



Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting

Building Up a Righteous Posterity

FEBRUARY 9, 2008

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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General Patterns and Specific Lives

ELDER JEFFREY R. HOLLAND

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



Ongoing Emphasis on the Family

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you to our 2008 worldwide leadership training broadcast. Our theme today, “Building Up a Righteous Posterity,” continues the Church’s ongoing emphasis on family matters. Two years ago, the broadcast focused on the topic “Supporting the Family,” containing counsel we will refer to today.

You’ve also heard other spoken and written messages, including carefully worded letters from the First

Presidency regarding the need to strengthen and protect the family. One of those letters, to have been read in sacrament meetings and delivered to families by home teachers, contains this language: “We call upon parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. . . . However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform.”¹

You realize we are addressing the entire adult population of the Church in this broadcast. It may seem unusual to have young single adults invited to a discussion primarily about building up a righteous posterity. But we have extended that invitation consciously. You single adults must and will be the parents of tomorrow. And while you’re planning and preparing for that opportunity, you are very much

part of your own parents’ posterity now and in the future. We are praying for all such to be righteously devoted to the family principles the Church and your parents espouse.

Furthermore, we know that others in our audience and in the Church are not now married, nor do some have an intact family fitting the ideal we regularly refer to in the Church. Please be assured we are fully aware of the many different circumstances that exist among our members. We love every one of you. We also realize that as more and more families are in disarray and as many cultural forces devalue marriage, children, and traditional family life, the General Authorities and general officers of the Church feel increased urgency to speak of ideals and gospel-centered principles. Otherwise, the moral drift which the world inevitably experiences could take us to a point where earnest people in and out of the Church are truly at sea when it comes to divine expectations in marriage and eternal family standards.

Patterns and Replicas

Let me use a parable that I hope can make this point, whatever your marital or family circumstance. For lack of a better title, I call it “The Parable of the Homemade Shirt.” My mother, bless her, was a marvelous seamstress. In my childhood years, when money was short and new clothing hard to come by, she would sometimes make clothing for us to

wear to school. I would see a shirt in a store window or in a mail-order catalog, and my mother would say, “I think I can make that.” By looking at the shirt as closely as she could, she would then cut cloth and put in seams to a degree that was close to the expensive original.

I pay her the tribute of being both willing and able to do that. But she didn’t like to do it that way. While she could study the commercial product and come close, what she really wanted was a pattern. A pattern helped her anticipate angles and corners and seams and stitches that were otherwise hard to recognize. Furthermore, if she went back for a second or a third shirt, she was always working from a perfect original pattern, not repeating or multiplying the imperfections of a replica.

I think you can see my point and hers. We are bound to be in trouble if a shirt is made from a shirt that was made from a shirt. A mistake or two in the first product—inevitable without a pattern—gets repeated and exaggerated, intensified, more awkward, the more repetitions we make, until finally this thing I’m to wear to school just doesn’t fit. One sleeve’s too long. The other’s too short. One shoulder seam runs down my chest. The other runs down my back. And the front collar button fastens behind my neck. I can tell you right now that such a look is not going to go over well in the seventh grade.



We can agree on the pattern as it comes from God, and we can strive for its realization the best way we can.

The Ideal Pattern from God

Now, I hope this helps you understand why we talk about the pattern, the ideal, of marriage and family when we know full well that not everyone now lives in that ideal circumstance. It is precisely because many don’t have, or perhaps have never even seen, that ideal and because some cultural forces steadily move us away from that ideal, that we speak about what our Father in Heaven wishes for us in His eternal plan for His children.

Individual adaptations have to be made as marital status and family circumstances differ. But all of us can agree on the pattern as it comes from God, and we can strive for its realization the best way we can.

We who are General Authorities and general officers are called to teach His general rules. You and we then lead specific lives and must seek

the Lord’s guidance regarding specific circumstances. But there would be mass confusion and loss of gospel promises if no general ideal and no doctrinal standard were established and, in our case today, repeated. We take great strength in knowing the Lord has spoken on these matters, and we accept His counsel even when it might not be popular.

Thank you for understanding why we are concerned about protecting all members of families, whatever your age, and why we speak in opposition to trends or forces that would seek to destroy any aspect of God’s eternal plan of happiness. How grateful we are that the Lord has said, “I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived” (D&C 52:14).

NOTE

1. First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999.

The Proclamation on the Family

PRESIDENT BOYD K. PACKER

President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



Transcendent Ideas

I'm grateful to participate in this meeting and greet all of you across the world on this very sacred and solemn occasion with perhaps the most important subject that we could bring to you from the leadership of the Church. We have watched, as you have watched, the patterns of the world and have become increasingly concerned about the matters of home and family.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the restored Church, and the initial introduction was the appearance of the Father and the Son to the Prophet Joseph Smith. In that great First Vision, as we refer to it now, two great transcendent ideas were revealed that have guided the Church ever since.

The first: He is the Father. Of all the titles that God might have given to Himself, He chose the one that's closest to all of us. He is our Father. We accept that—that we are the children of God. And with the Son being there, it became a family introduction. And so the Father and the Son appeared.

In a revelation given shortly thereafter, the Lord said, "Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments" (D&C 1:17).

Living by Revelation

And that was a beginning. It was the pattern, that we are to act and organize and live according to the revelations that the Lord had given. These revelations, as you know, compiled in the book of the Doctrine and Covenants and the revelations in the Book of Mormon and Pearl of Great Price, form the scriptural foundation for the Church.

We found that the Lord did not organize the Church according to the patterns of the other churches of the world. That is, there is no professional clergy. We don't have seminaries as such to prepare clergymen or clergywomen to guide the Church. It is summed up in another sentence that "every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, . . . the Savior of the world" (D&C 1:20).

We find in that an equality of the brethren who hold the priesthood and the women who stand at their side. We work together, and we're organized first as families. We all have the right to inspiration and revelation, and oh, how we need it in this world, especially in the great challenge of raising a family.

Raising a Righteous Posterity

Now, the theme of this meeting is to raise up a righteous posterity; it is an obligation. The first commandment given to Adam and Eve was that they were to multiply and replenish the earth, and the processes of multiplying and replenishing the earth



The first commandment given to Adam and Eve was to multiply and replenish the earth. That pattern has continued through all human history.

were given to them in their bodies. And that pattern would continue through all of the annals of human history.

So we had the first family—Adam and his wife, Eve, and then their children. We know that there had been a war in heaven and that there had been a rebellion and that Satan had been cast out. He was determined to destroy the works of the Almighty and was informed enough or wise enough or even inspired enough to know that the place where he should start his destruction was with the family. We see that in the account of Adam and Eve. Then as the history of the Church unfolded, the responsibility of parents and children emerged.

A Proclamation to the World

Not too many years ago there came a movement in the world

having to do with the family. The United Nations called a council on the family in Beijing, China. We sent delegations to that council on the family and to other councils that were held. And then it was announced that one of them would be held near our headquarters, and we thought, “Well, if they are coming here, we had better proclaim ourselves.”

A proclamation in the Church is a significant, major announcement. Very few of them have been issued from the beginning of the Church. They are significant; they are revelatory. And at that time, this was a little more than 10 years ago, the Brethren issued “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” It is scripturelike in its power.

Now, you will hear in the other presentations that are made many references to the proclamation on the



family. I thought it would be of good purpose to read it to you. We know we’ve read it. But if we read it slowly and carefully and articulate it very well, it may have more revelation than you thought was there.

When you wonder why we are the way we are and why we do the things we do and why we will not do some of the things that we will not do, you can find the authority for that in this proclamation on the family. There are times when we are accused of being intolerant because we won’t accept and do the things that are supposed to be the norm in society. Well, the things we won’t do, we won’t do. And the things we won’t do, we can’t do, because the standard we follow is given of Him.

Let me just read the proclamation to you, and you listen to it and see if you don't see in it the things that are foremost in society, in politics, in government, in religion now that are causing the most concern and difficulty. And you'll find answers there. And the answers that are there are the answers of the Church.

"The Family: A Proclamation to the World"

"The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

"We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of [all] His children."

Premortal Existence

We know in the Church from the doctrines that have been revealed to us that we had a premortal existence. It didn't all begin with the population of the earth with humankind. And the doctrines of the gospel were not new when they were revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith. They were from all eternity and will be for all eternity. Now listen carefully:

"All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential



characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose."

"In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave."

The Great Plan of Happiness

Note that it describes it as the plan of happiness. It is described elsewhere, in the Book of Mormon, as the "great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8).

"The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in

holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally."

"The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife."

You'll note as we go through this that declarations such as this are challenged. The world wants to change it. We will not. We cannot. When you wonder who we are and why we are, remember that we have this pattern and we will follow it.

"We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan."

Our position on such things as divorce, abortion, and gender issues are stated and outlined in the revelations, and the proclamation on the family is the clearest statement that we find of those issues.

Parental Duties

"Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. 'Children are an heritage of the Lord'

(Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

“The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan.”

And in the Church we recognize no other pattern for marriage—marriage is between man and woman.

“Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

I’ve always felt that the ultimate end of all of the activities and programs of the Church rests in a man and a woman and their family being happy at home.

“Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the

necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

A Warning

“We warn”—we don’t often use that word, but it’s appropriate here—“We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

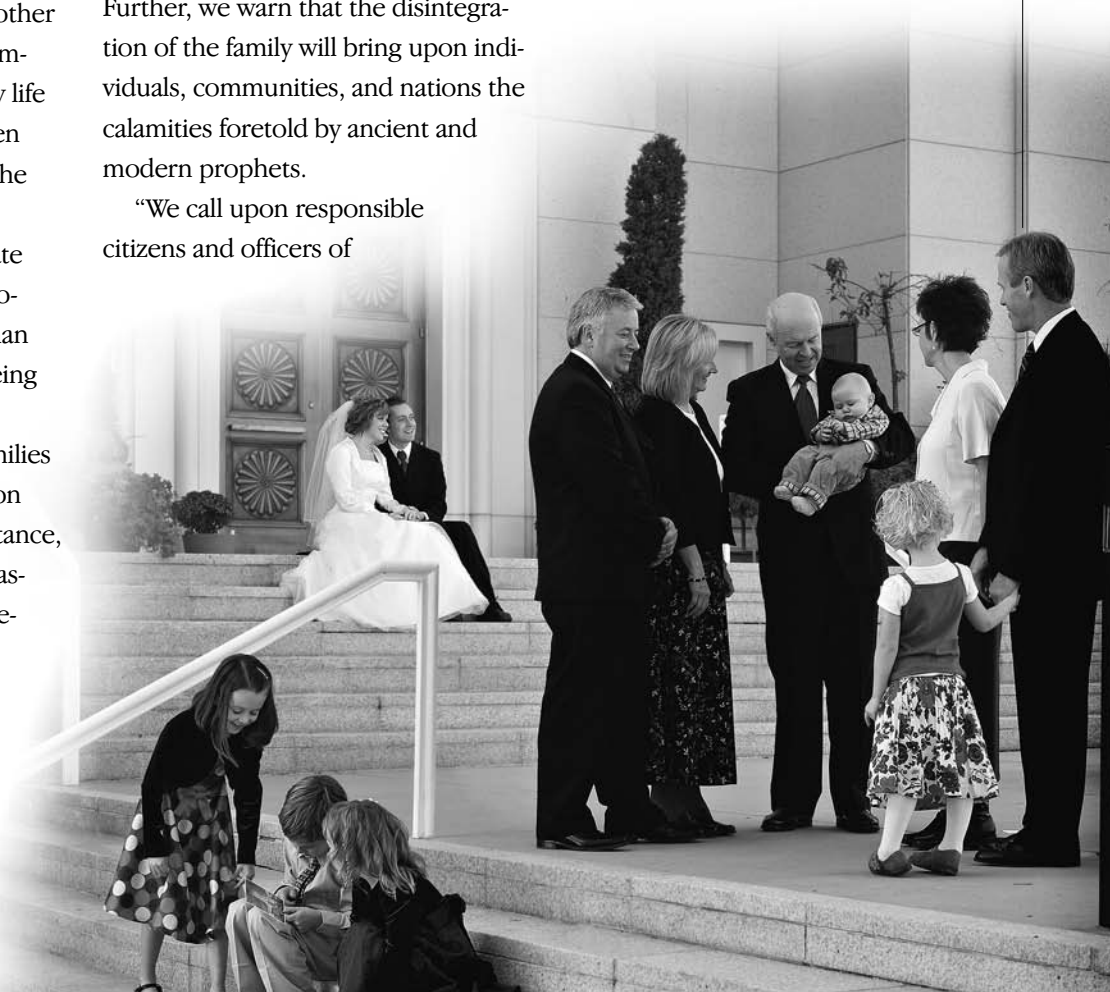
“We call upon responsible citizens and officers of

government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.”¹

Doctrines and Ordinances

Now, you will hear in the presentations made in this Churchwide meeting practical applications and instruction and counsel and guidance, but it’s all centered back on the revelations of the scriptures, on doctrine, and on the principles as proclaimed in this proclamation on the family.

When you young people who now look forward to marriage and a family life look around and see the dangers, there is only one place on this earth where the family can be fully





It's not easy to establish a family in this life and raise children. But in the Church you find the help that you need.

protected, and that's within the ordinances and the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Live the gospel, and you're going to be all right.

The world isn't a very pleasant place to live in, and there are challenges and disorders and patterns of life and death and all of the problems that come to us, and yet the answers are found in understanding that the family is the fundamental unit of the Church. All of the activities of the Church are calculated to strengthen the family.

Help for Families

Sometimes we may move a little away from our position of supporting families to having the families responsible to support the Church. Local

leaders need to use care in organizing activities and programs of the Church to bring the young men and young women forward and prepare them for married life and then help them in their early marriage years and on to old age.

I'm finding that old age is an interesting experience. I have wondered about the patterns of love and family association, the romantic love of youth. Will that be preserved? Oh, yes. That will not only be preserved but glorified and augmented.

Now, it's not easy to establish a family in this life and to raise children. But with the Church as it is, you find the help that you need.

We know how to pray, we know how to teach, but there are times

when we need help. Always, everywhere, there's a priesthood file leader. We've been taught the patterns of revelation and know that we have individual revelation. When we are unsure, we can turn to priesthood file leaders. And if we follow them, we'll get safely through modern life with our children and our grandchildren.

Now in our family we have grandchildren and great-grandchildren and still have the need to turn to the priesthood file leaders, to do what we are ordinarily expected to do in the Church. There are times of challenge and difficulty and danger and disappointment, but protecting families is what the Church is about. We do everything we can in the Church to protect the families, and then there is the priesthood leadership, the power that's present everywhere in the world, in every nation where the Church exists—men who are ordained to the priesthood and women who are wise and maternal, with motherly instincts.

When our children left home to go a great distance and settle their family in a distant city, we saw them leave and had the comfort of knowing that they would have a family there. And we told our children on more than one occasion, "You won't be able to telephone us very often because of the expense. But you will have a grandma there. Where will you find your grandma? In Relief Society. And you'll have wise counsel and be able to have the same strength that you've

had in our own family. And when you go, it just broadens the family circle.”

Now, if you’ll listen to the instruction that will be coming in this session, you’ll find that there is inspiration and direction. Know also that when we’re baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, there is another ordinance, separate from baptism, in which the gift of the Holy Ghost is conferred. Brethren holding the authority place their hands upon the head of each individual, each person who has been baptized, and confer upon him or her that gift, and it is to be a light and a teacher and a corrector and a guide as we move through life.

Guidance and Blessings

I don’t think it’s called for for members of the Church to live in fear, to see all that’s going on around us and say, “How can we ever raise a family when all of this temptation and difficulty is about us?”

Well, you can, because you can be guided and you can teach your children to be guided. In all of that you can live a happy life and find in the consummation of all of this, in the next existence, that the family can be together.

Now, sometimes there are those that are lost. We have the promise of the prophets that they are not lost permanently, that if they are sealed in the temple ordinances and if the covenants are kept, in due time, after

all the correction that’s necessary to be given, that they will not be lost.

So I extend my blessings to all of you across the Church as you enjoy family life, either as parents or as children or in any pattern that is your pattern, that you’ll be blessed and watched over, that the power of the Holy Ghost will be present in your life and the guarding power of the priesthood ever present will be there to correct you, to bless you, to boost you, and to confirm in you a testimony.

God Is Our Father!

I know that God lives, that He is our Father, that He is our Father! I don’t quite know how to say that word. It’s a word we say almost glibly. But He’s our Father; He loves us. And in that same pattern, we who lead the Church have that same feeling to all who are members of the Church and all who might be. So I invoke the blessings of the Lord upon all of you and the blessings of the Father upon all you as members of the Church as we face the responsibility of raising up a righteous posterity, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

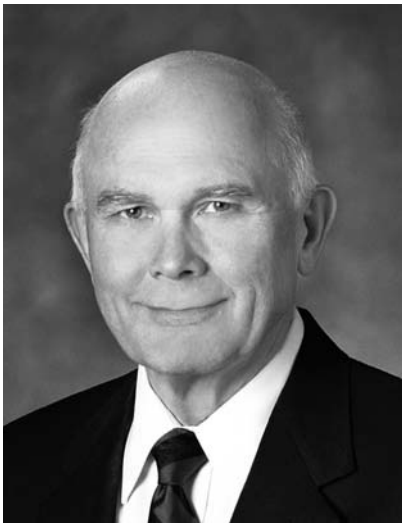
NOTE

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

Roundtable Discussion

ELDER DALLIN H. OAKS

Of the Quorum of the Twelve
Apostles



ELDER JEFFREY R. HOLLAND

Of the Quorum of the Twelve
Apostles



JULIE B. BECK

Relief Society General President



SUSAN W. TANNER

Young Women General President



CHERYL C. LANT

Primary General President

The Creator's Plan

Elder Holland

We're pleased to have with us Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Sister Julie Beck, general president of the Relief Society; Sister Susan Tanner, general president of the Young Women; and Sister Cheryl Lant, general president of the Primary. These leaders have been kind enough to invite me to join them at the table and have asked me to assume the role of moderating this discussion.

