

“Family Leadership”

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President Brian K. Ashton: Our dear BYU-Pathway Worldwide students and colleagues, welcome to a new block.

The mission of BYU-Pathway is to develop disciples of Jesus Christ who are leaders in their homes, the Church, and their communities. Today, we would like to share some ideas about how to be better leaders in our families.

Before we came to Earth to receive our physical bodies, we lived as spirit children of heavenly parents in the premortal life. Families are the divine model for growth and happiness. To become what God wants us to become, we need families and, ideally, good parents who know how to lead. Good families also help us to have joy in this life and the next.

Now, no family is perfect. If you grew up in a dysfunctional family, it was not your fault. If you find yourself leading a family you wish was happier, please know that you can recognize patterns that need to change and make the necessary adjustments with the Lord’s help.

Here are five things that the scriptures teach that parents should do to lead in their homes righteously:

1. Be a righteous example to our children.
2. Teach our children to walk in the ways of truth and light, and correct them when necessary.
3. Share our testimonies and experiences of God’s blessings and His miracles in our lives.
4. Pray with our children.
5. Create a culture that draws our families together.

Let’s explore each of these topics.

Be a Righteous Example

Sister Melinda Ashton: God has said He will give us “a pattern in all things.”¹ Jesus Christ has given us the pattern for how we should act. Because most people follow the example of their parents, we should also model the behavior we expect from our children. If we want them to be kind, we should be kind to our children and those around us. If we want our children to keep the commandments of God, we must keep those same commandments.

My mom taught us to serve by asking Heavenly Father each day, “Who needs my help?” She would then serve whoever came to mind. Not surprisingly, I find myself looking for someone to serve every day.

Now, all of us make mistakes. Our experience is that, as parents, we made a lot of mistakes. Our children did too. Consequently, one of the most important things we can do as parents is repent. Our children need to hear us own up to our mistakes and apologize to them and others. They need to see us do better by relying on the strength that comes from drawing closer to Jesus Christ. If they see their parents repenting, our children will know that repentance is part of becoming what God expects us to be. They are more likely to come to us for help when they make mistakes, and they will also be more likely to repent.

Teach Our Children to Walk in Truth

President Ashton: The Lord taught, “I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.”² Light consists of those things that help us see and understand, edify us, and draw us closer to God. God defines truth as “knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.”³

One of the most important truths we can teach our children is that they are spirit children of God. Knowing that God is the Father of our spirits means that we have divine parentage and, thus, divine potential.⁴ It means we can pray to God, ask for His help, and receive it when needed.⁵

Another truth we must teach is that Jesus Christ is the Savior and Redeemer of the world and the only name by which we can be saved.⁶ God has instructed parents to teach their children “to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old.”⁷ For this reason, the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi taught, “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, ... that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”⁸

God has also instructed us to teach our children His commandments and help them to obey.⁹ Why? Because doing good, serving others, and treating them as we would want to be treated helps us to be happy.

Bear Testimony of God’s Blessings and Miracles in Our Lives

Sister Ashton: Because God loves us, He will help us if we let Him. He can help us with our problems. He can comfort us in times of sorrow. He can guide us in times of trouble. The scriptures teach us that we should remember “how great things the Lord [has] done for [our] father[s].”¹⁰ As we share with our children the blessings and miracles God has done in our lives and our families, our children will know God can provide similar blessings and miracles in their lives.

Here are a couple of miracles that we remember in our family:

- **President Ashton:** We took a family trip many years ago. Before that trip, we asked Melinda’s dad to give us each a blessing. Parenthetically, those who hold the priesthood of God in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, like Melinda’s father, can give blessings to others. Among other things, God blessed us through Melinda’s dad that we would be safe.

One day on this trip, our five-year-old son bolted across a street into the path of an oncoming car. As I yelled at him to stop, I remember thinking that I was about to watch my son die. The driver of the car slammed on her brakes, and, miraculously, the car pivoted 360 degrees around our son with only inches or centimeters to spare. The car got so close to our son that the driver thought she had killed him. Fortunately, our son didn’t have a scratch on him.

