

E. JEFFREY HILL & DAVID C. DOLLAHITE

7

Faithful *Fathering*

BECOMING a faithful father is an enduring endeavor and a consecrated calling. Of the many names by which he might have chosen to be called, God asked us to call him *Father*. Many prophets have emphasized the preeminence of this sacred calling and have called for fathers to be faithfully involved in the home. As President Thomas S. Monson (2010) instructed priesthood brethren, “The Lord has been very explicit in talking to us fathers. . . . He has indicated that the greatest work we parents can do is performed in our homes” (p. 15). President Gordon B. Hinckley (1998a) said, “What greater thing in all this world can there be than to become the father of a precious child, a son or daughter of God, our Father in Heaven?” (p. 51). President Ezra Taft Benson (1987a) counseled priesthood holders, “Remember your sacred calling as a father in Israel—your most important calling in time and eternity—a calling from which you will never be released” (p. 51). In addition, many respected scholars have reported empirical evidence in academic journals that fathers serve in indispensable roles in the family as “companions, care providers, spouses, protectors, models, moral guides, teachers, and breadwinners” (Lamb, 1997, p. 3).



We believe that being a successful father is not so much about doing extraordinary things as it is about diligently doing many simple faithful things, each of which is doable by the least of us. © Jozef Polc.

Adequately fulfilling the role of faithful fathering may be daunting, but with the help of the Lord, faithful fathers can do difficult things (see Philippians 4:13). We believe that being a successful father is not so much about doing extraordinary things as it is about diligently doing many simple

faithful things, each of which is doable by the least of us. As Alma taught, “By small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6). Faithful fathering is also about striving to do our best even though we are prone to making mistakes. President Monson (2008a) said, “To you who are fathers of boys, . . . I say, *strive* to be the kind of example the boys need” (p. 66, emphasis added). We are convinced that being a faithful father is within the grasp of all faithful men as they persevere and strive to do small and simple, yet significant, things.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the sacred stewardship of being a faithful father as taught in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” and to share a hopeful vision that, with the help of the Lord, fathers can successfully perform these responsibilities. We explore the four key stewardships of faithful fathering emphasized in the seventh paragraph of the family proclamation: presiding, providing, protecting, and partnering (First Presidency, 1995). By magnifying these four sacred stewardships, fathers learn what they need to know, do what they need to do, and become who they need to become in order to bless their children and claim their blessings as rightful heirs of eternal life in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom.

Presiding

By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness. (First Presidency, 1995, p. 102)

The stewardship to preside in love and righteousness rests squarely on the shoulders of a faithful father. President Howard W. Hunter (1994) taught, “Your leadership of the family is your most important and sacred responsibility” (p. 50). Elder L. Tom Perry (2004) explained, “Fathers, by divine decree, you are to preside over your family. . . . You place the family in its proper priority. It’s the part of your life that will endure beyond the grave” (p. 72). Presiding in the family is a calling from which faithful fathers will never be released. Because it is a vital, irreplaceable responsibility, it is critical that its meaning is understood through a gospel lens. In a worldly sense,



The stewardship to preside in love and righteousness rests squarely on the shoulders of a faithful father. © 1989 Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

presiding may imply having power through ambition and achievement in order to rule, coerce, or control. Faithful fathers understand that this paradigm of power and authority comes from the adversary and debilitates their wives and children. Rather, they inseparably associate presiding with attributes of Christ such as humility, selflessness, submission, service, stewardship, and charity. By understanding and magnifying their presiding role in terms of righteous principles, faithful fathers are blessed with the grace and love required to perform the lofty stewardship given them.

To preside in righteousness, faithful fathers should take the lead in family worship within the home, as well as outside the home (such as in chapels and temples). Presiding involves leading the family in prayer, scripture

study, family home evening, Sabbath day activities, and other family devotional activities, as well as leading family members to attend church and go to the temple. Leading out in such worship is an opportunity for fathers to demonstrate by example what their children should prioritize as they face ever-increasing enticements. Such an example can prove more difficult to ignore than instruction alone. Additionally, a father's consistency and diligence can ensure that these crucial activities are neither forgone nor forgotten. Research done with Latter-day Saint families has shown the importance of meaningful religious practices in the home. One qualitative study of stable, active Latter-day Saint families found that spiritual growth, a happier daily life, more focus and direction, and better personal behavior were outcomes of engaging in these religious practices (Loser, Klein, Hill, & Dollahite, 2008; Loser, Hill, Klein, & Dollahite, 2009).

