

# Do Well Those Things Which God Ordained

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One a Sunday morning a few weeks ago my phone rang early. On the other end of the line was the precious voice of my three-year-old granddaughter, Kate. Kate had just recently graduated from the nursery to the Sunbeam class in Primary. At first she had a hard time going into opening exercises with all the "big kids." But because her mom served in Primary and her older brother and sister were there too, she felt secure and joyfully went into her new class.

In that early morning phone call she presented a problem she faced and a solution she had come up with. She said, "Grandma, my brother and sister are sick today, and Mom has to stay home from church to take care of them. I think I'm brave enough to go to Primary by myself if you will come and sit in the back during opening exercises."

The deal was made. I sat on the back row of Primary. Kate sat on the front row with her class and her teacher. Every once in a while she would turn around to make sure I was still there. When her class was dismissed at the end of opening exercises, she confidently marched past me and blew a kiss.

Of all the church work I had performed during the previous week, none brought me more joy or had the eternal significance of that small act of service to a member of my family. In a simple way, I helped Kate be where she needed to be on Sunday morning, learning what she needs to know and do to successfully walk the path that leads back to Heavenly Father.

Like Kate, each of us needs the steadying hands of loving family members on the trek back to our eternal home. And it is in our earthly homes we have the greatest opportunities to reach out to one another, to provide that substantive, steadfast help that is necessary for an eternally successful completion to this life's journey.

President Joseph F. Smith reminded us that "to do well those things which God ordained to be the common lot of all man-kind, is the truest greatness. To be a successful father or a successful mother is greater than to be a successful general or a successful statesman."[1](#)

My life experience has taught me that all women striving for righteousness have a deep understanding of President Smith's statement.

Indeed, faithful women bring to all their relationships a profound respect for family and the roles they play in their own families. A single friend who has no children tells of a temple recommend interview

she had with a member of her stake presidency. When the priesthood leader giving the interview reached the question about family relationships, he stopped and said, "You don't have a family. I don't need to ask you this."

My friend, who is a devoted daughter, sister, and aunt, replied, "I don't have a husband and children, but I do have a family. I take my family responsibilities very seriously. I work hard at them. I would like to report. Please ask me the question." And he did.

Our family responsibilities mean a great deal to us, whatever our circumstances. This is as the Lord would have it. After all, Eve was called "the mother of all living" long before she bore any children.

I'll never forget a lovely young woman—probably in her late thirties or early forties—who stood in a large meeting of stake Relief Society leaders recently and said, "I have never married and have never borne children, yet I am a 'mother in Zion.' We must learn to use the word mother to unite us and not divide us."

My hope is that all of us, sisters of Zion in many lands, will unite in a sacred recommitment to the holy calling of mothering and to "doing well those things which God ordained." Each of us—single or married, having borne children or able to nurture and bless God's children whom we haven't given birth to—has much to offer.

Other prophets of this dispensation join President Joseph F. Smith in teaching us how to view our roles. President David O. McKay said, "Motherhood [is] a holy calling, a sacred dedication for carrying out the Lord's plans, a consecration of devotion. . . ."

"Motherhood is . . . the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels."[2](#)

We faithful sisters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, every one of us, do honor mothering and motherhood. The world, however, doesn't declare that message. In fact, it proclaims the opposite message in word and deed. The world praises women for many things but rarely for that service which "God ordained."

Children, who are our literal legacy from the Lord, require our diligent, prayerful, loving mothering. And whether a woman has children in her home or not, each woman can exercise her gift of mothering in her extended family, in her Church callings, and in a variety of other settings. I would like to talk about three vital aspects of mothering: testimony, teaching, and time.

## Testimony

President Heber J. Grant declared, "The mother in the family . . . is the one who instills in the hearts of the children, a testimony and a love for the gospel . . . ; and wherever you find a woman who is devoted to this work, almost without exception you will find that her children are devoted to it."[3](#)

The faith of mothers often becomes the faith of children, even if it takes years for mothers to witness the fruits of their influence. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, spent years praying for the salvation of her son. As a child and young man, Augustine lived a life of disobedience and laziness, "feeding upon the lusts of the world." Though it seemed he would languish in sin forever, he was never beyond the reach of his mother's example. Slowly he began to study the Bible, seek friends who could teach him more about Christianity, and resist the temptations of the flesh. Near the end of Monica's life, she and Augustine lived together in a house overlooking the sea, where they spent their evenings discussing the things of God. When she died, he resolved to live the way his mother had always prayed he would, and so he devoted himself to the Lord's service. After seventeen years

of Monica's fervent prayers for her son and her enduring faith in Christ, Augustine spent forty-three years as a servant of God.<sup>4</sup>

Like Monica, women who live their testimonies of our Heavenly Father, our Savior, and the restored gospel of Jesus Christ bless generations.

Do your children and family members know you have a testimony? Does your knowledge of the restored gospel and the plan of salvation serve your children as they combat Satan's influence in a world of shifting values?

Recently, one of my children shared with me her frustration about how hard Sundays were for her. She said something I have heard from many women, "Sunday is my most difficult day of the week." As we talked, I thought back to the time when I was a mother raising young children and serving in a Relief Society presidency. My husband was always gone on Sunday morning serving in his Church assignment. It was extremely challenging to help my children get ready for church, get all the materials in the car I needed for Relief Society, and choose an outfit for myself to wear that went well with baby spit-up. Because it was the Sabbath and I wanted my children to feel the importance of this special day, I always tried to have a nicer dinner than on weekdays. It was especially challenging to keep peace and calm in the house so that a spirit of reverence and worship would permeate the day. Well, I felt like I failed most of the time. But I kept trying. And now, here was my daughter experiencing the same trials I remember so well.

As we talked, without even thinking, my testimony just started spilling out. I said, "It won't last forever, and besides, the gospel is true and it is worth all the difficulty." We then talked about the great things the Church does for us and our families. It was a sweet moment, and I was grateful for my testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and His plan for us during our time on this earth. Your testimonies, both spoken and evidenced in your home by your example, are treasured resources in strengthening family members.

Raising a child is not for the faint of heart. And have you noticed there are precious few cheerleaders on the sidelines in the game of motherhood? Our testimony can help us as we mother.

I have a friend whose son was a mighty spirit packed into a little body. His eagerness to learn and do manifested itself in ways that were a tremendous challenge for his mother. He never tired of watching a half-gallon of orange juice spread under the refrigerator. He was fascinated by the splat of eggs dropped one at a time from the kitchen counter onto the floor. In an attempt to thwart these efforts, his beleaguered mother secured the refrigerator door with a rope. A smart and creative boy, he quickly figured out how to undo it.

This mother spent the first five years of her son's life on her knees—not just cleaning up orange juice and eggs but also in fervent prayer for peace, stamina, and insight. She begged her husband to trade jobs—she would go to work, and he could stay home. But the mantle was hers, as President Smith put it, "to do well those things which God ordained to be the common lot of mothers." I am happy to report that everyone survived. Our zealous young man will go on his mission this month.

As you are on your knees and as you listen for the voice of the Spirit, your testimony will grow stronger. What a gift to be able to speak your heart to the Lord and have the promptings of His Spirit to guide your daily interactions with your family members.

Testimony is an all-important element in family life. We view our family relationships as the building blocks of eternity. We build homes inside of houses. We love, nurture, and pray with and for each family member. Generation after generation of righteous children, youth, and adults comes from

homes, mothers, and family members whose lives reflect their testimonies.

## Teaching

In one of his fables, Aesop tells the story of a crab and his mother:

A mother crab and her son went scurrying over the sand.  
The mother chastised her child: "Stop walking sideways! It's much more becoming to stroll straightforward."  
And the young crab replied: "I will, Mother dear, just as soon as I see how. Show me the straight way, and I'll walk in it behind you."[5](#)

The world offers far too many substitute teachers to show our children alternate paths if we do not endeavor to teach them how to walk "the straight way." Any woman who doubts the significance or centrality of her place in the Church should realize that prophets learn their first gospel lessons from mothers in their homes. It is in the home that our children learn about the Savior and the important gospel truths that will lead them back to their heavenly home. It is the mother who most consistently encourages her sons to advance in the priesthood and to prepare to serve missions; it is the mother who teaches her daughters to dress modestly and live worthily to enter the temple. Every mother is a teacher. No formal degree is required, but your determination to instruct prayerfully and lovingly and according to God's plan is prerequisite to your success—and theirs.

Patrick Henry said in the closing scene of his life: "I have now disposed of all my property to my family. There is one thing more I wish I could have given them, and that is the Christian religion. . . . If they had that, and I had not given them one shilling, they would be rich, and if they had not that, and I had given them all the world, they would be poor."[6](#)

Every one of us, by honoring our mothering role, can give some part of our "Christian religion" to the children and youth in our lives.

We live in a time of values upheaval, when many standards have been discarded. Behavior is widely accepted now that just a few years ago was considered shocking. We must teach our children the things of God, the mission of Christ, and their plan for eternal happiness. Just as we strive to sustain our children temporally, we must teach them the lessons of eternity or we will deprive them of what they really need to survive spiritually.

It doesn't take much outside influence to lead a child off the straight and narrow path. Hence, our consistent, loving teaching must be like a guidepost that children of all ages can rely on to make the way straight, even amidst a deluge of confusing worldly beckonings. A parent himself, President Joseph F. Smith undoubtedly understood all that constitutes the "common lot" of mothers and fathers. No wonder he strongly urged us "to do well those things which God ordained," for if we don't, the price is excruciatingly high. Now is the time. Home is the place.

## Time

Our total focus of time, energy, spirit, and heart on our God-ordained role brings the greatest rewards for ourselves and our family members. We can become confused by things that seem important and spend our time and energy in the name of many good things while neglecting that which is of highest value—our families. It is easy to become distracted with so many things competing for our time. The prize is so great that Satan wants us to get sidetracked. Eternity lies before us, but mortal life is the period in which children of God learn the lessons that enable eternal progression. How we choose to spend each moment of life determines the degree of success we'll have in teaching our families and strengthening their testimonies. As Edwin Hubbel Chapin stated, "Every

action of our lives touches on some chord that will vibrate in eternity."

Women have many choices and many obligations, all of which steal moments from their day. The truth remains that the most important thing we can do with our time is to strengthen our family members. At the last general Relief Society meeting, President Gordon B. Hinckley counseled: "As long as [your children] are in your home, let them be your primary interest. . . .

" . . . Let your first interest be in your home . . . let nothing stand in the way of [your] role as a mother." [7](#)

The Savior taught us about priorities when he said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, . . . for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (3 Nephi 13:19-21).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell instructed, "An inventory of how we spend our . . . time will tell us where our treasure is." [8](#)

As we plan how we spend our time, we need to look homeward and make home a place of building testimony, a place of teaching life's important lessons, and a place of refuge and renewal for our family members.

An old fairy tale tells the story of a mother who learns the hard way what her treasure really is. While out in the forest picking strawberries with her young daughter, the mother discovers a large cave filled with golden treasure and guarded by three maidens. Told she can have as much as she can hold, the mother releases her child's hand to gather the gold coins in her apron. In shock she discovers that by choosing the gold she has forfeited her child's company for one full year. When the mother returns to the cave the following year, she sees the maidens, the gold, and her child. Again the maidens tell her she can have as much gold as she can carry, but the mother runs eagerly to her child and enfolds the child in her arms. "Take the little one home," the maidens tell the mother, "for now your love is greater than your [other desires]." [9](#)

Make home and family your treasure. Wholeheartedly give them your time, energy, and avid attention. Children need mom to be there. Families need quiet time, unhurried time, pondering time, time for discovery, time for testimony, time for teaching.

At our last general conference, Elder Dallin Oaks said priorities should govern individuals in the precious time they give to family relationships. "I believe many of us are overnourished on entertainment junk food and undernourished on the bread of life.

" . . . We need to have inspired priorities and apply them in ways that will bring eternal blessings to us and to our family members." [10](#)

Only you can determine the most important use of your time. But remember the routine, small acts that take place in the home are the building blocks of eternal relationships. In the informal discussions at the dinner table or while working at daily tasks come the moments to teach and observe. In the day in and day out of family life, children can come to know and love Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, in ways no Church activity can ever duplicate or teach.

President Joseph F. Smith taught us a potent truth when he counseled us "to do well those things which God ordained to be the common lot of all mankind." The daily business of motherhood often seems common indeed, but you, the women of Zion, are uncommonly good. Thank you for doing well those things which God ordained.

May the Lord bless you in this most important work of mothering to all of His children. May you be there when they are very young and need the strength of your testimony. May you be there with eternal truths when they need your teaching. May you just be there-to use your time in sacred dedication with a consecration of your devotion as you honor the holy calling and service of mothering, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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## Notes

[1](#) Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Sermons and Writing of Joseph F. Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 285.

[2](#) David O. McKay, Conference Report, October 1942, 12-13.

[3](#) Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: *Improvement Era*, 1941), 150.

[4](#) Laura M. Adams, "Monica, Mother of Augustine," in *The Moral Compass: Stories for a Life's Journey*, edited by William J. Bennett (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 540-42.

[5](#) Bennett, *Moral Compass*, 522.

[6](#) Patrick Henry, quoted in *The New Dictionary of Thoughts* (Garden City, N. Y.: Standard Book Co., 1961), 561; also in David O. McKay, "Applied Christianity," *Improvement Era*, December 1937, editor's page.

[7](#) Gordon B. Hinckley, "Your Greatest Challenge, Mother," *Ensign*, November 2000, 98, 100.

[8](#) Neal A. Maxwell, *Notwithstanding My Weakness* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 116-17.

[9](#) Bennett, *Moral Compass*, 520-21.

[10](#) Dallin H. Oaks, "Focus and Priorities," *Ensign*, May 2001, 84.