- **Sister Ashton:** One of our children had anger problems as a child and preteen. Each day, he would run to his room, slam the door, and yell, “This is the worst day of my life!” This went on for a few years. After praying about how to help him, I felt impressed to pray with him every night that he would learn to manage his anger. Within days of doing this, this child’s anger began to subside. After a few weeks, he no longer slammed his door and yelled about how terrible his life was. Today, he is a well-adjusted adult who manages his anger well.

Now, God doesn't solve every problem. We grow from the challenges and difficulties we experience. Sometimes, rather than solving our problems, God gives us strength to endure them. But we testify that God can perform miracles in our lives according to His will and timing.

Pray with Our Children

President Ashton: God expects us to teach our children to pray and to pray for and with them. Jesus taught, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and children may be blessed."¹¹

We prayed with our children each night until they developed the habit. We have daily family prayer. We take turns saying the prayer. This has been a blessing, especially when someone needs special help. Not only has it helped us receive divine help, but it has brought a feeling of love and unity into our family.

Occasionally, when saying family prayer, I have forgotten to pray for our children to do well in their schoolwork. Usually, when this happens, one of our children will say, "Dad, you forgot to pray that I'd do well on my test today."

Create a Culture that Draws Our Families Together

Sister Ashton: Sometimes, we are so focused on responsibilities that we forget the need to do the things that make life enjoyable. We need wholesome fun and recreation. We need to do things as a family that we enjoy doing together. Our family loves to hike; travel; play games; eat; celebrate birthdays, graduations, and special events; and have Sunday dinner together. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints encourages its members to set aside Mondays, or another night of the week, for a family activity night.¹²

Our family cultures also need to be based on treating one another as God treats His children. One of the most helpful scriptures for us as parents has been Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–46. Speaking of those who want to lead righteously, the Lord said:

No [righteous] power or influence can or ought to be maintained ..., only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge.... Reproving betimes with sharpness [that means correcting in the moment], when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, ... be full of charity towards all men, ... and let virtue [or positive and clean thoughts] garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion [or family] shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means [meaning without being forced] it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.¹³

This scripture teaches that, if we are righteous and treat our families as God treats His, then God will teach us how He saves His children, and our families will want to be with us and follow us.

Conclusion

President Ashton: As we conclude, for those of you who are married, do things that strengthen your marriage: tell each other, "I love you," have a weekly date night, hold hands often, sit next to each other, and spend time together. If you are separated, divorced, or widowed, know that God is aware of you and your children. As you keep His commandments, He will bless your family and bring you joy. If you are not married or don't have children yet, prepare for it and trust in God's plan for you.

Sister Ashton: God wants us to have happy families. As we mentioned earlier, no family is perfect. However, by following these principles, we can create the best conditions for happiness and foster positive family relationships. We will become more like our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Consequently, our families will flow unto us “without compulsory means” in this life or the next.

President Ashton: I testify that President Russell M. Nelson is God’s prophet, Jesus is the Christ, and we have a Heavenly Father who loves us and wants to help us to find joy and return to live with Him again. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹ [Doctrine and Covenants 52:14](#)

² [Doctrine and Covenants 93:40](#)

³ [Doctrine and Covenants 93:24](#)

⁴ See [Romans 8:16–17](#)

⁵ See also [Ether 3:2](#)

⁶ See [Moses 6:52](#)

⁷ [Doctrine and Covenants 68:25](#)

⁸ [2 Nephi 25:26](#)

⁹ See [Genesis 18:19](#); [Deuteronomy 6:6–7](#); [11:18–19](#); [32:46](#); [Mosiah 4:15](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 68:25](#)

¹⁰ [Ether 6:30](#); see also [Exodus 13:3](#); [Deuteronomy 4:9](#); [15:15](#); [32:7](#); [Esther 9:28](#); [Isaiah 46:9](#); [Mosiah 27:16](#); [Alma 62:50](#); Henry B. Eyring, “[O Remember, Remember](#),” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 66

¹¹ [3 Nephi 18:21](#)

¹² See Quentin L. Cook, “[Deep and Lasting Conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ](#),” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 8

¹³ [Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–46](#)