There is a statement in the worldwide proclamation on the family that says, "Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan."¹ When we talk about marriage and family in the Church, why do we want to put it in the context of God's plan? That's the language we use; it's the language we'll undoubtedly use here tonight. Why do we put it in the context of eternity and the overall plan of salvation?

Elder Oaks

Well, in the family proclamation we're told that the "family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children." This means that our individual decisions and desires on marriage and the bearing and rearing of children are immensely important in eternal terms. We need to be guided in this by the commandments of God and the teachings of His servants, not by the icons of popular culture or the conventions of political correctness. I think that's a main

message we need to keep in mind and a main purpose for our addressing all of the adults of the Church in this important broadcast.

Elder Holland

Good. Thank you. Sisters, any comments about the eternal scheme of all of this, why we're not just another social organization, or why we're not just another agency speaking out of community needs? Any comments?

A Three-Way Commitment

Sister Tanner

I think the marriage commitment—and it is a commitment that the world does not seem to recognize at all—is a three-way commitment. Husbands and wives are committed to each other, but they're also definitely committed to our Father in Heaven. The binding force in this marriage relationship is charity, the pure love of Christ. As we have this charity for one another, it not only draws us to each other, but it draws us closer to our Father in Heaven and therefore closer to each other in the marriage relationship.

Elder Holland

In terms of that little triangle you just drew for us with your hands, we have our special emphasis on really trying to bring heaven into the home, trying to bring God into a marriage. Any counsel for brothers and sisters out there, younger or older, who are still trying to do that? Any feeling?

Sister Lant

What comes to my mind is that when we talk about this eternal family, we're not talking about a perfect family; we're talking about a family that's trying to become perfect eventually and get back to our Father in Heaven. And so then when you bring into that context this idea of a triangle, with our Father in Heaven helping us work through the challenges of life, to me that is what a perfect family in this life is. It's not one without challenges, but one that has challenges and is working toward solving them with the help of our Father in Heaven.

Sister Beck

I'd like to say something about the women out there who've been abandoned for one reason or another—left alone by a husband—and about our widowed women. We have many women out there who in perfect faith and faithfulness signed up for the whole plan at the time they were sealed, and now they find themselves alone. I know of many of these faithful women who've said, "All right. I signed up for the plan, and I'm not going to let it go just because I'm alone now. I still will have family prayer. I still will have family scripture study. Family home evening will happen. We will educate this family. We will take care of the needs of this family under the plan of the Lord." I salute and honor those brave women who do that. They don't abandon the plan because they are alone. It's harder work if you're alone, but you can still do it.

Elder Oaks

The Lord didn't tell us it would be easy, but He has assured us it would be possible.

The Centrality of the Family

Sister Beck

We asked why the family is central to the Creator's plan. How do we know that? We know from revelations to the prophets that we lived in heaven before we were born, that we participated in a great conflict in the premortal world for the privilege of being part of an eternal family.

There is an eternal family unit, and this is the whole plan. Then everything else we have fits into that plan.

Elder Holland

There might be wards and stakes in heaven—I don't know anything about them—or there may well be some other organization that we don't know much about. What we *do* know will exist in heaven is families. And most of what has been revealed about our afterlife, our eternal life, our celestial life, focuses on family organization, and thus the high principles of the temple, the covenants we make there.

We hope this helps the membership of the Church and those who are not members of the Church realize why we talk about this so much.

Elder Oaks

So much of what we concentrate on in mortality—power, prominence, property, prestige—are things that we don't have any evidence will make any difference in the next life. But family will.



Unity and Unselfishness in Marriage

Elder Holland

We're going to move into a discussion about family, about children and bearing them, rearing them, loving them and helping them be all that they need to be, but before we do, what about the personal things of marriage?

How do we work on marriage so it provides the environment that we will eventually want children to be born into and raised in?

Sister Lant

You ask how we get to the point where we're ready to have a family and to bring children into the world. There has to be that spiritual foundation, that unity of goals and beliefs between a husband and wife about what they want to have in their home and in their family to make it successful.

Sister Beck

One of the simplest instructions on how to do this comes in Genesis, chapter 2, where the Lord says that a man will leave his father and his

mother and cleave unto his wife and they two shall be one (see Genesis 2:24). That's three assignments that a couple has right at the beginning: they leave where they were, they cleave together, and they become one. And if they work on those three principles, then they start to develop that relationship with the Lord.

Elder Oaks

I like to tell a young couple who are being married that in the marriage relationship they ought to look first to one another, as they do across the altar during their marriage—not first to their parents, not first to their siblings, not first to their friends, but in solving all of their problems, they should look first to one another, because the unity between them under the presiding, loving authority of a Heavenly Father in that triangle you spoke of earlier is what will get them over the inevitable problems of marriage.

Sister Tanner

I like to think about this beginning story, this very first love story of Adam and Eve. When Adam was created, the Lord gave him everything. He gave him a beautiful world. He created flowers and beasts and this wonderful garden in which to live. But Adam couldn't progress. Man could not progress until he had a help meet for him, a person who was meet for him or suited for him in every way, in emotional ways, in spiritual ways, in physical ways.

That tells us about the kind of companionship we should have in a

good marriage. We need to be suited for one another. We need to think about what it is we can do to help that companionship progress. We each bring basic, innate qualities to the marriage, and we each have individual missions to perform in our marriages. But we also need to get outside of ourselves and be unselfish in that companionship and help one another.

Elder Holland

I've heard President Hinckley say that selfishness may be the single biggest challenge in a marriage.² Any counsel for the Church about how to keep working on this and say, "How has your day been?" rather than just "How has mine been?"

Sister Lant

You know, there's so much talk in today's world about "are my needs being met?" You hear that so much.

Elder Holland

Yes, *needs* is a very big word.

Sister Lant

Yes, "my needs aren't being met." And I think if we could just get to the point where we are thinking about someone else's needs, our needs are met. That's the best way to get our needs met, if we are looking to take care of somebody else.

Sister Tanner

I grew up in a home where there was a very good marriage, but I remember my mother saying over and over to me, "It takes work to have a good marriage; it requires consistent effort." She wasn't saying that they

didn't have a good marriage, but she meant that you never let a day go by without thinking about how you can bless your spouse and help meet his or her needs.

Choosing a Spouse

Sister Beck

Oftentimes we hear young adults saying, "I'm looking for my soul mate." And they put off being married because they think there's one perfect match and a soul mate who then will be their best friend forever. What should they really be looking for if they're interested in seeking after the Lord's blessings and forming an eternal family? How do they do that?

Elder Oaks

I'm always doubtful when I hear that someone's waiting for the person that was predestined for them in heaven. There may be such cases. But I think most of us are looking for someone we love, whom we can stand together with and go forward with, who has your same ideals and principles to make an eternal family. I think the idea that you're waiting until something hits you on the head as if to say "this is it" just postpones marriage and sometimes prevents it altogether.

Elder Holland

I think we've all heard comments such as "Well, I need to get through school before I get married" or "I need to get a job" or "I need a little money in the bank" or "We're going to need a car." We start to hear, increasingly in

society, those kinds of stipulations. We want all of this in place.

I have loved a very homely little definition of love that James Thurber gave many, many years ago. He said, "Love is what you go through together."³

To you single adults out there—you shouldn't miss the ties that bind and the experiences that link us together in our youth and in our hardship and in our sacrifice as well as in senior years when maybe you've got a little more money.

Elder Oaks

Remember there's a Heavenly Father there, and when we do what He has asked us to do, He will bless us. Let's not deny Him the opportunity to fulfill His promises by taking it all upon us as if we had to do it all by ourselves.

Sister Lant

At the same time, we want to make sure that we don't encourage the young people to settle for substandard—and I'm talking about standards of the Church. They should not settle by marrying someone who will not stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them in the gospel and serving the Lord.

Don't Live in Fear

Sister Tanner

I think being married, having families, being faithful, and sacrificing for the gospel is all joyful. It brings true joy in our lives. We need to remember that and emphasize that. Family life is a great blessing to us.

Elder Holland

With all that's happening around us, internationally and otherwise, I think there's a lot of fear expressed. I hear a lot of fear among young single adults and teenagers wondering whether there's going to be a future. "Will I live long enough to have a marriage?"

Listen, it has always been tough. There has never been a time in the history of the world when there weren't problems, when there weren't things to be fearful about. That's why we have the gospel. We can't live in fear—not in this Church—that somehow things aren't going to work out or that there's too much that's ominous out there that's going to strike. That can be personal fear or collective fear for civilization. We just need to live the gospel and summon our faith and get answers to our prayers and go forward. And that's the way it's always been done.

Elder Oaks

If I can paraphrase a scripture, "Perfect love [of the Lord] casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18; see also Moroni 8:16).

Equal Partners

Elder Oaks

Let me ask a question that relates to this. I've heard some young people contemplating marriage and in their courtship say, "If we could just make a list of the things you'll do and the things that I'll do, then under the terms of that list and this compact, we'll have a happy marriage." How about that?

Sister Beck

It's not a list. The list changes. It ebbs and flows every day.

Sister Tanner

There's a wonderful quote from the author John Milton in his epic poem *Paradise Lost*. Adam praises Eve for "those thousand decencies that daily flow from all her words and actions, mixt with Love."⁴ It would be wonderful if we could have companionships that were filled with decencies daily, where we think about what we can do through our words and actions to show love.

Sister Lant

You know, there has to be a division of labor to some extent in a marriage, because you can't do it all by yourself. But it has occurred to me—well, it's evident—that the division of labor for young couples today is different than it was when I was first married. I watch the young couples in my family—my children and their spouses—and the way they do things in their family. It's different than we did. They still get the job done. They work together in a different way. And in many ways it's better than the way we did it. The point is, though, that it's individual. Each couple has to work out how they will do things.

Elder Holland

You're taking me back to the proclamation, which speaks of being equal partners. We don't just say, "You're going to be the only nurturer, and I'm going to be the only one

that's concerned about the money or whatever." There will be ebbing and flowing. There's a balance here. We've got to be in this together. We've got to share in this. It seems to me that's exactly what the proclamation said.

Another line from the proclamation is, "Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ." That says to me, "I'd better address my flaws before I spend a lot of time worrying about everybody else's flaws in the family."

Elder Oaks

I think that's simply a manifestation of what Jesus taught when He said don't try to cast the mote out of another's eye until you've checked the beam in your own (see Matthew 7:3-5; Luke 6:41-42; 3 Nephi 14:3-5).

Latter-day Saint Culture

Sister Beck

I can think of an example of some friends of mine who were converts to the Church, and in their culture, in their family, there was not this unity and Christlike example. It wasn't part of their heritage. But they had joined the Church and embraced the teachings of the Savior, and they said when they were married, "What will the culture of our family be like? What culture will we have?" And they determined very carefully, "We will have a Latter-day Saint culture." They studied the scriptures; they studied the doctrines, asking, "What should our family look like



In their sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help each other as equal partners.

in order to conform to what we know to be true?" They built their home on those Christlike principles that you mentioned. What did the Savior teach? How do we treat each other? Good manners, kindness, respect.

And now over many years, we have seen that family emerge. They don't have the culture of their country. They have a gospel culture in their home.

Elder Oaks

And that is a far better foundation for a marriage—a Latter-day Saint culture—than a set of job lists.

Sister Lant

We have told our children through the years as they get married that it's not about who's right; it's about what's right. Each of them brings traditions from the families that they come from, and you would hope that as they bring those together, they would look at what's right—looking at the gospel principles to determine that—and then they are much better than either

of their families were. Their family will be stronger; it will be better.

Bearing Children in Faith

Elder Holland

Sister Tanner, you mentioned Adam and Eve. I have been so grateful that we have the second chapter of 2 Nephi in the Book of Mormon, which tells us more about the decision Adam and Eve made than anyone else in the world has ever been able to know.

And as I read 2 Nephi 2, it is crystal clear there would not have been children born to Adam and Eve in the garden (see verse 23). I think most of the world does not know that. With us it's a very fundamental doctrinal point, again underscoring the idea of the eternal plan, the centrality of the family, the point all of you have made about the plan.

Sister Tanner

I feel we are so blessed in the Church to have the proclamation on

the family. We can look to this document as almost scriptural because it comes to us from the living prophets and apostles. In it we are reminded that the commandment God gave to Adam and Eve to multiply and replenish the earth as husband and wife remains in force.

I remember when I was a young single adult and in my early married years, I heard that commandment preached over the pulpit by apostles and prophets. I was grateful for that counsel. I remember hearing them preach that we were to get married, to have children, and to get an education, sort of all simultaneously, as impossible as it sounds. Maybe it does seem impossible; I am sure we have people who question and wonder how it is possible.

As I've thought about this commandment to multiply remaining in force, I know that it is true and correct. I also believe that it requires of us great faith and great courage and often great sacrifice. It requires us to be in tune with the Lord to receive personal revelation, and I think it requires a pure heart so that we are not judgmental of other people who are exercising their faith and having their own personal revelation in regard to that commandment.

Elder Oaks

I think what Sister Tanner has just said is true and immensely important. Thank you for that statement. We're in danger today, it seems to me, of our members of the Church looking

to worldly priorities in their decisions about childbearing. Instead of making those decisions in faith on the Lord's promises and in reliance upon what we know of the great plan of happiness and the purpose of life, they look to other sources—television or prominent ideological gurus in the world today or even the pressure of their neighbors—to make decisions that are fundamental and eternal and need to be made prayerfully before the Lord.

Sister Beck

I think it is an issue of faith. We know of many places around the world where there are housing shortages. How do you find even a place to live as a new married couple, let alone bear children, when you can't find a place to live? I think that this is a matter of faith. We don't have children because we have money, because we have means. We have children with faith.

That feeling and attitude of seeking for the Lord's blessings under the plan, I believe, will create miracles in the lives of people. If you're in a place where there's a housing shortage, the way will be opened up. Just as paying tithing is a matter of faith, so is having children a matter of faith. You don't pay tithing with money; you don't have children with money.

Elder Oaks

We can add to that that we are teaching general principles because we are General Authorities and general officers.

Sister Tanner

I love the phrase "the way will be opened up if we walk by faith." I have a personal testimony that ways do open up when we are faithful. When we were first married, my husband's father gave him a blessing that said, "Follow the principles of the gospel—do what you know that you should in this marriage and walk by faith—and the way will be opened up, ways that are unforeseen to you right now."

Walking by faith doesn't mean to walk recklessly. We need to be very wise in our decisions and then work very hard and be willing to sacrifice and maybe go without some things. My husband and I know that his father's blessing was fulfilled in our lives. Ways unforeseen to us were opened up. I know it is a true principle for anyone who walks by faith.

Sister Lant

You talked about being willing to do the work that it takes. Having children is a lot of work. And we have to not be afraid of that, because it's that very element of working hard and being willing to do whatever it takes that makes us who we are. It's the sacrifice that makes us who we are. I want to bear my testimony of the joy that comes from having families, from having children, because there's not only the commandment from the Lord to do it, but there are great promised blessings.

Elder Oaks

And let us be mindful of the fact that in many parts of the world where people are listening to this

broadcast, the idea of having children has been rejected. Or the thought is that if you have one child that's enough and a person is just foolish or unpatriotic to have more than one child. There are plenty of ideas out there in the world that work against the gospel plan. And as father Lehi said, "[There] must needs be . . . an opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). We can't expect to be applauded every time we do something that we know is right. But God will bless you.

The Desires of the Heart

Sister Beck

I know of many couples who desire to have children and aren't given that blessing. Their challenge is the challenge of not having children. We need to be listening and supportive and encouraging toward them. I also believe that the desire to have children in the single sisters and in these couples probably won't go away if they're righteous, because that is a God-given desire. It speaks to their very natures and the training they received in the heavens. That longing will not go away. But the Lord will bless them.

Elder Oaks

And that longing will weigh in the Final Judgment. One of the most comforting passages in all of scripture for me is in the 137th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 9, where we're told that the Lord will judge us according to our works and according to the desires of our hearts.

The Family Comes First

Elder Holland

Let's talk about the rearing of the children, what comes after we have fulfilled the commandment to bear children and to continue their eternal progress by giving them mortal opportunity. Those duties are not unrelated. It seems to me that the Lord's commandment to us is not simply to bear children, it is to bear them with the idea that we will save them.

Elder Oaks

While we're talking about this, what does it mean that the family comes first? We say that, and we believe it, but what does it mean that the family comes first?

I want to use your eyeglasses to recall a metaphor from Neal Maxwell. He suggested on another subject that we write something on the inside of our glasses so that whenever we looked at any subject, we see that message. Similarly, we might say that when we look at decisions about how the family will use its time or decisions about how the ward will schedule its activities, we have written inside of our eyeglasses, "The family comes first."

Elder Holland

I love—we all love—the line from Ecclesiastes, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). We've only got so much time, but we all have the same amount of it. So I

think if we work on priorities, we can make family first. I think we can do a better job.

Elder Oaks

And when we speak of family first, we have to think of ideas like family prayer and family home evening and family scripture study and making time and seeing that these things happen which have eternal consequences in the spiritual growth of our children. That's a manifestation of "family comes first."



Family Patterns

Elder Holland

I introduced the word *pattern* in those brief remarks as we started. Some of these things that we probably take for granted should not be taken for granted, like family scripture study, like family prayer, like family home evening—we tend to dash those off as if they were understood by everybody, but they are not. They ought to become part of a family pattern.

Sister Tanner

One hopeful thing about patterns is that even though we sense our imperfections in trying to establish these patterns, it's quite remarkable and fulfilling for us as we see our children then carry on those patterns, even though we didn't feel like we were totally perfect at it.

Elder Holland

Some of it got through.

Sister Tanner

On a personal note, my husband said at his father's funeral that he had never learned anything at church that he had not already learned in his own home. That is such a tribute to his parents—parents of a large family. He talks of how they would sometimes gather on the parents' bed, and the father would pull down an old blind in the bedroom and draw on it a chart depicting the plan of salvation. He said, "We learned the plan of salvation sitting together on our father's and mother's bed. And not only did we learn gospel truths, but we would also go out together and play 'No Bears



Are Out Tonight' or other games as a family." There were a lot of good things that this family did to utilize their family time to pull together, to teach, and to create memories.

Elder Oaks

I recall a rule we had in our family—every family has rules—that we would never have the television on when we were eating a meal, because we thought this time of gathering was a time for conversation: "What did you do today?" "What's troubling you?" "How can we help?" That doesn't take place if the news, however important, is blaring into the family mealtime. We couldn't afford fast food, so we didn't have any rules to resist that. But we had a rule of no television and of much conversation, and we would all be home for dinner. We couldn't all do it for breakfast—our circumstances were such—but we had one meal where we sat down together. That was very good for our family.

Sister Tanner

We had similar experiences. You've talked about conversation and binding yourselves together with each other in that conversation. Not only is it binding and informative, it's fun. You can laugh together, and you can share tender experiences. We typically had our family prayer at breakfast time and at dinnertime, because we were together for those two meals. Our family prayer often introduced the topics of conversation for the mealtime. Sometimes my husband would pray for a grandma who was having an operation. Or he'd pray for people suffering somewhere in the world from an earthquake or other natural disaster. And then as we ate, we had these interesting topics to discuss and this time together to bind us as a family unit.

Sister Beck

I was raised in a big family. My parents had a lot of children. And that means there were a lot of opinions. It was a lot of work to care for this family.

My parents used the tool of family home evening to really teach us. Every week we sang “Love at Home” as the opening hymn. I remember as a teenager thinking it was really tiresome to sing that hymn every week.

Elder Oaks

Sometimes that hymn is sung through clenched teeth.

Elder Holland

And by assignment.

Sister Lant

Sometimes it’s the mother’s clenched teeth.

Sister Beck

It was more a belief than a practice. But every week, Dad would say, “Now we’ll sing our opening hymn, ‘Love at Home.’” When I was about 14 or 15, in that age when you question everything, I asked my father, “Why do we have to sing this hymn every week? There are a lot of good hymns in the hymnbook we could sing.”

And he looked at me very sternly, and he said, “When you have learned lesson 1, I will teach you lesson 2.” I don’t know what lesson 2 was; we didn’t ever get there, but I have to say that after the passage of many years, I look at my family, and we do love one another. We did, somehow, over the years, learn to love each other because that was lesson 1 my parents wanted to teach. They didn’t try to cover everything. They knew if they started with that, it would work.

I had a wonderful young mother approach me. She had four children under the age of six, and she said,

“We are being faithful in trying to have our family scripture study every morning, but it’s just a disaster. Somebody’s always crying; they don’t pay attention.” And I said, “How long are you trying to do this?” She said, “Well, we set a goal to do 10 minutes every day.” Trying to ease her worry, I said, “Well, with the audience you have, you’re probably about 8 minutes too long.” She had the pattern down, and she needed to adapt a little bit to the age of her audience. Maybe they could start with a picture of Adam and Eve and talk about the picture and not try to help a two-year-old read the scriptures. But she was faithful, and I loved her for that.

I do, however, believe it is important for even very young children to hear the scriptures being read to them. The language of the scriptures should become as familiar to them as the language of their parents.



Not Judging Others

Sister Lant

Elder Holland, I wanted to say just a word about judging other people. We look at other people, and things are not always as they seem. We think it’s one way, but it isn’t always that way.

We had a large family, and my husband was the bishop when all the children were still very young. I would work all day Saturday and all morning Sunday to get them to church, and I had to get them there early or we just didn’t even get there. We would line the whole bench—the whole center bench was filled with our children on the second row back—and we would be there before the meeting started.

I remember one day a sister came up behind me and leaned over and said, “Sister Lant, if my kids were as good as yours and if it was as easy for me as it is for you, I would have a large family too.”

Well, I started to cry, and I cried clear through the whole meeting. And my husband kept looking at me like “What is wrong? What is wrong?” I was a mess. I completely had a come-apart. And it was because it wasn’t easy.

We tend to judge one another. We judge harshly. Or we judge unfairly as we look at others unkindly. And we don’t really know what one another’s situations are. We just have to love each other.

Elder Holland

And cling to the doctrine, cling to these ideals—we’re going to climb this mountain the best way we know

how, and that will sometimes be a little different for each family.

Working Together

Elder Oaks

There's another aspect of that, and that is to challenge fathers to take the leadership. The family proclamation asks them to lead out. Fathers should call their families around them for family prayer. Fathers should make sure that family home evenings are held. Sometimes that's best done by delegating to a mother the planning; she may be a lot better at it than the father. But the Lord holds the father responsible. That's why we read in the family proclamation that "fathers are to preside."

Fathers, rise up and perform your role.

Elder Holland

And that fits with our earlier comment too, that many forces in the world would take people out of the home. This is yet another example of our trying to bring people into the home, including and especially, we say again, fathers.

Sister Lant

The fathers preside, and the fathers call their families around them. But mothers have to facilitate that. They have to enable their families to gather like that and pave the way for it to be a good experience.

Sister Beck

When you're together, when you know—right back to our beginning

principle—the family is ordained of God and we're in this together, then you of course plan together and see that it happens. You help it happen together.

Sister Lant

And children have to be willing. Teenagers have to be willing to respond.

Sister Beck

Well, sometimes they're willing.

Elder Oaks

No small task.

Sister Lant

Do it anyway. Do it anyway.

The principles that we've talked about, all of these principles about what the family should be based on, all point us to the temple. I think that the temple is such a blessing in our lives, whether we have a family that has already gone to the temple, or whether we're hoping for a family that will enter the temple. All of these principles of truth and these patterns of family life culminate in the blessings of the temple because that's where we become eternal families.

Elder Ballard has said to us that "clearly, those . . . entrusted with precious children have been given a sacred, noble stewardship, for we are the ones that God has appointed to encircle today's children with love and the fire of faith and an understanding of who they are."⁵ And that says it all for what we have to do as parents.

Extended Families

Elder Holland

Why don't we say just a word about others who can help "families"—grandparents, aunts, uncles, someone who for a time does not have a complete family. We acknowledged in the introduction that not everybody is going to meet this profile, but we can all be committed to the ideal; we can all be committed to the doctrine. Any comments about how families, broadly defined, pitch in and take an interest?

Sister Lant

I would hate to think as a mother that I had no help from anyone else. I am grateful for the good people who have had influence on my children. And there are many of them, from teachers, to neighbors, to friends, to extended relatives. There are many ways that people help my children. And I am grateful for that. It's an added witness to the things that we're trying to teach them. And sometimes you get to a point with one of your children where you cannot have the influence on them you would like to have, but someone else can.

I've had some of my children live in foreign countries. My youngest daughter has been living in Spain with her husband, and she had her first baby over in Spain. Of course she was a long distance from Grandma, and I was concerned about this and concerned about her, but these wonderful Saints there were her family. They were there

for her, and they helped her, and they gathered around her and loved her and loved that baby. How grateful I was for them and for their caring and for their influence in her life.

Elder Oaks

Having been raised in a single-parent household after my father died shortly before my eighth birthday, I know firsthand what the influence of grandparents is, what the influence of aunts and uncles and cousins is. I have rejoiced to see the strength of extended families as I've traveled outside the United States.

I think in many parts of the world the structure of the extended family is stronger than it has become in North America. I would just encourage my fellow members in North America to make sure they're reaching out, strengthening that extended family, and know that there are places in the world where that situation is functioning better than it is in North America.

Ward Family

Sister Beck

There's also the ward family. As we've mentioned, in every ward you're going to have a spectrum of experience and challenges. Some of those women will be able to have children; some will be married; some will be widowed; some won't. In reality there are a few women who will be able to have children and have a lot of them. In that ward family we should rally around and support those who invite children into their family. It's a challenge to have a large family. I would

certainly hope that no member of the Church would approach another sister in the ward and say, "You're crazy for having another child," but rather celebrate her ability and her desire to have them and say, "I'm supporting you. Let me do all I can to encourage and help you in that."

Elder Oaks

I'm glad you mentioned that, because we do get reports that some Latter-day Saints criticize other Latter-day Saints for having children. I remember early in our marriage when my wife June was pregnant with our fifth child, a very active sister in our ward said to her, "What are you trying to do, populate the world all by yourself?" And I was proud of June when she came right back with a response: "I can't think of anyone better to do it."

Elder Holland

And we all acknowledge—Sister Tanner touched on it—that there are issues of health, there are issues that are not materialistic. We're not talking about money or political correctness or deference to society, we're talking about legitimate gospel-oriented things that we watch and measure. That is all the more reason not to judge. We teach, we encourage, we rally, we cheer; within the context of the gospel we encourage people to seek that destiny that is theirs.

Never Give Up

Sister Tanner

On the subject of rearing children, we will probably have people in our

audience who are going to start feeling bad about themselves. The discrepancy between the ideal and the reality of everyday life sometimes seems very large to us as mothers and fathers. But I know that being a mother or father is an eternal role, an eternal calling, and that with that calling, as with any calling, we are blessed with a mantle. We need that mantle, and we need the spirit of that mantle with us constantly as we rear our children. In fact, I think that we, like Elisha, need a double portion of that spirit as we rear our children (see 2 Kings 2:9). I know Heavenly Father will bless us with that. These are His children, and He will bless us with a double portion of the spirit as we seek to rear them in righteousness.