Research has also shown how such religious beliefs and practices can be especially helpful in promoting responsible and involved fathering and in teaching fathers how to preside in the home. For example, in-depth interviews of married fathers, many of whom were Latter-day Saints, found that these men feel a strong connection with their children when guiding them spiritually (Brotherson, Dollahite, & Hawkins, 2005; Hill et al., 2008). Narratives of personal experiences of Latter-day Saint fathers of children with special needs suggest that their religious beliefs provide them with a powerful framework that inspires and guides their fathering behaviors (Dollahite, 2003; Olson, Dollahite, & White, 2002; Marks & Dollahite, 2001; Dollahite, Marks, & Olson, 1998). The fathers' belief that family relationships can be perpetuated beyond the grave creates an expectation of an eternal relationship with their children that helps them commit to and care for their children, even in challenging times.

Additional research conducted with Christian, Jewish, and Muslim families demonstrates the important presiding role of fathers in the religious lives of their families (Marks & Dollahite, 2007; Dollahite & Thatcher, 2008; Dollahite & Marks, 2009). Whether it is a Jewish father blessing his children at the Sabbath table, a Catholic father taking his family to mass, a Muslim

father leading his family in daily prayers, or a Latter-day Saint father gathering his family for scripture study, presiding in love and righteousness requires a deep and abiding commitment to the well-being of one's family.

Presiding in love requires faithful fathers to follow the example of their Heavenly Father. Each recorded time Heavenly Father's voice has been heard, he referred to his Son as "my beloved Son" and said that he was "well pleased" with him (Matthew 3:16–17; Matthew 17:5; 3 Nephi 11:7; Joseph Smith—History 1:17). This is a divine pattern that all faithful fathers can follow. Unfortunately, some children, teens, and young adults rarely hear the words "I love you," "I am pleased with you," or "I am proud of you" from their fathers. Faithful fathers will frequently communicate sincere and uplifting messages, verbally, in writing, and by their actions to show that they love their children and are pleased with them. It is helpful if children hear specific, accurate, and positive messages about their actions from their fathers. This can be difficult, especially for those who did not hear these messages from their own fathers. It is difficult, but it can be done.

As one who presides, a faithful father helps his children capture a vision of what the Lord expects for them. One of the best ways to do this is to give fathers' blessings on a regular basis. Some fathers have the tradition of blessing their children before each school year or before other special occasions. One father shared this example:

On the Saturday before the first fast Sunday after the birthday, I take the birthday child out on a one-on-one date. We eat wherever she chooses and we talk about the highlights of the year just past. Then we converse about the upcoming year and consider special hopes, needs, and wants. After returning home from the meal, we start our fast, kneeling with the rest of the family in prayer and asking for the Lord's Spirit to be with us. The next day (fast Sunday), before breaking our fast, I give that child a blessing for the coming year. (Hill & Dollahite, 2005, p. 168)



Providing fathers' blessings is one way a faithful father can help his children capture the vision of what the Lord expects of them. Craig Dimond, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

As part of their stewardship to preside, fathers are responsible to organize the everyday activities of the home so that family members are brought together frequently to be nourished physically and spiritually. Elder Perry (2004) taught, "You preside at the meal table, at family prayer. You preside at family home evening; and as guided by the Spirit of the Lord, you see that your children are taught correct principles" (p. 71). A father's presence and participation in these activities unifies and strengthens his family. Faithful fathers recognize they cannot be replaced in this stewardship and recognize that in such moments the most meaningful aspects of family life can be experienced. Author Robert Bellah (1991) wrote, "The family meal . . .

is the chief family celebration, even a family sacrament” (p. 260). Research on highly religious Christian, Muslim, and Jewish parents and their adolescent children shows that one of the most important things a father can do is to engage his teenaged children in “youth-centered” religious conversations in which the father is particularly attentive to the needs, interests, and concerns of his child (Dollahite & Thatcher, 2008). Research on religiously diverse adolescents also demonstrates the importance of establishing and maintaining a strong relationship with one’s teenage child in helping the youth to develop a strong commitment to his or her religious identity (Layton, Dollahite, & Hardy, 2011). For example, one Protestant young man recognized that his relationship with God the Father could be understood by relating it to his relationship with his parents (p. 403). A Muslim young woman valued fulfilling her duty to her religion as a way to help her parents fulfill theirs (p. 403–404).

