

Functional

Familying

For the Clueless

And a reference book for the rest of us.

by

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Introduction

FAMILYING

This book is about “Familying.”

You’ve never heard of the word, ”Familying?”

Neither had I until I made it up.

You’ve heard of playing, praying, buying, living and dying. So why not familying?

Some ask: “Are you are good at sailing? gardening? running? painting? boxing? or juggling?” A much more important question is, “Are you good at familying?” In other words, do you make things better for your family? If you do, then you are good at familying.

Just as we begin to master our role as a child in a family we turn into a teenager. We seldom master that role. Even so, with little preparation, we quickly move on to the roles of being a husband or wife and then to mother or father. All alone the line we feel less than adequate and often “clueless” in knowing how to better fulfill our family role.

This book provides “clues” on how to be better at familying. These clues have come through many years of up-close and personal observation of my own and other families.

The method of collecting these clues has been based on the words of Yogi Berra who said, “It is amazing what you can see by looking around.”

HOW TO USE THE IDEAS IN THIS BOOK:

Reading, considering and applying the ideas in this book will help you and your family move toward being a more functional family than you have ever been before.

What are we trying to do anyway?

We are trying to be a more functional family-a family that works better. Some things in your family ain’t broke and so we won’t try to fix those things. But some things are broke. Those are the things we will work on.

A “Dysfunctional family,” means that the family doesn’t work in desirable ways. Such families are getting the wrong results because they are doing the wrong things.

A “Functional family” means the family does work. They are getting the right results because they are doing the right things.

We are all somewhere in between

All families are somewhere in between these two extremes-functional and dysfunctional.

We had a family in our neighborhood who some said was, “dysfunctional.” On the other hand, I think, our family was known by those who did not know us really well, as a “functional” family. But as the years went by and I watch this other family, I began to wonder which of the two families was the most functional. They didn’t always function in the standard manner to which we in that neighborhood were accustomed. But some of the things they did really worked.

I watched the children of this family grow up. The three boys were not impressed with me or with the other men in the neighborhood but they sure were impressed with their dad. He was their hero and they wanted to be with him every minute. He treated them gruffly and they knew they better do as he said or they would be in big trouble.

The mother was very supportive of the father and I could sense that the two of them were in love. The father was not a religious man and was able to curse in an expert manner. The mother was deeply religious. They seemed to support each other in the decisions they had made about religion. In these matters their one daughter took after her mother and the boys took after their dad.

The family often went hunting together. Both the father and the sons were rugged men and could work and play with great strength and energy. The boys went to school regularly but their primary interest was not in the school curriculum. Their goal at school was to get it over with so they could get home to do something that was important-helping their dad with his work. Helping him fix up the several family cars that filled their driveway and the road in front of their house.

Their social graces would not win the favor of Emily Post. But in their own way they had much respect for each other.

Their house was small, humble and often very untidy. Their yard took a back seat to other more challenging and fun activities. Their manner of dress was not of a high fashion.

One early evening, dressed in a heavy coat and scarf to fend off the cold, I walked down the sidewalk in front of their home. They were all out at the curb side in their shirt sleeves talking and laughing and getting after each other. I sensed that they were engaged in wonderful family relationships. The father, who is much more mechanical than he is intellectual or social, was bent over the engine of an older model car. The three sons were packed in by him, one on one side and two on the other. When I said, “Hi,” they were so entranced with the challenge that was under the hood that they did not look up.

The mother, as close by as she could get without being in the way, stood holding a little grandson in her arms. The daughter was trying to get the little one to smile. Wives of the two married sons stood near by. I could tell that the woman folks knew that these men of theirs would soon have the old engine running like new.

As I continued on, I could hear the members of the family laughing and giving suggestions on what they thought might be wrong with the engine and what would be the best thing to do next. Some ideas were vocally judged as “Stupid.” Other suggestions were, “Get out of the way and let me try. I can get that thing off.”

As I walked on, I longed to have such a functional experience with my family.

We are all “dysfunctional-functional families.” The purpose of this book is to remind us and encourage us to do those familying things that will help us move toward being more and more functional.

THIS BOOK WILL HELP YOU BE YOUR OWN FAMILY THERAPIST

Someone has said, “Everyone in the world is odd except you and I. And even you are a little odd.” Don’t you think that you are a little odd? I think you are. I sure think that I am. I guess that is why I’m so glad that my son in law is a psychologist. I love to talk to him about what I’m doing, thinking and feeling. He helps me gain insights that make me want to try some new things in my quest to be better at familying.

What is therapy?

He calls what he does, therapy. The dictionary says that therapy is remedial (corrective) treatment that helps you get better results than you’ve been getting.

If every a family needed a little therapy, it is our family. I guess my being odd is what led to our family being a bit odd. You know, “Like father like family.” I remember the kids often saying, “Dad, we are the weirdest family in Utah and stretching up into southern Idaho.” They were right. We were weird.

Trouble was, we couldn’t afford therapy any more than we could afford Nike gym shoes. So, as with a lot of things, we had to be our own family therapist and use “home made” rather than “store bought” remedial treatments.

Home made group therapy for the family

There are times when a family therapist needs to talk to the entire family as a group. So being your own therapists you need to sit down together and talk things out. You can’t be the group leader of this therapy if it is based on a feeling that, “I’m the boss here and I’m going to tell all of you what to do and you’d better do it our else.”

I remember one time when I tried that. It was in the early days of the Family Home Evening Program. Marilyn and I decided our family would be faithful in having such a meeting each Monday night. The second week, this is how it went:

Early that evening I prepared a long lesson on a subject which I felt my children needed to help them correct some of their misbehavior.

As I began to teach, the children's attention lasted only two or three minutes and then they began to fidget. I was slightly irritated and raised my voice a bit. They began to poke one another and to whisper little insults at each other. This upset me and I became very stern and told them to sit still. I changed from teaching to preaching. They were quieter now because they sensed that I, their usually calm dad, was getting more and more upset. I felt as though they were not supporting what we were trying to do. I decided it was time to really lay down the law. I told them that our prophet had asked us to have family home evening and they acted like they didn't care about that.

All they wanted to do was goof off and hit each other. I was really wound up now. I told them that there were a lot of things they were and weren't doing around the house and that things were going to change. I reminded them of undone dishes, unmade beds, too much TV and too little study, too much bickering and not enough cooperation. I went on and on.

By now they were completely subdued. They were each sitting straight in their chairs and I was definitely in charge.

Having won the battle, I did not feel the thrill of victory because in my heart, I knew I had been a little harsh. So I asked, "Do you like to have family home evening?" They didn't respond but I could tell they were thinking, "Oh yes father! We love to have you get all upset and shout at us and tell us all what to do and make us feel like we are not worth two cents. That is really fun. We love it."

Then I ask, "What can we do to make family home evening better?"

Our oldest son, eight years old, meekly asked, "Next week, could we have Mom teach the lesson?" His request said it all.

I mellowed after that. From that time on we talked more with each other than at each other. At times our discussions would still get a bit warm as we expressed deep feelings about what bothered us and who was to blame and what we felt needed to be done. We never did get really expert at solving family problems but quite a bit of homemade group therapy went on during those little gatherings.

Part of therapy is self evaluation

A nationally prominent university basketball team had as its goal: “By learning from past games and practices, each team member will be a better player during the next game than he has ever been before. Thus the team will be increasingly strong.”

Learning from this example, a family goal could be: “By learning from past family experiences, each family member will be a better at familying during the next experience than he or she has ever been before. Thus the family will be increasingly strong.”

Those who use home made therapy and watch all that goes on the family can make the home a living laboratory. A place where the things we learn from the past can be tried out and the results can be observed and improvement can be made.

In familying, we all do some things wrong and other things right. By stepping away from our emotions and habits for a moment we can look back on what we have done and can resolve to keep doing the good things and abandoning the bad. Thus we can improve. Of course this is easier said than done. But by saying it, we are much more likely to do it-at least a little bit.

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

The best gage to use to determine if we’re moving in the desired direction is to ask, “Are we having fun yet?” If in the midst of the struggles of family life, the members could all shout (or at least whisper,) “Yes! We are having fun.” Then you know that the family is becoming more and more functional.

We should not be miserable because we are not there yet. Our joy should come in the direction we are determined to go.

THE “IDEAL” FAMILY FOCUS

The primary focus of this book will be on families with a father and mother and children all living together as a family. The “Ideal” will be the model most often used. Almost all that is said about the ideal families will be applicable to those “Exceptional” families who vary from the “Ideal” model in one way or another.

By discussing the “Ideal” family composition, we will never lose sight of the “Ideal.” And the “Ideal” should forever be the foundation of our family goals.

CONTENT

PART I

I saw everything and it was the family.

Chapter 1

FAMILYING CLUES WE CAN LEARN FROM YESTERDAY'S FAMILY

Chapter 2

FAMILYING CLUES WE CAN LEARN FROM YOUR PRESENT FAMILY

Chapter 3

WE MUST KNOW JUST WHERE IT IS WE WISH OUR FAMILY TO GO

PART II

To be a functional family mom and dad and the children must each fulfil their family roles and work together in unity.

Chapter 4

FATHER-THE FAMILY'S LEADING MAN AND PERHAPS THEIR STAR

Chapter 5

MOTHER: THE HEART OF THE FAMILY

Chapter 6

THE CHILDREN: THE EXCITING INGREDIANT OF THE FAMILY

Part III

The Shared Roles of Husband and Wife

Chapter 7

CHASTITY IS THE FOUNDATION OF FAMILY HAPPINESS

Chapter 8

THE HUSBAND AND THE WIFE: EACH DESERVES THE BEST

Chapter 9

MAKING TIME FOR THE FAMILY

Chapter 10

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN YOUR FAMILY

Chapter 11

DISCIPLINE:LIVING IN HARMONY WITH FAMIILY STANDARDS

Chapter 12

FAMILY FINANCES.

Chapter 13

HAVING COMMON FAMILY INTERESTS

Chapter 1

FAMILYING CLUES WE CAN LEARN FROM YESTERDAY'S FAMILY

The best way to find some clues on how to be better at familying is to have a look back at way your parents and brothers and sisters familyed you. Much of the way you carry out your family role comes from the things you learned in your former home. Some things back then were not of the sort that you want to emulate but many are. These are the things you remember with fondness and you want to have you children experience. Family therapists encourage us to examine our past in order to see and understand where we have been as an aid to helping us determine where we wish to go.

To facilitate our gaze into the past I will first look back at my family and tell you about some of the things that I learned from them.

After reading of my memories, your assignment is to think of your own childhood to determine what you learned from your family.

Things I learned from my childhood family

In my mind I can see myself as a boy in my father's chicken coops. I wanted to be playing baseball out in the pasture with my friends. But I knew if I didn't get those eggs gathered by ten, and three and six o'clock each day that my dad would give me one of his disgusted looks. His harsh expression was more difficult to bear than any physical sort of punishments. In those carefree days I could neither spell nor define the word, "responsibility." I'm not sure dad couldn't either but he showed me what it was.

I secretly took some burlap sacks from the granary and sold them at the mill. I used the money to buy candy for my friends and myself. The guys at the mill told dad what I had done. When we met that night in the kitchen, I didn't want to look at him but I knew that I had to. He looked at me with one of his disgusted looks. Everybody in town trusted my dad. He didn't tell me much about being honest but he showed me what it was.

"Dig some worms," he'd sometimes say. And my heart would race with the quickened beat of a boy who knew he was going fishing with his dad. He didn't talk much about being a good father but he showed me what a good father was.

I can still feel my hand in Mom's as the two of us walked down the old Alpine road headed to town to see the new movie, "The Wizard Of Oz." I went everywhere with her when I was a small boy. I never wanted to leave her side. That is why when she took me to kindergarten I refused to stay. I cried so long and hard that the teacher begged her to take me home. My tears got me expelled from kindergarten but I had another year with mom. She didn't tell me much about love but she showed me what it was.

If I wanted to be with her on Sunday I had to go Church because nothing could keep her away from her meetings. As we'd walk home from the old Fourth Ward Chapel she'd tell me about how her prayers were always answered. I could tell that she and the Lord were good friends. She never said much about religion but she showed me what it was.

My sister got married to Bill Nerdin when I was still a small boy. They bought a farm just through the fields from our place. I would walk up and see her each day. She made chocolate cake from sugar, cocoa and eggs and flour and stuff like that. She always called me her sweet little brother and gave me a kiss and a piece of cake ever time I came to see her. I could tell she really liked me. She didn't say much about sisterly love but she showed me what it was.

My brother Stewart was the oldest and I was the youngest of nine. He took me on the roller coaster for the first time ever. When it dropped over the edge I lost control and said, "Hell! Hell! Hell!" After we got off, he and I sat under a tree. He asked me what I'd said. I told him I had never said that word before. He told me never to say it again. He became my bishop when I was still a young boy. He didn't say much about character but he showed me what it was.

My brother Bill was a big handsome athlete. I was standing with him on the front lawn on a sunny summer's day. An old Model A Ford came up the Alpine road. It stopped and four guys got out and shouted, "Bill!" They jump our fence and came bounding over to see him. Together they talked and laughed and then they left. As they drove away I hoped that someday I'd be the kind of guy who would have some friends who would jump over a fence to laugh and talk with me. He never told me all that went in to being a good friend but he showed me what it was.

Bill told me to brush my teeth or they would go yellow and rot away. He never had a single cavity. He didn't say much about being clean but he showed me what it was.

My Brother John was a war hero on Guam. He received the Silver Star. Every body in town knew about it. When he came home he came to my school in his Marine uniform. He came right into my class and told the teacher that he wanted me to go with him to Salt Lake City. As I stood up and walked out of the room with him all the kids looked at me like I was a hero. John never said anything about being brave but he showed me what it was.

Of course there were things in the family of my childhood and youth which were not ideal. I don't choose o list these things in writing but they are forever recorded in my heart and have shaped many of the desires I have about the way I want our family life be.

I could go on about my family. But you get the flavor of what I'm saying. I had friends and they were important, but not like my family.

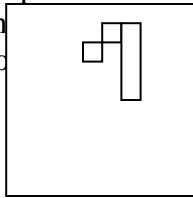
Things you learned from your childhood family

Now it is your turn. What did you learn from your family? List five things and how you learned them. Be positive in your writing. But also record in your mind the things you felt were not right and which you wish to avoid in your family life.

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.

I know that in the past no two of us had the same family circumstances. But for all of us there were some common things-- things that helped us and things that hurt us. That is all right. That is who we were and who our family was

Past family experiences are something we can move away from as we go _____ our future. But in reality the lessons of those experiences are something we can never leave behind. By looking back and building upon _____, forgiving, and abandoning the bad we have the best set of clues on how to _____ in familying.



Chapter 2

FAMILYING CLUES WE CAN LEARN FROM YOUR PRESENT FAMILY

Step outside yourself and play the role of being your own family therapist. By asking yourself some questions you can find some real clues on what you could change and what you could leave the same in your familying role.

Remember a therapist's main job is to help you have a good look at yourself. To do this she asks you questions. It seems like you have to pay about five bucks for every question. So if you can't afford that much and you are almost normal (what ever that is), you just have to ask yourself the questions she would ask if you were sitting in her office. Because you are the therapist pay yourself five bucks for each question that you ask yourself.

The first question might be:

1. How do you feel about your family?

Let me try that one first because I'm sure you feel about the same about your family as I do mine.

All that I hold most dear today centers in my family-Marilyn, the children and the grandchildren.

Last night after we arrived home from Church my son Mark and his family came to visit us. There was a raging blizzard outside. Mark and I talked of sports. Marilyn and Marilee busily made clam chowder and grilled cheese sandwiches. Two year old Georgie sat real close to me on the couch. I put my arm around him and pulled him even closer. It felt as though I could not tell were he left off and I began. While we were all together eating and talking and laughing and feeling, we didn't mention Heaven but we all knew what it was.

Saturday I drove to Hinckley Utah to give a talk. I told the ladies there about Marilyn. I said, "She will miss me all the while I am away. She will stand with her nose against the window watching as each car comes down the road, hoping it is me. When I do return she will see me before I see her and she will move away from the window and I will not see her there. But I will know that all the while I was gone she spent her time there at the window longing for my return."

As you can see from what I just wrote, I'm not an expert on reality but because of my love for Marilyn I know what dreams are and my little story illustrates my fondest dream.

Did I hit the nail on the head on that one. You would have said it differently than I did. But you feel about the way that I do, don't you. That is why this book is so important. If

there is anything we can do to make our family life better for our spouse and our children then we will do it.

2. How do you feel about your spouse?

Again let me answer first.

Marilyn and I have been together for a long time. We met in England. We married in the Salt Lake Temple. In January, we honeymooned in our tiny apartment in Provo. While the blizzards raged outside we cooked hamburger mixed with macaroni and tomatoes, we drank cool aid, we knelt at our bedside, and we help each other close. We knew little of the future but we felt that as long as we were together all would be well.

Since those early days we've loved, struggled, played, worked, tried, succeeded, failed, moved, hoped, despaired, prayed, worried, worshipped, wondered, talked to little, spent to much, criticized, praised, encouraged, loved, served and sacrificed. Through it all, we have been richly blessed, and immensely grateful. We longed for perfection but failing at that option, we have tried to learn from our imperfections. Our beginning love, which to us was greater than any romantic love ever before known, has matured into a sense of oneness that makes us know that neither of us could ever survive without the companionship of the other. Jesus said. "I and my father are one." We know what such oneness is because of our feelings toward each other.

Now your turn. How do you feel about your spouse?

You may feel great fondness for your spouse or you may be having a difficult time with your relationship with him or her. What ever the case, by being your own therapist you can see some things you need to keep doing or some things which need to be changed.

3. How do you feel about your children.

I now that you and I will agree on the answer to this one. We may be having a hard time with one or more of them, but we love them more than we love life itself.

Here is my attempt to describe that love.

The blessing, which has almost been equal to our love for each other, has been our love for our children. We had our first child at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. Because we were in the army, the medical costs were just \$8.00. As he has grown up, I have often told him, "Matt you cost us \$8.00 but I want you to know something. You have been worth it."

Had we paid eight million dollars for him and each of our other seven children they would have been more than worth it.

To know the excitement of “expecting,” to feel the awe of the birth, to hold, to feed, to clothe, to teach, to enjoy, to watch, to encourage, to sooth, to nurture a son or daughter is to experience the very meaning of life. To cry with, to laugh with, to walk with, to talk with, to play with, to learn with, to struggle with, to be patient with, to grow with and to dream with your children makes up life’s most cherished experiences.

I can’t fathom the depths of the love of Christ but being a father has come closest to revealing to me what perfect love is.

Now, last and the best of all the game, come the grandchildren. Now it is I who often sits with my nose against the window looking out and longing for the grandchildren to come. My experience is that we don’t love our grandchildren with the same intense love we had for our children. That is because we are not as heavily invested in them as we were in our children. Ours is now a second line of responsibility. Now we enjoy the experience of love without the deep duty of discipline. But to see them, to give them treats, to take them on walks, to watch Barney with them, to go to their recitals and ball games, to hear them shout, “Grandma! Grandpa!” These things are blessings far beyond our fondest dreams.

Again in the answer that I just gave my words are not your words but I’m sure my feeling are yours. With such tender feelings for our children we want to do all we can to less their lives in such way that they will thrive in every way while they are in our care.

Now we all know that to some, marriage never comes. To others, the anguish of divorce takes center stage. Sons or daughters at times, break the hearts of parents. Family life becomes the source of great unhappiness. But even within these circumstances, there are feelings that touch heaven. There is in family life a degree of love, which is dearer than life itself. Among the dark seasons of despair there are heavenly moments of pure hope and exquisite joy.

Because of the range of feelings, which are only experienced within the walls of home, there are none that would ever deny that the family is supreme.

Looking at ourselves

Now, continuing to act as your own family therapist ask yourself some very personal questions. I did that and here are some of the results.

For example, regarding my relationship with Marilyn, I could ask myself:

George,

Why do you get so upset when Marilyn corrects you? Why can’t you talk to her about family finances without feeling resentment when she says we have to cut back? Why do you watch TV instead of going for a walk with her? Why is it so

difficult for you to tend the children while she goes to homemaking meeting? Why do you blame her when the house is a bit cluttered? Why do you feel love for her so often and express it so seldom?"

And continuing my home made therapy. I could ask myself these things about my relationship with my children:

George,

Why do you get so frustrated with teen age Matt when he acts so ornery toward you and all of the rest of the family? How can you make Kathryn feel better about her brothers getting all the limelight? How can you make moving from Provo to Salt lake City easier for fifteen year old Marinda? Why do you get so hurt with the fact that Warren doesn't want to be in high school athletics like his brothers were? Why do you get so upset in family home evening when the kids act like they hate being together? Why would you rather read the newspaper than tell the kids a bedtime story? Why do you have so much energy at work and so little at home?"

Because therapy includes looking at both the good and the bad, I could ask:

George,

Why did Matt open up and talk to you when you were playing "one on one" basketball in the backyard? Why did Kathryn seem so pleased when you took her with you on your speaking tour? Why did Marilyn seem so relieved when you talked with her about family finances? Why did Warren respond so favorably when you became his church league basketball coach? Why is dinner so much more fun when you are in a good mood and kid around with the family? Why did Dwight thank you when you took him to his boss's house and insisted that he apologize for calling in sick so that he could go skiing with his friends? Why did Sarah stop crying and tell you she loved you when were driving home from her volleyball ball game? (A game she lost to Olympus high-whose star player had recently stolen her boyfriend) Why did Kathryn seem so relieved when you apologized to her after she told you of her hurt feelings at the way you paid so much attention to her brothers and so little to her? Why did Matt agree to not take the bus home from the family vacation when you got him and Devin together and helped them talk out their disagreement? Why did Marilyn come home so happy from her calligraphy class when you had a dozen roses delivered to her while she was in the middle of her workshop surrounded by her lady friends? Why did the kids seem so pleased when you told them how to keep the carpet monster from attacking them at night by putting three candy Snaps on the floor? Why did the kids love family home evening so much on the nights when you all had Banana Cream Pie and Sprite and played games and had Marilyn teach rather than yourself? Why did the kids respond better when you were more supportive of the family rules that Marilyn felt were necessary? Why did things work better at

home when you had a family meeting to talk things out? Why did the mood of your home seem so much more positive when you came home from work and ignored how tired you were and acted fun and funny and ready to play games? And why did the kids feel so important when you told your leaders you couldn't come to a recently scheduled meeting because weeks before, you promised them you would take them to the Kentucky Derby on that day?"

Now as your own family therapist you have discovered some clues on what you need to do.

One of the most profound statements I have ever heard is, "If we keep doing what we are doing, we will keep getting what we are getting."

If we are getting some negative results in our family life, we need to change some of our familying behaviors. There is no way to make things more positive at home unless we get rid of the actions which are bringing us the negative results. On the other hand, the only way to continue to have the positive results we are now enjoying in our family unless we keep doing the familying things which are bringing those results.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

To gain benefits of home made family therapy, each family member must take the position that, "I am the problem and the solution is in my hands." He or she must also acknowledge, "It is not what someone else can do that will make our family more functional. It is what I can do. I can't control the others but I can control myself-at least to a point." And, "I can also encourage others to do the things they can do to make the family more functional."

The way we feel about our families gives us a determination to do the things we need to do to get the results that we desire. That is what our family deserves.

Chapter 3

WE MUST KNOW JUST WHERE IT IS WE WISH OUR FAMILY TO GO

Your favorite family therapist, namely you, has now given you some clues on what you need to do to improve your familying skills. Things you need to change if you are going to get the results that you want to get. But the question is just what results do you want to get. It would be difficult to arrive in Los Angeles if you did not know in advance that that is where you wish to arrive.

So where do you want to arrive with your family? You've seen maps that say, "You are here." Your family therapist can tell you where you are. Now you need to pin point on life's great map just where in the future you want to be. You got to have a dream of the future if that dream is to ever come true.

There is an age old question that asks, "What'll you have?" What ever you say in answer is what you will get.

So if you are newly married. "What'll you have?" What treasures do you desire? How about a marriage that, though not always perfect is based on respect and trust and love? How about having a family who loves the Lord? A family, who prays together, plays together, spends a lot of time together, works together, hobbies together, and laughs and laughs together. A family who does their best and who's best is always improving. And of course to add to anything that I could say, you will have some unique dreams for your unique family. Dreams that I cannot suggest because they are within your own private domain. Write them down and share them in the privacy of your own family.

So "What'll you have?" If you can describe your family dream and if you want it to come true more than you have ever wanted anything before, or ever wanted any thing now, or ever wanted anything in the future it will come true. It is amazing to me how dreams come true. It is almost a certainty that you will get what you desire. That seems to be a law of both heaven and hell. It does not mean that there won't be detours, and travel down distressing roads, but ultimately you will get to just where you dream of getting.

Now is always the time to dream

There is a statement which says, "You've come a long ways baby." That could be said of each of us. But no matter what our age now, or how far we have come we still have a long ways to go.

This chapter will help you firm up in your mind your family dream-the way that you long to be from this time and on into the future. Once you have specifically identified in your heart and on paper your desired vision of the future. You can with steadiness make your way toward your goal.

Where ever we are we need to look from there toward a desired future.

Although the past does not determine the future it is still helpful to look back and see where we have been to get some data to determine where we wish to go.

So let us now, for the sake of our topic, pretend that we are the age where we are about to get married. Wow! That is an exciting time. If when we set out in this glorious voyage of holy matrimony we do not know just what port we wish to arrive at in the future there is a strong probability that we will end up on the rocks.

Marry one who shares your family dream.”

We have just dated, fallen in love, chosen, become engaged and are now ready to marry. If we don't have a vision of what we want in the future we may end up marrying the wrong person. If we want to live a religious life and our chosen mate does not want to, we are headed for troubled waters. If we want to be a school-teacher and our spouse wants to be rich, we may find ourselves up the creek without a fancy enough paddle. If we want to have a big family and our spouse does not, we will end up frustrated. And the list goes on.

Choosing ones mate in the light of one's family dream is the foundation of happy family life. I've observed and often said, "You don't have to die to go to hell, you just have to marry the wrong person." Conversely I've added, "You don't have to die to go to heaven. You just have to marry the right person." Now that is not entirely true. Because if you marry the "wrong one" or if you are the "wrong one" you can, with a lot of personal effort and aid from heaven, help yourself and the other person to become the "right ones."

Sometimes, unfortunately, a decision will be made within your marriage that the two of you are indeed the "wrong ones." When, to no avail, both of you have done what you can to work it out. When, after great effort, the lives of both or at least one of you continues to be a living hell, then divorce will likely send you each down a separate path.

At marriage, have your joint marriage dream firmly fixed "I thee wed"

Your very marriage vows, if they are internalized as your feelings and convictions can be the foundation of a marriage dream: "Love one another, cherish one another, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health; until death do ye part." In keeping these sacred vows the two of you will build upon the desires and dreams you brought to the marriage altar. But there needs to be more. There must be a dream of the children who will come- how you will relate to them and what character traits you will wish them to have.

I made up the following story. So it is not a true. But it ought to be because it tells of a profound process-the building of a family dream.

A young, honeymooning couple stopped at a bed and breakfast. That warm evening they went out to sit on the large porch. The owners of the establishment, a man and his wife in their mid seventies, soon joined them. The four of them began to talk. The elderly wife told of their courting days. She explained, "We would come home early from our dates and sit on my porch and talk. We would speak of our autumn marriage and how we wanted things to be. We talked of treating each other with respect. We determined that we would be more polite with each other than with any one else. We discussed the role religion would play in our lives. We would begin and end each day by praying together. We vowed that we would live on what ever money he could provide. We planned to have children. We talked of how we would teach them to be honest, industrious and loving. And how we would encourage them to do their best in all their endeavors."

She explained, "I kept a journal in those days and after he had gone home, I'd record the visions which we had discussed about our love and our family. These writings became our marriage and family goals."

He added, "At least twice a year we'd read what she wrote down. These statements have been a guide to us in all we have done." With great joy he then explained. "Now after fifty plus years, all that we desired has come true. We have fallen more and more in love. The children are just what we dreamed they would be. It has all come true."

As a result of what they had heard and felt, the young couple decided to do some dreaming of their own.

You'll want to do that to. Talk with your intended spouse before marriage. Write down in a brief way the content of your marriage and family dream.

Your dream as parents "Unto us a child is born"

I recall when I married Marilyn. I noted that she was tall. To me, the best looking of all women are tall or short or somewhere in between. But Marilyn was tall. I couldn't help thinking, "Our children will be tall. That means they will be good basketball players like I always wanted to be."

In our early days together we went to purchase some shrubs for our new home. We discovered that the nurseryman was Marilyn's second cousin. He told us that his son was the star football player in the entire state. I thought to myself. "There are athletic genes in Marilyn's family. My dream of being the father of athletes was enhanced."

The children weren't even born yet. But already I could see what they could be. I talked to Marilyn about our future athletes and she smiled but said nothing in support of my enthusiasm. At that time, she didn't care if they were athletes. She cares now as she shouts at referees but she didn't care then. I had to show her the way.

Now you might say, “Hey! It does not matter if my kids are athletes or not. I just want them to be what they want to be. I’m not going to try to live through them.”

Such a statement is all right for you but I love to live through my kids. I love to see them do the things that I only dreamed of doing. Having your children do good things is better than doing them yourself.

Of course you can go too far in this matter. I heard of one man who took a ball and put it in the crib with his three-day-old baby. He wanted the little one to get used to the ball and make playing with balls the greatest priority in life.

It worked. His dream came true. This child became a super athlete. The problem was, when the time came he couldn’t play for the school team because of poor grades and lousy citizenship.

The father later lamented that he wished he had put a good book in the crib.

Constant amendments to our family dream

Now let’s jump ahead to a couple who have been married a bit longer. Let us say that through the years they have had their family dream firmly in mind. They have not had it written on paper but they have had it written upon their hearts.

They have had their ups and downs and ins and outs in their marriage and in raising their children but somehow their dream has been their guide-their beckon light and has often brought them back on course when they strayed. So they are still on target to achieve their deepest family desires.

To their great dream they constantly attach little amendments. They do something much like an idea I heard in church recently. The fellow speaking said, “Dad often prophesied about the future of the family and especially the future of us kids.” (Now lest you think that this is too much a religious idea for you to handle, this is how he explained it.) “From time to time, expressing the feelings of both mom and him, he would write down what he felt would soon happen to each family member. Then at dinner or at family home evening he’d read to us what he had written. This futuristic thinking would be realistic but it always pointed to the ideal. For example he would write, (these are not the family members real names)

“James will do very well in school this semester.”

“Betty will soon have as many friends in this new town as she did in the one where we lived before.”

“Robert will have his greatest season as a basketball player.”

“Marvin will continue to prepare for his mission in such a manner that someday he will be a powerful missionary.”

This fellow who was telling us about this said, “These prophecies, that is what our family called them, of our father were very motivational to us.” He added, “Dad sensed this and would frequently update his vision of our future.”

How do you feel about such an idea? I like it. Maybe we wouldn’t have to call it prophecies. But why not be a prophet to your family, a budding Isaiah? Look into the future and see the good that is waiting there. These “forward looks” are really desires or dreams. Once you have them identified these desires, then create a family climate that will allow it to happen. The mark of a true prophet is that the things he or she prophesies, will come to pass. Remember, no prophesy ever came true unless it was prophesied. So get busy and do some prophesying about your marriage and about your children and your family’s destiny.

Prophecy idealistically but keep it realistic

So what do you desire in your marriage? What do you really want? What do you dream of? I know I said we would be idealistic in this book but forget that for just a minute. Go for some things that are realistic. If your husband is not a talker, don’t dream of him and you having perfect communication. Dream of his loving you always and talking to you sometimes. If your wife is not a canner of fruits and vegetables or a domestic, just live close to a good grocery store. But be idealistic in desiring to have perfect integrity, perfect honesty, kindness, devotion, loyalty and dependability.

I like to tell the story of the woman who bragged in Relief Society that her husband was so good, so outstanding, so talented, so handsome. As she spoke, all of the other sisters were saying to themselves, “Gee I thought she was married to old Charlie.”

But to her, her description of old Charlie was right on. She loved the guy just the way he was. Oh sure she wanted him to be a little better and she had a never-ending project of working on him. But she knew that her great hope of changing him came by liking him just the way he was. Her overriding dream was that he would live honorably and love her and children forever.

So do some prophesying for your family, “Ben will pass all his classes this term with at least a C average.” When he does that, and he will, then you can up the level of your prophecies.

Dreaming that things could be just a bit better

As you read this, don’t get the idea that I’m advising you to settle for something other than the best. I recall a missionary who because of his actions or lack thereof was close to being sent home. But my leaders told me I could, as president, handle the case in the way that I thought best. The decision was mine to make. I talked to the Elder in a very stern manner. I told him what he would have to do to stay. And if he did stay what he

would have to do the remainder of his mission. I then said demanding, “Will you do these things?”

He replied, “I’ll do my best.”

I quickly responded, “I did not ask if you would do your best. I asked you if you will do what I said.”

Under such coercion he of course agreed that he would.

Now many years later, I regret my action on that occasion. If I had it to do again, I would have accepted his first answer, “That he would do his best.” He never did become the powerful missionary that he would have become had he done all that I told him he had to do. But he stayed and while serving he did many good things. And he truly did, under his life’s past and present circumstances, do his best.

I tell that story as kind of a standard of what I expect of myself, of Marilyn, of the children and of the family. Of course the question is, “What is one’s best?” We look at someone and say, “That is not your best.” But maybe it is. Maybe at this point in their life, with things as they are, they are doing their best. I feel that if I could now go back to high school, I could do much better now than I did then. But if I went back under the same circumstances surrounded me before I would probably do about the same this time as I did then. Regardless of our present circumstances we can all do a bit better. Our best can be better. These little increments in “our best” are what dreams are built of.

It is never too late to dream

My desires for my family are still the main occupants of my mind and heart. Marilyn and I share those dreams. Vocalizing these family dreams is the main content of our joint prayers.

Family forever first

So dream about your marriage. Dream about your children. Dream about the kind of father or mother you will be. Then put all your eggs (at least the freshest and best ones) in the family basket. Friends are important and as Shakespeare said, should be “grappled to your soul with hoops of steel.” But friends should never be the top priority. The thing to go after, with your whole soul, is not your career or your hobby or anything other than your family. And of course the love of your family is at the heart of your love of God and is at the center of your dream to always put spiritual things first.

There is no greater “clue” as to how to have a functional family than to have that outcome as your fondest dream.

Chapter 4

FATHER-THE FAMILY'S LEADING MAN AND PERHAPS THEIR STAR

To help your family become more functional your family therapist, namely you, would certainly desire to talk to the father of the family to see how he feels and how he is doing or will do as a father. I realize, as do you, my fellow fathers, that the mother is the heart of the home. But almost all great productions call for a leading man. I invite you to try for that role. And if you keep doing the great things you are already doing and, in addition, implement the clues found in this chapter, you'll get the role of leading man. And you will play that role so well that you will become a star!

I know, my fellow fathers, that we can do it. We can receive a newborn child and we can fulfill the responsibility of being the kind of father that child deserves. As we meet with faith and with love this mightiest of all responsibilities, we can become great. For there is none so great as he whose deepest desire is to be a good father.

THE AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING A FATHER

"We are going to have a baby."

That news is enough to frighten the bravest of all men.

I will forever remember the moment when I first heard this most thrilling of all messages

I was assisting Marilyn in preparing our evening meal when she said, "I went to the doctor today." When I heard these words, I tensed up and scarcely breathed as I awaited the rest of the story. She continued, "We are going to have a baby." I collapsed into a nearby chair. I had to quit peeling the potatoes--my hands trembled with such excitement that the task became too dangerous to continue. My heart pounded within me. Marilyn stood behind me and comforted me by saying, "You will be all right."

But would I?

Several months later, I had been drafted into the army and Marilyn and I were stationed at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. The army doctor told us that when Marilyn, who lived in town while I had to live at the barracks, came to the base hospital to have the child, I'd be notified so that I could be there. But I wasn't notified until the day after. That morning, a sergeant came to me in the mess hall and said, "Private Durrant call the hospital."

I did and the nurse announced, "You are a father. Come and meet your new son."

I bounded out of the phone booth with the agility of a great athlete and shouted to some near by troops, "I'm a father! I'm a father!"

I dashed to the small base hospital. As I made my way down the hall, I saw the windows of the newborn baby room. There among the three babies was a one whose crib bore the name Durrant. As I looked I had the overwhelming realization, "This is my son. I'm his father."

I soon found Marilyn's room and excitedly announced, "I saw him. He looks just like me."

She replied, "I know that, but let's keep him anyway."

And keep him we did. Other children came but he is the one who gave me the awesome title of "Father."

Being a father is as "Big time" as you can get. I wanted to be a father more than I'd ever wanted to be anything. But on the subject of how to be a good father, I was about as clueless as Sherlock Holmes on the first minute of a new case.

I knew that being a father in title is far less difficult than being a father in deed. I needed all the clues I could get to fill the magnificent familying role of being a father.

An all consuming desire to be a good father makes up for initial cluelessness

Mothers seem to be born with the knowledge which instinctively qualifies them to be mothers. But fathers are clueless on how to proceed. Fortunately, as President Thomas S. Monson has said, "He who God calls, He also qualifies." One of God's two greatest callings is that of "Father." And if we will allow Him, God will qualify us for that sacred challenge.

A navy pilot in the early days of the Pacific campaign had been quickly elevated in rank due to the fact that many of his superiors had been killed in the intense struggle. Finally this young officer became aware that he would soon be asked to become the commander of many other pilots. In that assignment he would have the almost unbearable responsibility of directing other men to places from which they would never return.

As he had suspected, the orders were that he take this command. In response he quickly refused on the grounds that he was not qualified to do this. The admiral arose from his chair, came around the desk, and put his hand on the young man's shoulders. Looking into his eyes, he said, "What do you want me to do--find a great man for this overwhelming responsibility? Well, let me tell you something. There aren't any great men. There are only great responsibilities. When an ordinary man such as you or me accepts and fulfills a great responsibility, then that ordinary man becomes great."

When men such as you and I meet this mightiest of all responsibilities with faith and with love, we become great for we become fathers in deed. For there is none so great as he whose deepest desire is to be a good father.

TOTAL INVOLVEMENT IS THE FIRST AND FOREMOST CLUE ON HOW TO BE A GOOD FATHER

To be or not to be a good father is not the question. The question is how?

The answer is as simple as the “one, two, threes” of good real estate investments.

In real estate it’s “location, location, and location.”

In Fathering it is “involvement, involvement and involvement.”

Involvement is the key to fatherhood

“Involvement,” is the first and foremost clue on how meet the great responsibility of fatherhood.

Make being a husband and father your top priority.

We always have time and energy to be totally involved in our top priority. From the time of your first family dreams, make being a husband and father your top priority. Consider the gateway to your two greatest honors to be her word across the altar, “Yes.” And her later words, “You are going to be a father.”

In invest yourself in your greatest honor-being a father

On a questionnaire I once filled out for my employment, one of the questions was, "What honors have you received?" I thought, "I'll leave this question and come back to it later." I filled in all the other blanks and then again looked at the words "What honors have you received?" I could think of none. I'd never been all-state in anything nor had I been elected to any office. I felt a little unimportant as I left the item blank. I folded the paper and placed it in the envelope for mailing. But before I sealed it, I paused. I took the paper out of the envelope and smoothed it on the table.

Again I read, "What honors have you received?" I picked up my pen and wrote the words, “The Melchizedek Priesthood.”

Next I wrote, “Husband.

And then with reverence I added the sacred word “Father.”

Such honors when seen with eyes that really see make the honors of men shrink and hide in the wings.

You are irreplaceable as a father

In considering your involvement in your family role, always remember, when you come home from work or anywhere else, you have left a place where you are of lesser

importance and have entered a place where you are of far greater importance. 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 for another or when he retires, is not adequately replaced; things go on quite well without him. 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." Likewise, a man's golfing, hunting, bowling, and fishing partners all like his company, but even they could carry on quite well if he was not there.

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, he's missed. And until he returns, there will be an empty, unfilled space in the hearts of his family. It is undeniable. A man's greatest contribution is made in his home with his family.

"Involvement, involvement, involvement," that is the key to being a father. Without that nothing else we say about being a father matters.

Your involvement must be positive

Of course that involvement must be positive involvement. There is no way that we can not be involved in the lives of our children. If we abandon them our action in so doing will influence them all of their lives. If we ignore them that neglect will lessen their feelings of self worth more than we could ever know. If we abuse them we will injure them with long lasting pain. We are always involved whether we think we are or not.

I was told of a father who tried to advocate his role as father. He decided that because he was clueless in how to be a father that he would leave all parenting matters, especially discipline up to his wife. He was determined to not be involve.

As a young teenager the child had serious problems in his school work and in relating to others. Finally he was involved with the police. The father refused to talk to the officers, saying, "Talk to the boys mother. I had nothing to do with shaping the way he acts. I left that entirely in the hands of his mother. She is the one who has had the influence in his life."

"Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!"

This father's influence and involvement by trying to not being involved was a major influence in this boy's life and was a primary reason for the boy's antisocial behavior.

On the other hand positive involvement does much to enable the children to grow and thrive.

Children forget who it was that changed their diapers, gave them a bottle and comforted them in the night when they were infants. But somehow, in ways that transcend and go beyond natural memory, they always remember. Once in a while if you watch closely you will see a little one whom you are comforting look at you in such a way that you will know that something profound is going on in their mind and heart. And that something has very much to do for the love they are feeling will feel for them. This sacred moment often occurs in the middle of the night. Don't miss it. Take your turn at this sacred night watch.