Elder Oaks

And some are simply more difficult than others. There's no such thing as treating all children equally in the parental attention or some of the basic decisions required. We might be equal in the division of property as we choose or don't choose, but we sure can't be equal in the division of time because the needs are different.

Sister Beck

I saw an example of the time division in my own home growing up. My oldest sister, the oldest of 10, lost her hearing when she was age two. There was no way for my mother to say, "I will give 10 minutes to this child and 10 minutes to the next one." There is no doubt that daughter took the lion's share of the time for quite a long time in the family.

I also think that the help and the power for a sealed eternal family comes from the temple. Much like a stake president is given keys and power and authority, and a bishop has keys and authority to run his ward and officiate there, parents in the temple are given that power to receive answers, to receive revelation to resolve what they need to resolve.

Elder Oaks

Part of that vision is to realize that God has given these, His children, the power of choice. And the time comes in their maturity when they have to make choices and be accountable for them.

It's always so unfortunate when parents carry a burden of guilt throughout their adult lives for every decision their children have made. We never, never, never give up. And we're responsible to teach correct principles and do all we can with love and persuasion and so on. All of these are priesthood principles for the exercise of family as well as Church authority. But in the last analysis, I say to my fellow adult parents and grandparents, keep praying, keep trying, but set down that large burden of guilt because people given the power of choice are going to make wrong choices. Sometimes the only way some people can learn is to make a wrong choice and see the consequence of it. Then we rely on the incredible power of the Atonement of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And there are hardly any

sins we can commit in mortality that can't, on proper principles, be forgiven through the power of the Atonement of our Lord.

Creating a Nurturing Climate

Sister Lant

Have we said enough about really loving one another? We've used a lot of words about how we should teach our children and the things that we need to do in our homes, but I think we simply have to love one another. I've heard the statement that there's nothing greater a father can do for his children than to love their mother. And it's the same for each member of the family—to really look for ways to show and say and express that love.

Elder Holland

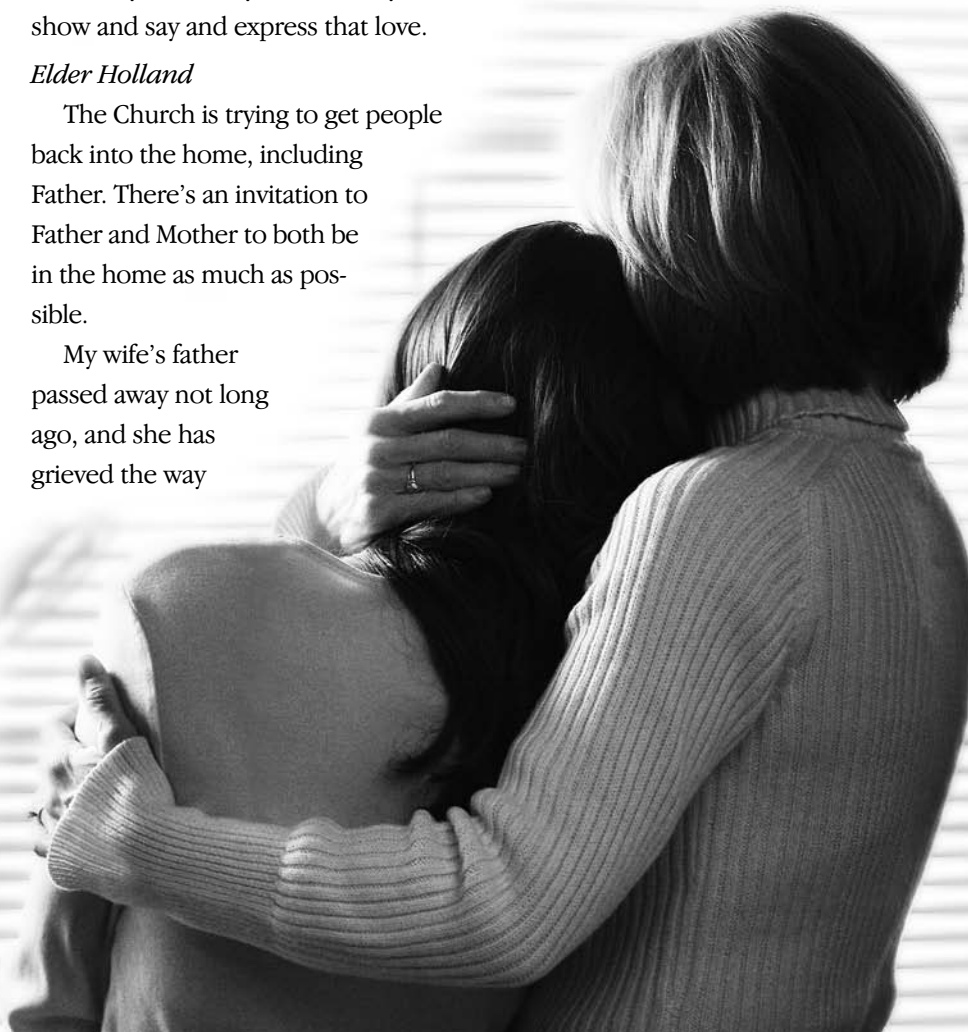
The Church is trying to get people back into the home, including Father. There's an invitation to Father and Mother to both be in the home as much as possible.

My wife's father passed away not long ago, and she has grieved the way

a daughter grieves over the loss of a father. I was comforting her, and she said, "But he loved me so much. He sang to me. He put me to bed. He tucked me in." She said, "I can hardly remember a night that he did not tuck me in bed and sing to me." I'm making a point about dads, fathers, being in the home. And I pay tribute to my boys, who do better than I ever did about changing diapers and taking the children out during church.

Sister Lant

I think there's a great influence in the world that is trying to pull us not



only out of the home, but away from those things that really matter. As I look at what gets us off track in families, sometimes it's having too much, and sometimes it's having too little. But it all has to do with material things. I think we really need to take a careful look at our lives and priorities—Are we too busy? Are we trying to do too much?—and look at the things that really are going to make a difference in the lives of our children and make sure that it's the spiritual things that we're not excluding.

Sister Beck

I don't think it takes a lot of extra activity or time to follow the Lord's plan. It can be done in simple ways. I think one of the most important concepts for parents to grasp about a home is to create a climate. Often we say it's tasks or we measure things by achievements or things or lists. But we can think of a climate where something can grow. The word *nurture* means to help something grow. Something can't grow where it's too dry or too cold or the ground is too hard. The job of parents in rearing children is to keep that climate where things can grow with the Spirit, where there's faith and hope and charity.

I saw a wonderful mother in Mexico. She had a little courtyard outside her front door, and she had painted a garden on the wall. She didn't have any ground to grow a garden in. She had a wall, so she painted a garden, with flowers and trees and a fountain. She wanted to create a climate

for growth for her family. What a beautiful thought she had to make a place to give her family that vision.

Elder Oaks

My mother used to love quoting the words of Pearl Buck, who said, "I love my children with all my heart, but I can't love them with all my time."⁶ And so she was very careful in the limited time that she had available after being the breadwinner for the family. She was very careful with what we did in the scarce time that we were privileged to be together. She liked us to work on projects together. I look back on that with greater affection than I experienced at the time. It seemed like Mother was always organizing us to do some project to clear out the garage. But I look back on it, and I realize that she was pursuing a very important parenting function in getting the children to work together and with their parents.

It's harder and harder to do that in some urban societies that many live in. People in underdeveloped parts of the world where husband and wife and children work together in the rice fields don't have that same kind of problem. But the principle works throughout, and it's very, very important for us.

Principles of Homemaking

Sister Lant

You speak of principles. I think that's what we really have to turn to in all of this discussion because families and family situations are different

all over the world. But the principles of work and of love and of unselfishness and of forgiveness and of service, those basic principles of the gospel are where we have to go to know how to rear our children, to know how to build our relationships.

Elder Oaks

I think the family proclamation gives us some principles that we need to refer to:

"By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children." It doesn't say *exclusively*. "In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners."

There may be a circumstance where the mother needs to be the breadwinner. I was raised in such a home. The health of the father may prevent him from performing a function that is identified as his responsibility. But under the principle of equal partners solving the problems, these can be worked out individually with the inspiration of heaven.

Sister Tanner

To make a home, to be a homemaker, requires the knowledge of certain principles and the practice of certain skills. The lack of homemaking skills—and I don't just mean baking bread—has created an emotional homelessness that causes

some of the very same byproducts as street homelessness. People who do not have a place to go that has the Spirit, that has emotional stability, and where values and principles are taught, have a lot of the same problems that street homeless people have, like despair, drug abuse, and immorality. We have an opportunity, mothers and fathers working together, to be homemakers, to create an environment that will make a home. Home is not just a place; it is a feeling, and it is a spirit.

Elder Oaks

I'm glad you speak of homemaking because *homemaking* is a word of disparagement in the eyes of some, and it should not be. But we may need to define it. Homemaking is not just baking bread or cleaning a house. Homemaking is to make the environment necessary to nurture our children toward eternal life, which is our responsibility as parents. And that homemaking is as much for fathers as it is for mothers.

Sister Lant

And that home, then, needs to be the safe place, the place where all the members of the family can come and know that they're loved and that they are safe from the things of the world and that they're OK.

Elder Oaks

On the subject of delegation, there are probably a lot of *housekeeping* tasks that can be delegated, but there aren't any *homemaking* tasks that can be delegated. We don't delegate

conducting a family home evening. We're not going to delegate family prayer. We're not going to delegate the love of a mother and a father for the children or that individual time that's so essential for growth. Let's make a distinction between *housekeeping* and *homemaking*.

Sister Lant

We can't delegate those responsibilities, but we can share them.

Elder Oaks

Yes, we can.

Elder Holland

What struck me when Elder Oaks said, "You can't delegate" is you can't delegate it into the community, you can't delegate it to the chamber of commerce—

Elder Oaks

Even to the Church.

Elder Holland

Or to the Church. That's my point. Let's talk about that. Let's lead into the idea of how the Church is to help the family and bless the family. There are some things that simply cannot and should not, probably, be done by the Church—or anyone else—when it really is a *family* matter.

Scheduling Activities

Elder Holland

What counsel do we have collectively for Church leaders to help them strike the balance helping families and scheduling and calendaring? Time is an issue out there in the wards and stakes of the Church.

Elder Oaks, how do we look at calendaring?

Elder Oaks

Let me speak to bishops and stake presidents, who preside over ward councils and stake councils. Let's have parental time considered as we make up schedules, not just fitting every conceivable meeting and activity into the Church calendar without regard to what that does to families.

Elder Holland

We want to bless individuals, but we've also got to protect the family as a unit.

Sister Beck

Years ago there was a little rule I made for myself that I think is pretty applicable to everyone. A good reason to have a ward activity or a stake activity is because we need it and it will strengthen our families and individuals. A bad reason to have an activity is because it's a tradition or there's a certain holiday we have to celebrate. When we talk about gospel patterns, we know the needs. Let's plan the activities around those needs, and if something was a wonderful activity last year, it doesn't mean we need to build it into a tradition.

Elder Oaks

And we can say that it's best when Church schedules are considerate of family circumstances, so that the total burden on families on weeknights and weekends is not excessive and doesn't just sweep away the possible times for a family to be together.



When a ward council or a presidency meets, they should consider, “How can we support the family?”

We need to add to that the caution that if we make more family time available, parents have to take more responsibility in making sure that it doesn't just increase sports, television viewing, individual athletic activities, or participation in many, very good community activities for children. We are not trying to hobble the Church in competing with other activities. We are trying to discipline the use of Church meetings and Church activities in favor of the family. And the family has got to fill that vacuum instead of inviting others in to fill it.

Sister Lant

You know, that puts responsibility back on the family, doesn't it?

Elder Oaks

It does.

Ward and Family Councils

Sister Beck

When a ward council meets or a presidency meets, oftentimes they

discuss, “How can we get people to support us in our organization?” or “We had a lot of people there; we had a lot of support.” That's really a backward thought. When a ward council meets or a presidency meets, if they would begin by saying, “How can we support the family?” then what we do is an outgrowth of things that will support the family and not the other way around; I think we could all turn that lens backward.

Elder Oaks

And that's a great subject for ward councils, where a group like we have with us here today gets together and each has his or her own perspective. The bishop is the decision maker, but he hears from all of the groups and he can try to set the level of activity and adjust the schedules to deal with the principles we've talked about.

Elder Holland

I'd like to think it might be valuable right in the middle of this

discussion to pause and say to the Church audience that, although we didn't necessarily set out to do it, we are modeling here what we would like to happen among men and women in the Church.

Elder Oaks

In every culture.

Elder Holland

In every culture. This is the way that ward councils ought to talk. I'd like to think that this is the way husbands and wives would talk. We're respectful; we're interested; people have ideas; we're sharing. And in some of the cultures—this is a worldwide broadcast—this will run counter to tradition and history and the style of some people. But gospel culture always has to prevail. And if it hasn't been the local habit or the local tradition to listen to the sisters or to have the marvelous respect these sisters have shown to priesthood—all of this, we hope, will convey to the Church the need to hear each other, love each other, talk together, get the best ideas, pray for guidance, and have better families and a better Church as a result. That shouldn't be the least of the issues conveyed in our broadcast here tonight.

Matching Needs and Resources

Elder Oaks

Elder L. Tom Perry gave us a marvelous principle in the worldwide leadership training meeting of January 2003. I want to read a few of the words that he gave, just by way of reemphasizing them. They're more important

today than they were five years ago when he first stated them. He said:

“The secret in building a branch or a district, a ward or a stake is to know your members, their abilities, and their needs, and build your program based on the leadership available and the needs of your members. . . .

“In all you do, be aware that bigger is not necessarily better. Grow only as fast as the size and maturity of your unit permit. Preserve the strength of your members.”⁷

It’s a liberating principle.

Sister Lant

It is. And I think how that comes down, then, to an auxiliary leader, a Primary leader in a ward. Ofttimes you call that Primary leader, and she looks at the Primary program, and she thinks, “OK, how am I going to do all of these things?” And she works at doing those things, and then she looks for what else she can do.

We’ve got to put the family focus on all of the work that we’re called to do, because we don’t have to do more. Sometimes we can take that program, look at the needs of our members, and do less.

Elder Holland

It reminded me that Elder Scott said sometimes to magnify your calling is to do less, not more.⁸ You’ve brought more focus to it, you’ve exercised better judgment. You’ve increased the quality, but the sheer mass may be smaller, not greater. That’s an equally liberating thought, I think—not to shirk, not to be a slacker, but to really,

seriously look at the big picture, including the big picture of the family, and maybe sometimes do less.

Sister Lant

And so many times these auxiliary leaders are so capable, they can do so much, that we get carried away. We have to watch ourselves not to do that, to focus on the people not the program.

Wisdom and Good Judgment

Sister Tanner

I appreciate priesthood leaders who look at family situations before they make calls. I know calls are inspired, but they also require wisdom and judgment on the part of priesthood leaders.

Elder Oaks

Units that have a limited number of active members are short on workers, and they should be very careful not to just fill up the callings by using the same 10 people in the ward and giving them all four or five different callings. That’s not the way to have a strong family. It’s not the way to have a strong ward. An inspired priesthood leader ought to start off with the proposition that busy parents ought not to have multiple callings.

The program may have to be pared back somewhat to meet the requirements of the principle Elder Perry outlined in that worldwide leadership training broadcast of January 2003.

Elder Holland

And we’ll all acknowledge—everyone at this table can acknowledge—

that sacrifice is still a principle in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We sacrifice for each other across family ties. You take that very far, and you’re out to the branch and the ward and the stake. We’ve all been called to do things that stretched us and pushed us, and we had to make some judgments about “What do we do to protect our family?” and “What do we do to protect the Church?” “How do we make sure that the Church flourishes as well as the family?”

We’ve got to have the wisdom and the judgment to be able to kind of “do it all.” It’s just that we can’t do it all at once, and we sometimes don’t need to do all the things we’ve done. But the essential things we will be blessed to do.

Sister Beck

I remember the wonderful teaching of Elder Ballard when he taught us to be wise. “O be wise,” he said, “in choosing these things.”⁹ The teaching of sacrifice is important. Some of the beginning stirrings of my testimony, if I go back to when I first started to say, “This is a wonderful church,” were watching my parents serve and struggle in their callings and learn. That taught me some things. And I’ve been stretched and drawn to the Lord through my own service. I would never want to say that it’s either family or service. It has to be a marriage and a unity of what we commit to the Lord to help build His kingdom and what we’ve committed to build a family. They go together. It’s not one or the other.

The Joy of the Sabbath

Elder Holland

Could I make a plea to our group and to the larger Church that we do everything possible to reclaim the joy of the Sabbath. I don't know that we could do more to enhance family unity in the Church than to enjoy Sunday fully. And we do enjoy it. I enjoy it. As busy as I am, I live for Sunday. But the early scriptural declarations, I'm thinking particularly clear back into the Old Testament, up to and including our own Doctrine and Covenants pronouncements, have been about the joy of the Sabbath, the joy of worship, and the delight of the Sabbath. Surely we can do better at having a Sabbath together. We're going to have to lighten up, in some cases, on these multiple assignments in order that an equally important aspect of gospel living can happen in the home.

Sister Beck

Well, you're speaking too about the Sabbath day and how to enhance that experience. I think oftentimes the busyness and the tasks we throw into the Sabbath to take care of Church work take us away from the real reason why we go to church. We go to renew covenants. If families would prepare for that and focus on that in their Sabbath experiences, start with that, we, I think, would go a long way in blessing our families. We go to partake of the sacrament, and the rest is an add-on to that. That's not a secondary experience; it's the primary reason we go.

Sometimes I think in our busyness our children lose that message because of our rush. And that should be the first thing we teach them.

"Come and Dine"

Elder Holland

In the true spirit of homemaking, in the best and highest sense of that word, I hope we can again sit down at a common dinner table as a family. I think almost any sociologist would say, and they do say, that perhaps nothing is as unifying in the course of a family's week as to eat together at an agreed-upon mealtime.

Sister Beck

A scriptural example that is one of my favorites is in the last chapter of

the Gospel of John, where the Savior at the Sea of Galilee gathered His disciples. He had a fire there and coals and fish, and He said, "Come and dine." Now, that describes quite a bit of preparation. A meal had been prepared—a family meal, you could say—and He invited them to come and dine, not just run in and eat, but come and dine. And then the scripture says, "When they had dined," He then began to teach them that wonderful teaching about feeding His sheep (see John 21:9–15). There is something about eating together and mellowing out and having that feeling there. What would His teaching have looked like if He hadn't prepared the place to teach it?

Perhaps nothing is as unifying in the course of a family's week as to eat together.



He created the setting for that marvelous teaching, and it was a meal-time. I think that wasn't accidental.

Clinging to the Doctrine

Elder Oaks

In all that we have discussed, I think it is fundamental for us to avoid taking the world's models as our guides for parenting and marriage and all of those things that have eternal importance. I'm mindful of the counsel the Apostle Paul gave to the Corinthians. This is recorded in 2 Corinthians, chapter 6. He was speaking to those who had the gospel, and he said, "[Don't be] unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14). He's telling us that we cannot afford to stand side by side, yoked with the world, when we are trying to make these fundamental eternal decisions.

Elder Holland

And it seems to me that if we will cling to the doctrine of the Church—again I keep coming back to the idea around which we started this conversation, the idea of a plan and counsel that our Father in Heaven gave us before we ever came here—if we can cling to the doctrine, we will get through, we will have answers to our prayers, and we will stay founded on true principles.

I've often thought, and I've said to my own children, that those parents who kept going past Chimney Rock and past Martin's Cove (and a few

didn't get farther than that) where those little graves are dotted all across the historic landscape of this Church—they didn't do that for a program, they didn't do it for a social activity, they did it because the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ was in their soul, it was in the marrow of their bones. That's the only way those mothers could bury that baby in a breadbox and move on, saying, "The promised land is out there somewhere. We're going to make it to the valley."

They could say that because of covenants and doctrine and faith and revelation and spirit. If we can keep that in our families and in the Church, maybe a lot of other things start to take care of themselves. Maybe a lot of other less-needed things sort of fall out of the wagon. I'm told those handcarts could only hold so much. Just as our ancestors had to choose what they took, maybe the 21st century will drive us to decide, "What can we put on this handcart?" It's the substance of our soul; it's the stuff right down in the marrow of our bones. We'll have blessed family and Church if we can cling to the revelations.

Elder Oaks

Elder Holland, I think that is a good note to end on.

Elder Holland

Elder Oaks, Sister Beck, Sister Lant, Sister Tanner, on behalf of this entire Church, thank you. Thank you for your time, your love, your service, your own sacrifice, and the convictions you have in your soul about

family life and family love in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thank you. And brothers and sisters, thanks to all of you.

NOTES

1. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 64; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 59; and Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 69.
3. See "Thurber," *Life*, Mar. 14, 1960, 108.
4. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book 8, lines 601–2.
5. M. Russell Ballard, "Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children," *Ensign*, Apr. 1994, 60.
6. See Pearl S. Buck, "At Home in the World," *Marriage and Family Living*, Feb. 1942, 2.
7. L. Tom Perry, "Basic Unit Program," *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 9.
8. See Richard G. Scott, "The Doctrinal Foundation of the Auxiliaries," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2004, 7–8.
9. See M. Russell Ballard, in Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 16–19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 17–20.

A Sanctuary from the World

PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints



Bringing Heaven into Our Homes

My brothers and sisters, it is in a spirit of humility that I conclude this inspiring meeting. Our thoughts have centered on home and family as we have been reminded that “the home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place nor fulfill its essential functions.”¹

As we know, families come in a variety of appearances. Some include father, mother, brothers, and sisters,

while others could be made up of a single parent and children. Still others might consist of but one person.

Whatever the makeup of our particular family, if we follow the guidelines which have been set before us in this meeting, we will draw closer to the Lord and bring more of heaven into our homes.

When Jesus walked the dusty pathways of towns and villages that we now reverently call the Holy Land and taught His disciples by beautiful Galilee, He often spoke in parables, in language the people understood best. Frequently He referred to home building in relationship to the lives of those who listened.

He declared, “Every . . . house divided against itself shall not stand” (Matthew 12:25). Later He cautioned, “Behold, mine house is a house of order . . . and not a house of confusion” (D&C 132:8).

More and more the world is filled with chaos and confusion. Messages surround us which contradict all that

we hold dear—enticing us to turn from that which is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (Articles of Faith 1:13) and embrace the thinking which often prevails outside the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, when our families are united in purpose, and an atmosphere of peace and love prevails, home becomes a sanctuary from the world.

When we are tired or ill or discouraged, how sweet the comfort of being able to turn homeward. We are blessed to belong and to have a place in the family circle.

At times we may become bored or irritated with home and family and familiar surroundings. Such may seem less than glamorous, with a sense of sameness, and other places may sometimes seem more exciting. But when we have sampled much and have wandered far and have seen how fleeting and sometimes superficial a lot of the world is, our gratitude grows for the privilege of being part of something we can count on—home and family and the loyalty of loved ones. We come to know what it means to be bound together by duty, by respect, by belonging. We learn that nothing can fully take the place of the blessed relationship of family life.

All of us remember the home of our childhood. For most of us, our thoughts do not dwell on whether the house was large or small, the neighborhood fashionable or down-trodden. Rather, we delight in the experiences we shared as a family.



As we pray with our families each day, we will help to provide the protection we all so desperately need in today's world.

Margaret Thatcher, when she was prime minister of Great Britain, expressed this profound philosophy: "The family is the building block of society. It is a nursery, a school, a hospital, a leisure centre, a place of refuge and a place of rest. It encompasses the whole of the society. It fashions our beliefs; it is the preparation for the rest of our life."²

May I offer three guidelines to help ensure that our homes will be havens of happiness.

A Pattern of Prayer

First, let us establish a pattern of prayer.

As a people, aren't we grateful that family prayer is not an out-of-date practice with us? There is not a more beautiful sight in all this world than to

see a family praying together. The Lord directed that we have family prayer when He said, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed" (3 Nephi 18:21).

As we pray with our families each day, we will help to provide the protection we all so desperately need in today's world.

A Library of Learning

Second, may our homes be a library of learning.

An essential part of our learning library will be good books. Reading is one of the true pleasures of life. In our age of mass culture, when so much that we encounter is abridged, adapted, adulterated, shredded, and

boiled down, it is mind-easing and mind-inspiring to sit down privately with a congenial book.

James A. Michener, prominent author, suggests: "A nation becomes what its young people read in their youth. Its ideals are fashioned then, its goals strongly determined."

The Lord counseled, "Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118).

Of course, the standard works offer the ultimate library of learning of which I speak. Let us read from them often, both privately and with our families, that we may be enlightened and edified and draw closer to the Lord.

A Legacy of Love

Third, may we enjoy a legacy of love.

Seemingly little lessons of love are observed by children as they silently absorb the examples of their parents. Let us make certain that our examples are worthy of emulation. When our homes carry the legacy of love, we will not receive Jacob's chastisement as recorded in the Book of Mormon: "Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you" (Jacob 2:35).

Rather, may our families and homes be filled with love: love of each other, love of the gospel, love

of our fellowman, and love of our Savior. As a result, heaven will be a little closer here on earth.

May we make of our homes sanctuaries to which our family members will ever want to return.

A Yearning for Home

Some of you may remember the story of a very young boy who was abducted from his parents and home and taken to a village situated far away. Under those conditions the small boy grew to young manhood without really being able to remember his parents or home. As he grew, there came into his heart a yearning to return to parents and home.

But where was home to be found? Where were his mother and father to be discovered? Oh, if only he could remember even their names, his task would be less hopeless. Desperately he sought to recall even a glimpse of his childhood.

One day, like a flash of inspiration, he remembered the sound of a bell which, from the tower atop the village church, pealed its welcome each Sabbath morning. From village to village the young man wandered, ever listening for that familiar bell to chime. Some bells were similar, others far different from the sound he remembered.

At length the weary young man stood one Sunday morning before a church of a typical town. He listened carefully as the bell began to peal. The sound was familiar, unlike any

other he had heard, save that bell which pealed in the memory of his early childhood days. Yes, it was the same bell. Its ring was true. His eyes filled with tears, and his heart rejoiced in gladness. His soul overflowed with gratitude. The young man dropped to his knees, looked upward beyond the bell tower—even toward heaven—and in a prayer of gratitude whispered, “Thanks be to God. I’m home.”

I love the words found in the hymn:

O home belov’d, where’er I wander,
On foreign land or distant sea,
As time rolls by, my heart grows
fonder
And yearns more lovingly for thee!
Tho’ fair be nature’s scenes around
me,
And friends are ever kind and true,
Tho’ joyous mirth and song surround
me,
My heart, my soul still yearn for
you.³

May we ever strive to make of our homes havens of love and peace and happiness, where the Spirit of the Lord would choose to dwell. This is my prayer for all of us, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. David O. McKay, in *Family Home Evening Manual* (1965), iii.
2. In Nicholas Wood, “Thatcher Champions the Family,” *The Times*, May 26, 1988, 24.
3. “O Home Beloved,” *Hymns*, no. 337.

THE FAMILY

A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES
OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

WE, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a

sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

WE WARN that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

WE CALL UPON responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