Faithful fathers who serve as righteous priesthood holders are often called to preside in places besides the home. These fathers may find it difficult to find adequate time to fulfill both their ecclesiastical priesthood duties and their family responsibilities. While Church callings are important and should be a high priority, the work of a father is the greatest calling any man can ever have. The scriptures teach us an important lesson. The only time the Lord used the word *rebuke* to chasten the Prophet Joseph Smith was when Joseph failed to teach his children—even though it was at a time of compelling Church responsibilities (see D&C 93:47–48). If the head of the dispensation of the fullness of times was expected to make time for his fathering, fathers now ought to do the same.

Author George Durrant (1976) provides a perspective that serving one’s family, even wholesome recreation, is Church work:

While I was mission president, I would quite often resolve that it was again time for some more high-priority Church work. Then [our family] would all go to an amusement park. . . . I just walked around the park with a smile on my face, holding hands with my

children, eating all the cotton candy I could stand. Once in a while, a thought would enter my mind: “Hey, you’re the mission president. You’d better get back to the office.” But then I’d smile again and say to myself, “Well, I’m doing my Church work here. I’m with my children and my wife. We’re having a fun day and tonight I’ll be able to write in my journal that I did six hours of glorious Church work today. (p. 29)

As a faithful father learns to harmonize Church and paternal responsibilities, he can also reach out and assume a fathering role for others of God’s children. The Lord has said, “Wherefore, be faithful; . . . succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees” (D&C 81:5). Home teaching is a formal way to be a father figure, and there are many other informal settings as well. These fathers enrich the lives of others while being an example of service to their own children. When a father has a chance to home teach with his sons, he should take full advantage of the great blessing of being able to fulfill priesthood and fatherhood duties at the same time. During these few years of service while his son is a teacher and priest, he has the chance to build spiritual and emotional bonds with his son through doing the Lord’s work together. Great care should be given to preparation for the visits, during which the father can lovingly and positively teach his son the doctrines of the priesthood and the joy of priesthood service. He can build the son’s skills and confidence in home teaching and gospel-based service. The father should regularly express his love for and pride in his son for taking his priesthood duties seriously and his joy in being able to do this great service together.

With an appropriate vision of presiding in terms of stewardship, love, and service, faithful fathers are blessed to play a critical role within the family unit. A father’s presiding role entails taking the lead in family worship within the home, expressing love through words and actions, using the power of the priesthood in the home, encouraging togetherness in daily family activities, and balancing and prioritizing the many demands he faces. When fathers

act with accountability for these uniting rituals, they strengthen the bonds with their children. Their leadership, love, and attentiveness are special blessings to both immediate family members and others for whom they serve as a father figure and friend.

Providing

By divine design, fathers are . . . responsible to provide the necessities of life. (First Presidency, 1995, p. 102)

Faithful fathers are responsible to provide the necessities of life for their families. Providing the necessities of life involves providing income and living providently through the wise use of resources. President Hinckley (1998a) emphasized the importance of providing adequately: “It is your primary obligation to provide for your family” (p. 50). Recognizing that unique challenges or circumstances may conflict with this aspect of a father’s role, President Howard W. Hunter (1994) taught, “You [fathers] have the responsibility, unless disabled, to provide temporal support for your wife and children” (p. 51).

Faithful fathers are responsible not only for providing an income but also for establishing sound financial management at home. President Hinckley (1998b) taught, “I urge you to be modest in your expenditures; discipline yourselves in your purchases to avoid debt to the extent possible. Pay off debt as quickly as you can, and free yourselves from bondage” (p. 54). Fathers should also be faithful tithe payers and should wisely use excess funds on establishing savings and providing for the poor and needy. When fathers employ this counsel to live providently, they provide security for their family. They also help their children learn self-discipline and the difference between wants and needs. Fathers should work as partners with their wives in tending to financial matters. In this joint responsibility, husband and wife should be respectful to each other, even when disagreements may arise.

Fathers must also teach their children principles of providing. President Benson (1987) said, “Teach your children to work . . . Establishing mission



Faithful fathers are responsible to provide the necessities of life for their families. Craig Dimond, © 2001 Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

funds and education funds for your children shows them what Dad considers to be important” (p. 51). Fathers can teach these principles by being an example of hard work and provident living as well as by involving their

children appropriately in financial decision-making. They will thus teach their children to budget, save, and share.