Bathe your children, tell them stories, read to them, take them for walks, point out the birds and the flowers and the airplanes. Go to back to school night. Go to their games especially when they aren't the star, attend their recitals, befriend their friends, take them places, work at their side, tell them jokes and laugh with them. Pray with them. Go to church with them. Talk to them about life: how it begins, what it means, and show and tell them how to live it.

Cease the moment and give your children the greatest gift you can give-yourself

Day in and day out see that you have -involvement, involvement, involvement with your family.

My greatest memories and most significant moments are those I've spent with my children. When they were young, I asked each of them, "Which would you rather do--ride on the roller coaster at an amusement park or wrestle with your dad on the floor at home?" They'd reply, "Ride on the roller coaster." But that's just because they don't really know what they were talking about. They just imagined that they'd rather ride the roller coaster, but they'd really have more fun wrestling with me.

How do I know that wrestling with me is more fun for them than riding the roller coaster? Because I've seen it in their eyes and I've heard it in their voices. I've felt their feelings on both occasions. To me, the data is conclusive--a child's fun-barometer goes higher when he's playing with his dad than at any other time.

A football game among themselves in the yard is exciting for children, but when old Dad comes out and asks if he can be quarterback, then watch out! Supreme fun steps in and each child says, "Oh boy, this is great!" The only thing that dampens the fun is that Dad gets tired before the kids do and says, "I'd better quit." It's so difficult to see such fun end. Roller-coasters fun? Sure, but not anywhere near as much fun as a football game with Dad.

When Dad steps up to the basketball court and says, "I'll take you one on one," his son's heart starts to pound. The father hooks in an old-fashioned shot and the son says, "Wow, Dad, you're back to your old high school form."

The father replies, "You haven't seen anything yet."

Again, the only thing to mar the fun is when the son says, "One more game, Dad?" and Dad, panting for breath, begs off with, "Maybe tomorrow. Right now [puff, puff] I've got some work to do."

A hunting or fishing trip with the world's finest big game guide isn't as much fun as a trip with Dad. One man who now holds a position of great authority once told me of his time spent in the mountains in late October with his father. "My dad's gone now," he told me with tears in his eyes, "but the memory of our hunting together will be with me forever." He went on, "We'd make camp together. We'd hike the mountains together. We'd sit and wait for a buck together. And all the time we'd talk. He'd teach me what he held near and dear. In those times together, he gave me a desire to be and to do good."

The more he told me about those hunting trips with his father, the more emotion filled his heart as he said, "Those memories of my time with my dad are my most cherished memories."

So have a good talk with your family therapist (talking to yourself is good). Ask: How am I doing? Am I making my family my top priority? Could I somehow be more involved?

Just a little more effort on your part to be a bit more involved could make you even greater than you are as father. And you already "awesome" according to your kids.

DETERMINING YOUR DIRECTION AND DESTINATION AS A FATHER

But involvement has to take you in the right direction.

Two beginning but lucky deer hunters had shot a big buck. They were dragging it to camp when an experienced hunter coming up the trail observed that they were pulling it by its hind legs. He helpfully suggested, "If you fellers will pull that deer by its horns, you will be dragging it with the grain of the hair and it will move more easily."

Taking this advice, the hunters took hold of the horns and dragged the deer for another hour. Finally one said to the other, "He was right; it does drag easier this way."

"Yes," replied the other, "but we are getting farther and farther away from camp."

When it comes to being a father, what camp do you want to arrive at? What kind of a father do you want to be? What do you want your children to tell your grandchildren about the kind of father that you were?

My fondest dream would be that my children would tell their children, "Your Grandpa George was a real character. He told us that he would rather be our father than to be a King."

He made up a story about that.

He told us that he wondered what it would have been like to live in King Arthur's day in the great Kingdom of Camelot. He said he would have been one of the simple folks in the kingdom. He would have lived in a little village about three miles south of the castle.

Then he told us this:

One day King Arthur, returning from a battle came riding by on a white horse, accompanied by several knights. As these great men rode past our thatched covered cottage the king looked over and watched us. We were playing basketball on a dirt court that we had smoothed out near our little garden. Our ball was one your mother had knitted and filled with straw. Our hoop was a fruit basket whose bottom had been worn through. All you kids were laughing and shouting, "Daddy! Daddy! Throw it to me." King Arthur reined up his horse, pause and watched us for a long time. The knights finally grew impatient and said, "Let's go King." Arthur replied as if he was in a different world, "Just a minute. Just a minute." And then looking back he slowly rode forward. He was on his way toward a great battle. But in his heart, as he went along in silence, he remembered me. In his mind he could see Marilyn looking on admiringly at me and you children laughing and playing and calling me, "dad." He, the mighty king, was jealous of me-one of the simple folks. As he moved silently toward making history, he asked his knights, "Who was that man back there with those children?"

They replied, "Who cares?"

He answered softly, "Those children seemed to care."

Then I hope my children would tell their children. Our dad, your grandpa, used to change the words to songs so that he could sing songs to us to tell us how he felt about being our dad. There is song that says, "A Mormon boy, a Mormon boy, I am a Mormon boy. I might be envied by a king for I am a Mormon boy." But he would change it and sing, "A Mormon dad, a Mormon dad, I am a Mormon dad. I might be envied by a king for I am a Mormon Dad."

We always knew that he would rather be our father than any thing else in the whole world. He made home a happy place to be.

On Sunday and other nights we'd all sit at our round table-like king Arthur's. Mom would make us a big pan of scones. Dad would announce, "Being your father and having you all for children is like being the coach of a bunch of all Americans." He'd add, "I must have done something good in Heaven to have Marilyn as my wife and you all as my children. Then he'd call on someone to

pray by saying, “Our prayer tonight will be given by the family member who is handsome, the one who is intelligent, the one with the great personality the one we all love.”

By now we would each be saying, “I gave the prayer last night.”

We’d put margarine on scones until it dropped off the side. Dad would say, “Please pass the margarine.”

Mom would say, “Call it butter.” But he was too honest and he kept right on calling it butter. He’d tell us what he thought were funny stories. Sometimes they were a little funny. But we would try not to laugh because we knew that would only encourage him.

We would sometimes, after one of his stories, all cry out as if in pain, “Boo! Boo!” We loved to persecute him. He said we did it for righteousness sake. