

Earthly Families

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Each of us was born to a family here on earth. That family can take on a variety of forms from a single mother to something more elaborate and traditional. While earthly families come in all shapes and sizes, there is one common denominator: a mortal mother and father—it takes both to bring a child into the world.

The Commission of Families on Earth

The Lord has commanded all of his children to “Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God” (D&C 88:119).

The family is the most important entity in the Church of Jesus Christ and one that can last forever in the eternities. The main purpose of the Church is to assist families in achieving this goal, to obtain eternal blessings, and return back to our Heavenly Father. The Church as its organization, leadership, programs and activities are intended to strengthen families and their members and support this purpose and mission for all families on earth.

Children as Part of the Family

Since the time of Adam and Eve, where the commandment was given to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen. 1:28), Heavenly Father has willed that married parents provide tabernacles of flesh for his spirit children. Once in the world, God’s children are then to be raised by parents in a family in collaboration with Heavenly Father in order to bring to pass his purposes and plan. To reach its full potential in the Lord,

a family operates with each member carrying out a set of temporal and spiritual responsibilities. These responsibilities include those given to a father and mother individually, parents together, and children.

The Role of the Father in the Family

A father should fully assume his patriarchal role as the head of the family by exercising his priesthood and taking serious all of the responsibilities associated with these callings with “long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned” (D&C 121:41). Fathers are to lead by example. Fathers lead the family in prayer, scripture reading, attending church meetings, and other activities as prescribed by the Church. It is the father’s responsibility to support the family in all of their temporal needs. This is often accomplished by the father as being the primary income of the home, or at least being a steady and strong contributor of income in conjunction with the mother or others under certain circumstances.

The Role of the Mother in the Family

A mother will not only bring children into the world physically in partnership with God, but is called to teach and care for children in a special and specific role separate from that of the father. The prophet David O McKay taught: “The noblest calling in the world is motherhood. True motherhood is the most beautiful of all arts, the greatest of all professions. She who can paint a masterpiece, or who can write a book that will influence millions, deserves the admiration and plaudits of mankind; but she who rears successfully a family of healthy, beautiful sons and daughters, whose immortal souls will exert an influence throughout the ages long after paintings shall have faded, and books and statues shall have decayed or have been destroyed, deserves the highest honor that man can give, and the choicest blessings of God” (Pathways to Happiness, comp. Llewelyn R. McKay (1957), 116).

Mothers teach the gospel to children through work and play, helping children comprehend life and the world they live in. Mothers are the primary home-makers in creating a loving and nurturing environment within the home, while helping children build strong and appropriate feelings of self-esteem.

The Role of Parents Collectively

As parents there are many things that both fathers and mothers perform within the family together as “equal partners...to provide for the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs of the family” (Gospel Principles, 236). Parents lead and teach their children by example starting with love, thoughtfulness, and kindness towards each other to demonstrate the joys of marriage. Parents together are given serious charge to teach their children the gospel—failing to do so will bring grave consequences upon the heads of the parents (D&C 68:25). Parents are to teach siblings to love one another and to abstain from arguing and quarrelling and to “teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness... to love one another, and to serve one another” (Mosiah 4:14-15). Parents should be kind, loving and respectful of children, but with a spirit of firmness and diligent resolve.

The Role of Children in the Family

A child should share the vision and responsibility of their parents to create a healthy and joyful home. Children should obey all of the commandments of God and contribute to the harmony in a home through cooperation, love, and work. An important commandment for children of all ages is to “Honor thy father and thy mother...” (Exodus 20:12). To honor means to love, respect, and obey. Paul told the Ephesians, “obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (Ephesians 6:1).

The Family is Under Constant Attack

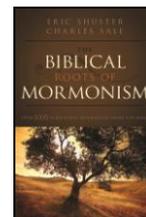
Satan is well aware of the importance of families and the impact they can have on thwarting his plan of evil. Satan desires to destroy families through a variety of means that include temptation, contention, and pride. To remain strong Christian leaders urge families to pray together daily, have family scripture study daily, to hold weekly family home evenings, to serve one another, and to spend time together in wholesome, unifying activities. One must also look for initiatives where the Christian Church supports and nurtures the family. The Family Home Evening program was instituted in 1915, where families were asked to designate one night a week for teaching and sharing time as family. In 1970 the prophet Joseph F. Smith designed Monday night as the official night for Family Home Evening.

Conclusion

Christian leaders should constantly exhort families to pray and read the scriptures together daily. Families should be encouraged to sing together, play together, and do other uplifting things that will bring them closer together and nearer to Jesus Christ. Strengthening families is about applying the principles of the gospel and installing a sustainable routine that will protect children from the influences of Satan and provide practical tools for husbands and wives as couples and as parents. On September 23, 1995, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints published *The Family, a Proclamation to the World*, providing a concise and inspired framework of families on earth and in the eternities. The proclamation is shown on the next page.

About The Sword Series™

The Sword Series™ is a collection of Christian theological essays that are freely distributed for the education and enjoyment of all. These essays later inspired the book *The Biblical Roots of Mormonism* by Eric Shuster (2010). The views expressed in the Sword Series™ are those of Eric Shuster based upon his study and understanding of the scriptures under the influence of the Holy Ghost. All formatted content in this paper is the property of Eric Shuster and may be distributed freely. Any modification of the content of this paper without the express written consent of Eric Shuster is prohibited. Copyright 2008 ©



About the Foundation for Christian Studies

The Foundation for Christian Studies is a non-profit organization dedicated to the study, teaching, and practice of Christianity with an emphasis on the doctrines and principles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormonism).

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.