

# *Becoming a Righteous Husband and Father—Man's Eternal Roles*

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Righteousness is a state of being. When we keep the laws and ordinances of the Gospel we become righteous.

What does Heavenly Father expect of us? “Be ye therefore perfect” (3 Nephi 12:48). Overwhelming? Not if we repent perfectly and make husband and father our highest priority. Remember the Lord said, “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19). This is a sacred role and responsibility.

1. Become one with your wife.
  - One in all things—purpose, cause, and action.
  - The Savior prayed that the disciples might be one.
    - John 17:21
    - D&C 35:27
  - Oneness—Unite with the Lord and with your mate in His purpose (immortality and eternal life of man—especially your own family), cause (To bless the entire human family in all that we do), and to spread the gospel to the entire world.
  - Remember, “if ye are not one ye are not mine,” the Lord reminds us.
    - D&C 38:27
  - We make covenants with our Heavenly Father, our Savior, and each other. If we are faithful, the Holy Spirit of Promise will seal us for time and all eternity. We must have true fidelity and honor in our relationship.
2. Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands—Eph. 5:22–23.
  - Rule or preside over—Moses 4:22

- This causes problems because of lack of understanding. You see, husbands are to be to their wives as Christ is to the Church.
- **Story—Temple Sealing**
- “Love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church” (Eph. 5:25).
- What did Christ do?
  - Loved us, atoned for our sins, served, nurtured, and gave us the gospel and Kingdom of God, priesthood, Plan of Happiness, simply everything.
- We are to be even as He is—3 Nephi 27:27.
  - Leaders are servants. They teach by the Spirit; they nurture; they help others be their best; they are saviors to their wife and family; they do things for them that they cannot do for themselves (vicarious service).

3. Our attitude about relationships:

Never, no, never forget these words of a living prophet: “If you will make your first concern the comfort, the well-being and the happiness of your companion, sublimating any personal concern to that loftier goal, you will be happy, and your marriage will go on through eternity.” —President Hinckley

A husband and wife should always be gracious and kind to each other. Neither of them should ever say or do anything to hurt the feelings of the other. Deepest love and affection should be shown toward each other continuously. At all times each should make a conscious effort to do everything possible to bring joy and happiness into the life of the other. A husband should show and express appreciation for the accomplishments of his mate, and she should do likewise. We should look for ways to build each other up and make each other happy. Neither the husband nor the wife should let a day pass without expressing love for the other. We should not assume that our mate knows and that it is not necessary to express it. At one time I had the honor of having President Joseph Fielding Smith and his beloved wife, Jessie, attend a conference to which I had been assigned. In her talk Sister Smith said: “I never let a day go by without telling my husband that I love him, and he never lets a day go by without telling me.”

Under these circumstances, God’s blessings will shower down from heaven upon the married couple and especially for those married by the power of the priesthood in the house of the Lord. The power from on high will bind the love and marriage of such couples for eternity. —Milton R. Hunter

4. Your top priority:

- Calling as a mission president—**Story—Elder Maxwell**
- In 1965, President David O. McKay made the following statement to a group of Church employees:

Let me assure you, Brethren, that some day you will have a personal priesthood interview with the Savior himself. If you are interested, I will tell you the order in which he will ask you to account for your earthly responsibilities.

First, he will request an accountability report about your relationship with your wife. Have you actively been engaged in making her happy and ensuring that her needs have been met as an individual?

Second, he will want an accountability report about each of your children individually. He will not attempt to have this for simply a family stewardship but will request information about your relationship to each and every child.

Third, he will want to know what you personally have done with the talents you were given in the preexistence.

Fourth, he will want a summary of your activity in your Church assignments. He will not be necessarily interested in what assignments you have had, for in his eyes the home teacher and a mission president are probably equals, but he will request a summary of how you have been of service to your fellow man in your Church assignments.

Fifth, he will have no interest in how you earned your living but if you were honest in all your dealings.

