

The Importance of Fathers and Mothers

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Fathers:

1. “You fathers and mothers, I know you love your children. I hope you treat them as if you love them. I know that your patience wears thin but I hope that you would restrain your anger. I do not believe that it is necessary to hurt children or beat them or do anything of that kind. I think my father never laid a hand on me in all my life except to bless me, placing his hands upon my head. Use the discipline of love rather than the heartbreak of the discipline of terror that children might experience. I hope you keep nurturing and love your children, leading them in light and truth. They are the most precious things you have in all the world. Among all the assets you possess nothing is so precious as your children. You will grow old, even as I have grown old, and when you look around you, you will see the greatest thing to have is the love, confidence and respect of your children. . . .

“The peace of the Latter-day Saints, the happiness of the Latter-day Saints, the progress of the Latter-day Saints, and, I believe, the prosperity of the Latter-day Saints, will depend on their living the gospel of Jesus Christ in a world that is crumbling all around them. Be faithful and true” (President Hinckley, Magna Stake conference; in *Church News*, Oct. 29, 1995, 2).

2. “If the father does not honor the priesthood he holds, rest assured that the son will do more than duplicate the inactivity. He will likely magnify the mischief he sees in you, father. Fortunately, the same may be true of your virtue and activity also. Give careful, prayerful, conscious thought and consideration to your family. Do not bury your life in merely providing a living. Many men play the role of fatherhood just by ear. They only react to what is, rather than to strive with conscious, prayerful effort for what ought to be. . . . A boy is not born to know that

his father loves him. He must be told and shown and shown and told a thousand times or more.” (Boyd K. Packer, *Improvement Era*, 1963, December, 1085ff)

3. Mothers seem to take a dominant role in preparing children to live within their families (present and future). Fathers seem best equipped to prepare children to function in the environment outside the family. One authority stated, “Studies show that fathers have a special role to play in building a child’s self-respect. They are important, too, in ways we really don’t understand, in developing internal limits and controls in children.” He continues, “Research also shows that fathers are critical in [the] establishment of gender [identity] in children. Interestingly, fatherly involvement produces stronger sexual identity and character in both boys and girls. It is well established that the masculinity of sons and the femininity of daughters are each greater when fathers are active in family life” (“Father, Come Home,” James E. Faust, *Ensign*, May 1993, p. 35).

4. If you want to destroy the Father's Plan, attack the family. When couples split up, the dangers to the plan increase:

1. Mother must spend her time obtaining sufficient income.
2. Mother must go to work leaving children home alone to become "latch-key" kids.
3. Mom is tired and can't give to her children what only mothers can give; she is protective and often indulgent.
4. Children watch TV—tending themselves.
5. Children hear mom talking about her "ex"—their father—in negative ways.
6. Fathers are critical of their "ex"—their mother; sex roles are damaged.
7. Inactivity increases; the percentage of missionaries and temple marriages goes down.
8. The culture negatively impacts children with too much time on their hands—watching MTV, soap operas.
9. Children don't work outside the home.
10. Children are left without both mom and dad; psychological problems more apt to develop.

5. Thoughts from "Daddy, Come Out and Play," Michael Stewart. An old Spanish proverb says, "An ounce of mother is worth a pound of priest." Could it be said that "a pound of good fathering is worth a carload of policemen?" Becoming a father is easy, but being a father can be tough. Here's the difference:

1. Seventy percent of boys in long-term correctional facilities grew up without a father (David Blankenhorn, Pres. of American Institute of Values).
2. Scholars have concluded that the father's presence or absence, not race or income, most influences whether an urban at-risk child falls victim to poverty and dysfunction.
3. Children who benefit from strong, loving relationships with their fathers are more likely to enjoy healthy, fulfilling relationships with their spouses.
4. The instance of child abuse and neglect increases when biological fathers are removed from the home.
5. Nobody teaches a boy to be a father except his dad. It is an imitated skill. Too often, we give more attention to driver training than parental training.
6. A mother can teach a child kindness and cleanliness, but only a man can teach manhood. Fathers are necessary to raising children: they tickle, roughhouse, and encourage risk-taking when mothers emphasize being careful. At the playground, mothers caution, "Be careful as you climb," while fathers holler, "Go all the way to the top!" Fathers push children to their limits. A child needs the balance that both mother and father bring.
7. Children who lack visible relationships with their father often, like salmon, spend a good portion of their lives trying to find their origins. "We must change the social perception that a good father is an exception." "Being a good father is not a matter of talent, but of effort. The only prerequisites are desire and commitment."