One of the authors of this chapter gives the following example:

A few years ago, one source of income for the family budget unexpectedly dried up and we found ourselves with a \$750 per month budget shortfall. I felt impressed to bring this problem to our family council to resolve. We held a family council and listed on a white board all of the ways we could think of to reduce our spending. Some of these included: increase the thermostat by five degrees in the summer and reduce it by five degrees in the winter, eliminate cable television, reduce or eliminate cell phones, eliminate summer camps, stop taking the newspaper, go on a camping vacation instead of staying in hotels, reduce the number of times we go out to eat, plan better where we drive so we reduce mileage on the cars, etc. Everyone then created a priority list of the cuts they would select. After this each person got to talk about their list and everyone could make modifications. We then tallied up the responses and decided on a new budget for the family with the agreed-upon cuts. I believe this taught our children many good lessons. The only thing I didn't like about it was that everyone wanted to stop the newspaper except for me. However, I graciously agreed to the cut on the condition that I could still buy the newspaper on occasion from the newsstand. (Hill, 2012)

Providing the necessities of life, however, should not be used as justification for spending excessive time and energy at work simply to provide a high standard of living. Sometimes hopes of achieving greater success, a higher salary, or a more powerful title lure men to spend more time in the workplace than in the home. One of the most important aspects of providing for one's children is to bestow upon them enough paternal time and enthusiastic involvement.



To find time for their children, fathers must make spending time with them a high priority. This usually involves a continual effort for fathers not to allow their careers or jobs to deplete their time and energy and turn attention away from their children.
© Tyler Olson.

It is said that children spell *love* “t-i-m-e.” To find time for their children, fathers must make spending time with them a high priority. This usually involves a continual effort for fathers not to allow their careers or jobs to deplete their time and energy and turn attention away from their children. One father learned the importance of putting family first when he chose to stay at work a little later than he had planned to finish up a relatively unimportant project. Traffic was heavier than expected, so he was late for his son’s first swim meet. He arrived just as his son was getting out of the water. He had missed it! He reflected, “If this had been an important business meeting I would have given myself more lead time.” He vowed he would never again let his job keep him from missing important events in his child’s

life (Hill, 1991). President Monson (2005) highlighted this point as he spoke to fathers, “I would encourage you to be available to your children. I have heard it said that no man, as death approaches, has ever declared that he wished he had spent more time at the office” (p. 20).

President Monson goes on to quote a powerful article entitled “A Day at the Beach” by Arthur Gordon.

When I was around thirteen and my brother ten, Father had promised to take us to the circus. But at lunchtime there was a phone call; some urgent business required his attention downtown. We braced ourselves for disappointment. Then we heard him say, “No, I won’t be down. It’ll have to wait.” When he came back to the table, Mother smiled [and said,] “The circus keeps coming back, you know.”

“I know,” said Father. “But childhood doesn’t.” (p. 21)

Author George Durrant (1976) captured the relative importance of work and family:

At your place of work, you are needed. But, sad as it may seem, there has never been a man who, when he leaves his daily job or when he retires, is not adequately replaced. As one man said, “I felt that if I left the company, it would take a month or so and then I’d be replaced and they wouldn’t even miss me. But,” he said, “I was wrong. It only took a week.” . . . But there is a place where a man has no substitute. Not after a month or a year or a generation. That is the place where they call him “Father.” When he leaves home [for work], he’s missed. And until he returns, there will be an empty, unfilled space in the hearts of his family. (p. 15)

Providing the necessities of life is a great responsibility, and the Lord expects fathers to ensure the temporal security of their families. This role

can be a great burden, especially during challenging economic times and conflicting responsibilities. However, fathers should not be discouraged. Through faithful living and with the help of their wives and the Lord, fathers can do it. The Lord recognizes the sacrifice such service requires and blesses fathers as they diligently do their best.

Protecting

By divine design fathers . . . are responsible to provide . . . protection for their families. (First Presidency, 1995, p. 102)

Protecting is closely related to presiding and providing. Both spiritual and temporal safety are elements of protection. President Hunter (1994) taught, “A righteous father protects his children with his time and presence in their social, educational, and spiritual activities and responsibilities” (p. 51). Elder Perry (2003) added, “We need to make our homes a place of refuge from the storm, which is increasing in intensity all about us. Even if the smallest openings are left unattended, negative influences can penetrate the very walls of our homes” (p. 40). Protection involves guarding the home from spiritually detrimental influences, providing emotional support, ensuring a physically safe environment, appropriately expressing physical affection, and teaching family preparedness.

We live in a world in which moral dangers confront children very early in life. Faithful fathers should actively protect their children by helping them make wise choices about the literature they read, the media they watch, and the friendships they establish. President Hinckley (2002) wrote, “Guard your homes. How foolish it seems to install bars and bolts and electronic devices against thieves and molesters while more insidious intruders stealthily enter and despoil” (p. 2–6).

Children also need emotional protection, especially during times of crisis. Research shows that children feel deep security and comfort from regular family routines in such times (Loser, Hill, Klein, & Dollahite, 2009). Consistent family meals, bedtime rituals, family recreation, and



Fathers are responsible to provide spiritual protection for their children by helping them understand and make wise choices about the media they watch, the literature they read, and the friends they associate with. Craig W. Dimond, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

other comforting consistencies can have a reassuring and stabilizing effect on children. Religious traditions and rituals such as regular prayer, church attendance, and other religious activities and devotions can be especially comforting in these increasingly dangerous and anxiety-provoking times.

Faithful fathers protect their children by setting clear boundaries about what is and is not allowed in the home. It is especially important that fathers are good examples in this respect. When the father of the home shuns evil and keeps his thoughts, words, and actions pure, his children will learn to do the same. It is helpful for parents to watch media with their children and turn it off with an explanation when it violates the standards of the home. Faithful fathers can also provide both spiritual and physical protection by surveying the environment and preparing their children ahead of time to meet known dangers.

Physical protection is also important. A faithful father, along with his wife, protects his family by wisely selecting a safe neighborhood in which to locate their home. The father can also take a protective lead by insisting upon seat belt use, installing smoke alarms, locking up dangerous chemicals, and seeing that bike helmets are worn. Appropriate physical affection between fathers and children helps with feelings of security. Hugging, holding hands, and sitting close give children a tangible sense of security that words alone cannot provide. Research confirms that children receive emotional and psychological benefits from meaningful physical affection from parents in particular (Blackwell, 2000).

While appropriate touch is important for healthy emotional and psychological development, the effects of inappropriate touching can be devastating. All forms of abuse are harmful to the development of the heart, mind, and relationship. Research among a sample of college students and their dating partners revealed that memories of childhood emotional abuse was negatively associated with relationship quality (Riggs, Cusimano, & Benson, 2011). It has also been found among a random sample of 2,225 women in a New Zealand community that a background with any type of abuse as a child was related to increased sexual difficulties, psychopathology, lower

self-esteem, and interpersonal problems (Mullen et al., 1996). The Lord condemns any man who would abuse his children. President Hinckley (1998c) taught, “No man who abuses his wife or children is worthy to be a member in good standing in this Church” (p. 72). Spiritual abuse is another form of abuse that is often overlooked. It occurs when a man misuses his priesthood authority to unrighteously exert power and control over his wife or children. The Lord’s warning in D&C 121:37 applies well to fathers: “[When] they . . . exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.” A faithful father knows how to control his temper and never threatens his wife or children with actions, words, or thoughts. Where destructive abuse has occurred, the healing power of the Atonement can be applied through the difficult but achievable road of repentance, forgiveness, and healing.

Family preparedness is an additional way to protect family during times of need. Fathers should take the lead in ensuring that principles of preparedness are taught and lived in their families. President Monson (2008b) counseled, “We urge all Latter-day Saints to be prudent in their planning, to be conservative in their living, and to avoid excessive or unnecessary debt” (p. 61). President Hinckley (1998b) also warned Latter-day Saints that financial prosperity can be fleeting and has encouraged them to be cautious and prepared (pp. 52–53). For many decades, Church leaders have regularly counseled members to get out of debt, live modestly, and have a savings they can subsist on during a financial crisis. By heeding these prophetic warnings, fathers can protect their children from unnecessary fear, pain, and lack of opportunity.

Finally, a way for a faithful father to offer protection is to formally dedicate his home as a place of safety. The *Church Handbook of Instructions* (2010) helps us understand this process:

Church members may dedicate their homes as sacred edifices where the Holy Spirit can reside and where family members can worship,

find safety from the world, grow spiritually, and prepare for eternal family relationships. Homes need not be free of debt to be dedicated. Unlike Church buildings, homes are not consecrated to the Lord. . . . [To dedicate a home], a family might gather and offer a prayer that includes the elements mentioned [above] and other words as the Spirit directs. (pp. 176–77)

Some fathers have transcribed their dedicatory prayer and displayed it in a prominent place as a reminder that their home is the Lord's. Remembering that the home has been dedicated can be a comfort to those living within its walls, and a reminder of what should and should not happen there. When the standards of the home are kept consistent with the aims and desires expressed in a dedicatory prayer, the adversary's attacks on the home can be thwarted and it can become a haven of growth, learning, and joy.

As the adversary increasingly seeks to destroy the good work accomplished in the home, the duty to protect is ever more important and challenging. Fathers can provide protection by being available to their children physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Through their actions they ensure physical safety, regulate entertainment, and practice family preparedness. Finally, a father may offer a dedicatory prayer on the home that can serve as a blanket of protection for the family, providing a vision for unity, purity, and peace among its members.

Partnering

In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. (First Presidency, 1995, p.102)

In studying family proclamation–based principles of faithful fathering, we may be tempted to limit our focus to the three P's, preside, provide, and protect. However, the stewardship to partner with one's eternal companion is equally—if not more—important. Partnership in marriage means to be united in decision-making, to fully contribute and invite full contribution

in both spiritual and temporal work in the home, and to bear and nurture children together as co-creators with God. President Boyd K. Packer (1998) stated, “However much priesthood power and authority the men may possess—however much wisdom and experience they may accumulate—the safety of the family, the integrity of the doctrine, the ordinances, the covenants, indeed the future of the Church, rests equally on the women. . . . No man achieves the supernal exalting status of worthy fatherhood except as a gift from his wife” (p. 73). With a vision of being united eternally as a family, fathers and mothers can and should help one another as companions in fulfilling their divinely appointed responsibilities.

For a man acting alone, the responsibility to be a faithful father may seem difficult, burdensome, and even overwhelming. “Fortunately, you are not required to preside and judge, and act without counsel, without assistance. You have a wife—a companion, a counselor, a partner, a helpmeet, a friend” (Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, 2002, p. 15). With a helpmeet to help bear this burden, the stewardship of being a faithful father may become light (see Mosiah 18:8).

The partnership of Joseph Smith with his wife Emma is an extraordinary illustration of the grand vision of equal partnership. Jesse Crosby (as cited in Andrus & Andrus, 1999), an early Latter-day Saint, observed this about Joseph Smith: “Some of the home habits of the Prophet—such as building kitchen fires, carrying out ashes, carrying in wood and water, assisting in the care of children, etc.—were not in accord with my idea of a great man’s self-respect.” So Brother Crosby gave Joseph what he called “corrective advice,” telling him that such work was “too terrible a humiliation, for you who are the head, and you should not do it.” Joseph responded, “If there be humiliation in a man’s house, who but the head of that house should or could bear that humiliation?” (pp. 163–64). As a father, Joseph partnered with Emma in raising the children and in the everyday work of the home.

In keeping with the Prophet’s example, President Packer (1989) taught, “There is no task, however menial, connected with the care of babies, the nurturing of children, or with the maintenance of the home that is not [a



*Faithful fathers partner with their wives in all aspects of their marriage. Craig Dimond,
© Intellectual Reserve, Inc.*



Perhaps partnering in parenting is the greatest responsibility and aspiration of all.
© Kzenon.

husband's] equal obligation" (p. 75). And President Hinckley (1992) said, "Marriage, in its truest sense, is a partnership of equals, with neither exercising dominion over the other, but, rather, with each encouraging and assisting the other in whatever responsibilities and aspirations he or she might have" (p. 6). Perhaps partnering in parenting is the greatest responsibility and aspiration of all. In this regard, fathers have a tremendously positive impact on children simply through expressing love and honor for their mother. President Hunter (1994) taught, "one of the greatest things a father can do for his children is to love their mother" (p. 50). A father can show his love for his wife by expressing appreciation to her, supporting her in her individual endeavors, and assisting her in every way possible. Fathers should both offer loving service and accept it as a gift from their wives in a spirit of humility and sacrifice. Faithful fathers seek help from their wives in their own stewardships to preside over their families in love and righteousness. President Hunter (1994) wrote, "Presiding in righteousness necessitates a shared responsibility between husband and wife; together you act with knowledge and participation in all family matters. For a man to operate independent of or without regard to the feelings and counsel of his wife in governing the family is to exercise unrighteous dominion" (p. 51). Shared family leadership means deciding all important matters together in humility. Decisions are made in a humble spirit of honoring agency, facilitating growth, bridging conflicts, forgiving, and healing. No decision of substance should be made except by consensus.

Faithful fathers assist their wives in nurturing and caring for their children as well as in the daily maintenance of the home. President Benson (1987) wrote, "Remember, brethren . . . to help with the dishes, change diapers, get up with a crying child in the night, and leave the television or the newspaper to help with the dinner. Those are the quiet ways we say, 'I love you' with our actions. They bring rich dividends" (p. 50). Scholarly research reveals that when the father is more involved in housework and childcare, both husbands and wives rate their intimate relationship as more satisfying (Coltrane, 2003).

Faithful fathers are also sacred partners in procreation. President Benson (1987b) wrote, “Husbands and wives, as co-creators, should eagerly and prayerfully invite children into their homes. Then, as each child joins their family circle, they can gratefully exclaim, as did Hannah, ‘For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him’ (1 Samuel 1:27).”

Fathers must join with their partners in teaching their children the proper principles of procreation. President Hinckley (1996) wrote, “Let parents teach their children the sanctity of sex, that the gift of creating life is sacred, that the impulses that burn within us can be and must be disciplined and restrained if there is to be happiness, peace, and goodness” (p. 7).

While the assistance of a helpmeet is invaluable, there are circumstances in which a father is required to take on both the roles of nurturing and providing. Whether through death, disability, divorce, or other circumstances, a growing number of men are single parents. While they may feel overwhelmed, single fathers are fully capable of raising a righteous family with the Lord’s help.

When fathers seek the assistance of their wives in presiding, providing, and protecting, and provide assistance to their wives in nurturing, the partnership thus created is a powerful strength in the home. Fathers should be full partners in day-to-day labors in the home as well as in the nurturing of their children. As they are fully invested in the home, they will reap great blessings of eternal relationships that can never be severed.

Summary

Year in and year out, faithful fathers do the everyday tasks, founded upon the gospel of Jesus Christ, that are necessary to establish, maintain, and strengthen their families. They endure to the end of their paternal stewardship in mortality and are then crowned with the glory of an eternal posterity. A faithful father does his best to fulfill his stewardships of presiding, providing, protecting, and partnering. Becoming a faithful father



Helping around the house is one way to say, “I love you” with your actions. Mark A. Philbrick. © 2013 BYU Photo.

is of transcendent importance. President Hinckley (2004) taught, “When life is over and you look back, you will not take any money with you. The only thing that will give you satisfaction is what you see in the lives of your children, [and] you will have an understanding that comes of the gospel that these children are also our Father in Heaven’s children” (“Rear Children,” para. 1).

The process of becoming a faithful father is, in essence, the process of becoming like God. It is an apprenticeship. As a man seeks God’s help to

preside, provide, protect, and partner in righteousness, he receives divine direction. Just as an apprentice learns line upon line from his master, so faithful fathers can look to God for guidance, and they too will learn. We believe that becoming a faithful father is within the grasp of every faithful man. Remember, “the most important of the Lord’s work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes” (Lee, 1974, p. 255).

References

- Andrus, H. L., & Andrus, H. M. (1999). *They knew the Prophet: Personal accounts from over 100 people who knew Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book.
- Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R., Swidler, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1991). *The good society*. New York: Vintage.
- Benson, E. T. (1987a, November). To the fathers in Israel, *Ensign*, 17(11), 48–51.
- Benson, E. T. (1987b). To the mothers in Zion. Retrieved from <http://www.byu.edu/fc/ee/w_etb87.htm>
- Blackwell, P. L. (2000, July). The influence of touch on child development: Implications for intervention. *Infants and Young Children*, 13(1), 25–39.
- Brotherson, S. E., Dollahite, D. C., & Hawkins, A. J. (2005, Winter). Generative fathering and the dynamics of connection between fathers and their children. *Fathering*, 3(1), 1–28.
- Coltrane, S. (2003). Fathering: paradoxes, contradictions, and dilemmas. Paper presented at the second annual Work and Family Conference held at Boston, Massachusetts. Retrieved from http://www.powershow.com/view/c0d7-ZTE3Y/Fathering_Paradoxes_Contradictions_and_Dilemmas_powerpoint_ppt_presentation
- Dollahite, D. C. (2003, March). Fathering for eternity: Generative spirituality in Latter-day Saint fathers of children with special needs. *Review of Religious Research*, 44(3), 237–251.
- Dollahite, D. C., & Marks, L. D. (2009, June). A conceptual model of family and religious processes in highly religious families. *Review of Religious Research*, 50(4), 373–391.

- Dollahite, D. C., Marks, L. D., & Olson, M. M. (1998, Fall). Faithful fathering in trying times: Religious beliefs and practices of Latter-day Saint fathers of children with special needs. *Journal of Men's Studies*, 7(1), 71–93.
- Dollahite, D. C. & Thatcher, J. Y. (2008, September). Talking about religion: How religious youth and parents discuss their faith. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 23(5), 611–641.
- Durrant, G. D. (1976). *Love at home starring Father*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft.
- First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles (1995). The family: A proclamation to the world. *Ensign*, 25(11), 102.
- Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010). Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 176–177.
- Hill, E. J. (2012). Lecture in SFL 100, Strengthening marriages and families, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
- Hill, E. J., & Dollahite, D. C. (2005). Faithful fathering. In C. Hart, L. D. Newell, E. Walton, & D. C. Dollahite (Eds.). *Helping and healing our families: Principles and practices inspired by "The family: A proclamation to the world"* (pp. 167–171). Salt Lake City: Deseret Book.
- Hill, E. J., Whyte, R. O., Jacob, J. I., Blanchard, V. I., Duncan, S., Dollahite, D. C., & Wadsworth, L. (2008). Fathers' religious and family involvement at home: Work and family outcomes. *The Open Family Studies Journal*, 1, 56–65.
- Hill, T. (1991). Please, put first things first. *DADS Newsletter*, 9, 5.
- Hinckley, G. B. (1992, August). I believe. *Ensign*, 22(8), 6.
- Hinckley, G. B. (1996, September). Four simple things to help our families and our nations. *Ensign*, 26(9). 2–8.
- Hinckley, G. B. (1998a, May). Living worthy of the girl you will someday marry. *Ensign*, 28(5).
- Hinckley, G. B. (1998b, November). To the boys and to the men. *Ensign*, 28(11), 51–54.
- Hinckley, G. B. (1998c, November). What are people asking about us. *Ensign*, 28(11), 70–72.
- Hinckley, G. B. (2002, January). Overpowering the Goliaths in our lives. *Ensign*, 32(1), 2–6.

- Hinckley, G. B. (2004, January 3). Church news: Messages of inspiration from President Hinckley. Available at <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/print/44907/Messages-of-inspiration-from-President-Hinckley.html>
- Hunter, H. W. (1994, November). Being a righteous husband and father. *Ensign*, 24(11), 49–51.
- Lamb, M. E. (1997). Fathers and child development: An introductory overview and guide. In M. E. Lamb (Ed.). *The role of the father in child development* (3rd ed., pp. 1–18). New York: Wiley.
- Layton, E., Dollahite, D. C., & Hardy, S. A. (2011). Anchors of religious commitment in adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 26(3), 381–413.
- Lee, H. B. (1974). *Stand ye in holy places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book.
- Loser, R. W., Hill, E. J., Klein, S. R., & Dollahite, D. C. (2009). Perceived benefits of religious rituals in the Latter-day Saint home. *Review of Religious Research*, 50(3), 345–362.
- Loser, R. W., Klein, S. R., Hill, E. J., & Dollahite, D. C. (2008, September). Religion and the daily lives of LDS families: An ecological perspective. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 37(1), 52–70.
- Marks, L. D., & Dollahite, D. C. (2001). Religion, relationships, and responsible fathering in Latter-day Saint families of children with special needs. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 18(5), 625–650.
- Marks, L. D., & Dollahite, D. C. (2007). Fathering and religious contexts: Why religion makes a difference to fathers and their children. In S. E. Brotherson, & J. M. White (Eds.). *Why Fathers Count* (pp. 335–351). Harriman, TN: Men's Studies Press.
- Monson, T. S. (2005, May). Constant truths for changing times. *Ensign*, 35(5), 20–21.
- Monson, T. S. (2008a, May). Examples of righteousness. *Ensign*, 38(5), 66.
- Monson, T. S. (2008b, November). To learn, to do, to be. *Ensign*, 38(11).
- Monson, T. S. (2010, October). Blessings of the temple. *Ensign*, 40(10), 15.
- Mullen, P. E., Martin, J. L., Anderson, J. C., Romans, S. E., & Herbison, G. P. (1996). The long-term impact of the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of children: A community study. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 20(1), 7–21.

- Olson, M. M., Dollahite, D. C., & White, M. B. (2002). Involved fathering of children with special needs: relationships and religion as resources. *Journal of Religion, Disability, & Health*, 6(1), 47–73.
- Packer, B. K. (1989, July). A tribute to women. *Ensign*, 19(7), 75.
- Packer, B. K. (1998). The Relief Society. *Ensign*, 28(5), 72–74.
- Perry, L. T. (2003). The importance of the family. *Ensign*, 33(5), 40.
- Perry, L. T. (2004, May). Fatherhood, an eternal calling. *Ensign*, 34(5), 69–72.
- Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. (2002, June). Father, consider your ways. *Ensign*, 32(6), 12–16.
- Riggs, S. A., Cusimano, A. M., & Benson, K. M. (2011). Childhood emotional abuse and attachment processes in the dyadic adjustment of dating couples. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 58(1), 126–138.