Sixth, he will ask for an accountability on what you have done to contribute in a positive manner to your community, state, country, and the world” (Reported by Cloyd Hofheins in a talk to the Seventies Quorum of Provo Utah Oak Hills Stake, May 16, 1982).

5. Share role—counsel together.

I desire to emphasize this. I want the young men of Zion to realize that this institution of marriage is not a man-made institution. It is of God. It is honorable, and no man who is of marriageable age is living his religion who remains single. It is not simply devised for the convenience alone of man, to suit his own notions, and his own ideas; to marry and then divorce; to adopt and then to discard, just as he pleases. There are great consequences connected with it, consequences which reach beyond this present time into all eternity; for thereby souls are begotten into the world, and men and women obtain their being in the world. Marriage is the preserver of the human race. Without it, the purposes of God would be frustrated; virtue would be destroyed to give place to vice and corruption, and the earth would be void and empty.

—Joseph F. Smith

6. Unrealized expectations often yield negative response.

- **Story—Bill Dyer**
  - Key is to communicate:
  - Things you expect
  - Things you need help with
  - Things to share
  - How you say it makes all the difference—**Story of Pat and the garbage**

7. What do many wives expect or hope for from you?

- To be sensitive—not necessarily do all things
  - **Story of Superman**
- To be cherished; express feelings; 1, 2, 3; always be encouraging
- Show and demonstrate your love consistently and at all times
- Communicate totally and completely.

- The most difficult communication in the world is often between husband and wife. A man walked into a lawyer's office to file for divorce. The lawyer asked him to sit down; he got out his pencil and yellow pad and asked the man some questions.

“Do you have grounds?” he inquired.

“Yes,” he replied, “about three-quarters of an acre.”

The lawyer paused for a moment, then asked, “Do you have a grudge?”

“No,” the man quickly answered, “but we do have a lovely carport.”

Again the lawyer paused, “Does she beat you up in any way?”

“No, I get up before her every morning.”

Finally in exasperation the lawyer blurted out, “My dear sir, why do you want to divorce your wife?”

“Because,” he explained, “that woman cannot carry on an intelligent conversation.”

- A woman once said, “If you don't have communication, does anything else matter?” In essence she was lamenting the fact that in normal situations, if you don't communicate, you don't have a good relationship.
- Parenting a priority—time and effort
- Help around the house.
- In his book *What Wives Expect of Husbands*, Brent A. Barlow lists the following:
  - Physical touching of an affectionate, non-sexual nature
  - Shared feelings
  - Closeness without inhibitions
  - Absence of psychological defenses
  - Open communication and honesty
  - Intellectual agreement on major issues (agreed upon values brings unity to the family.)
  - Similar values held
  - Imparted secrets
  - Genuine understanding
  - Mutual confidence
  - A sense of warmth, safety, and relaxation when together
  - Signs of love freely given and received
  - Mutual responsibility and caring
  - Abiding trust
    - **Story—Brent—Commitment; Ed—Love**

Father's role to bless and serve his family is uniquely his.

- Come to a knowledge and understanding of your responsibilities. Appreciate your power to do good—or, should you abdicate your role, the vacuum you leave will affect the lives of everyone in your family.
- When you appreciate this opportunity, you will be grateful to Heavenly Father for the trust He has placed in you which, like the priesthood, has but one function—to love and serve your family. You are the servant leader!
- When this knowledge distills upon your being, you will become a true Father, Patriarch, Priesthood leader, Teacher, Friend, and provide for your family. Truly your attitude and the behavior of your role will change. You will honor your covenant to be a father
- Revere Motherhood and extol the virtues of your wife and above all sustain her in this most quintessential role in life.
- You will be committed to this transcending role of love and leadership.

You will make a difference in the lives of your family. We as fathers have mortal fathers and an eternal Heavenly Father. We are the literal sons of God. He is our perfect example of fatherhood. We should do things as Heavenly Father does them. Why does Heavenly Father do what He does? Because He loves us (John 3:16). Everything He has done or will ever do in regards to our immortality and eternal life (His total purpose) is because He loves us. This is His work and glory, His joy, His purpose, His reason for existence—our eternal happiness. And what will He give us? *All that He has.* (D&C 84:36–38) And then we can, if true and faithful, live a life like His and have eternal increase. We must keep in our minds this vision, this perception of why we are fathers; else we fail in our roles to be true father-patriarchs in Zion. Remember, we are to help our Heavenly Father and our Savior in blessing their children—our mortal children, and help our beloved family return to their presence. We become instruments in the hand of God in this transcending work of blessing our family.

There is no role so difficult, yet rewarding. (3 John 1:4) The knowledge, attributes, and skills necessary to be a true father require constant dedication and effort to become a wonderful father for your family. There is no competition with other fathers—**just with yourself to be the best father for your children.**

We must understand the plan of happiness. We must seek to become like our Savior in all things (3 Nephi 27:27; 3 Nephi 12:48), full of charity which encompasses all of the Christlike attributes as we become charitable (2 Peter 1:3–12; D&C 4:6), and then we will appear to be as He is (Moroni 7:48).

I remember the day the role of father sank deep into my heart.

#### **Story—Brett and the airplanes**

I share the following with couples I counsel with prior to their temple marriage

- Family prayer
- Family scripture time
- Family home evening
- Family council (counsel with wife and with family)
  - Praise children—**Story—Cory and the dishes**
  - Voting—**Story morning music**

- Family interviews
  - School, life, prayers, gospel, concerns

Remember that the greatest thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother.

- **Story—Appreciation and love for Pat—her love, devotion to me and the family, wisdom and advice (goal setting); you are equal partners**

President Ezra Taft Benson has stated that a father has the responsibility to lead his family by:

- Loving God and looking to him for daily counsel and direction. That means family prayer as well as personal prayer. I often wish there were some way to measure accurately the value of family prayer. What it would mean to little Mary, who is giving her first talk in Sunday School or perhaps her first little talk in Primary, to have the family go onto their knees that morning and make special mention of her that she will do her best and not be too frightened. What it would mean to a special teenage son who is facing a stiff examination in high school, to have him specially mentioned in family prayer. Family prayer can greatly increase the unity and solidarity in the family.
- Loving his wife and being one with her. One of the greatest things a man can do for his children is to love his wife and let them know he loves her.
- Desiring to have children and loving them.
- Letting virtue garnish his thoughts unceasingly. This is one of the great needs today, particularly. We have so much sin, so many men attracted by a pretty face and untrue to their companions.
- Being an example of all he wants to teach.
- Teaching and training his children in the word of the Lord, in light and truth.
- Teaching them repentance, faith in Christ, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, enduring to the end, praying vocally and in secret.
- Governing, commanding, correcting, nurturing, and blessing them in meekness, tenderness, and love, and upon the principles of righteousness.
- Provoking not so that the family or the child is discouraged.
- Creating an environment in the home conducive to order, prayer, worshiping, learning, fasting, growth, happiness and the Spirit of the Lord.
- Dedicating his home to the Lord.

The father must hunger and thirst and yearn to bless his family, go to the Lord, ponder the words of God, and live by the Spirit to know the mind and will of the Lord and what he must do to lead his family.

The Church exists to assist the father to get his family back into the presence of our Father in heaven.

The father will solve his problems in the Lord's way. As heads of families, we have four major responsibilities. Certainly the first is the home and the family. I have in my office two great statements in one frame. One is by President Harold B. Lee: "The most important of the Lord's work that you will ever do will be the work that you do within the walls of your own home." The other is that great statement by President David O. McKay: "No other success can compensate for failure in the home." I wish that every father in Israel could have those emphasized to him. The second responsibility is a man's Church responsibility: exercising his priesthood in

righteousness, responding to calls, paying tithing and fast offerings, supporting the missionary program, the welfare program, the building program, the entire program of the Church.