Rules for good fathering:

1. Strengthen dad-child relationships through family activities. (The average parent spends less than ten minutes a week talking with each child individually.)
2. Successful fathers establish rules and expectations with input from their children.
3. Good dads compliment, put their arm around, and express their love for their children.
4. Good families have a strong set of values—religious rituals.
5. Warm praise and encouraging words and touching help build relationships:
 - “It was so fun to be with you.”
 - “How could I be so lucky as to have you for a daughter?”
 - “That’s terrific—how did you know how to do that?”
 - “What a sweetheart you are.”
 - “Thanks for going with me.”
 - “I love you with all my heart”
 - “Now I know why the Lord sent you to me.”
 - “I never had so much fun.”
 - “You are growing up so strongly in the gospel.”
 - “You remind me of your mom—what a jewel.”
 - “Thanks for being my son.”
 - “Let’s do it again sometime.”
 - “You’re a terrific bowler/tennis player/ping pong player.”Arm around, lots of touching, lots of eye-to-eye contact.

Mothers

1. Utah women marry younger, have more children, live longer, and earn less than their counterparts nationwide. . . . State figures show Utah women marry younger than their peers nationally—at age 21 instead of 23.7—and have more children but fewer out of wedlock. It is well known that Utah women age 15 to 44—the government standard for women of childbearing age—have the nation’s highest fertility rate. They have nearly 2.5 children per lifetime, compared to the national rate of 2. . . . About 12 percent of Utah’s mothers are stay-at-home types, which is more than the national average of 8 percent.

In the past six years, the percentage of Utah mothers with jobs and children age 5 and younger has risen from 57 to 62, according to figures from the state employment security office. And 78 percent of those with children ages 6 to 17 have jobs.

Most families need two wage-earners to get along, and corporations also are making more allowances for family commitments, said Thayne Robson, University of Utah Bureau of Economic and Business Research (*The Daily Herald*, Wed. March 11, 1998:FP & A6).

2. “I think the revelations which Jesus Christ gave through the Prophet Joseph Smith concerning motherhood are the greatest contribution the world has ever received on this subject; for it was, so far as I know, never taught before in the history of the world that not only have we a Father in Heaven but we have a Mother there also. No matter to what heights God has attained or may attain, He does not stand alone; for side by side with Him, in all Her glory, a glory like unto His, stands a companion, the Mother of His children. For as we have a Father in Heaven, so also we have a Mother there, a glorified, exalted, ennobled Mother. I recognize that this is a startling

doctrine to some folks, and yet we ought to be governed by reason in giving consideration to this doctrine which is a revelation from God. . . .

Not only is there no life in this world without a mother; there is no life in the realms that are above and beyond us, unless there is also a mother. Motherhood is eternal with Godhood, and there is no such thing as eternal or endless life without the eternal and endless continuation of motherhood. So we believe that the bonds by which we are united here as husband and wife—through the sealing power of the holy priesthood for time and eternity—will be perpetuated and will endure throughout the ages that are to come” (Melvin J. Ballard, as quoted in *Crusader for Righteousness*, Bookcraft, pp. 127–128).

3. “Of all the joys of life, none other equals that of happy parenthood. Of all the responsibilities with which we struggle, none other is so serious. To rear children in an atmosphere of love, security, and faith is the most rewarding of all challenges. The good result from such efforts becomes life’s most satisfying compensation.” (President Hinckley, *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54).

4. “Never forget that these little ones are the sons and daughters of God and that yours is a custodial relationship to them, that He was a parent before you were parents and that He has not relinquished His parental rights or interest in these little ones. Now, love them, take care of them. Fathers, control your tempers, now and in all the years to come. Mothers, control your voices, keep them down. Rear your children in love, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Take care of your little ones, welcome them into your homes and nurture and love them with all of your hearts” (Pres. Hinckley, Salt Lake University Third Stake conference, 3 Nov. 1996; in *Church News*, 1 March 1997:2).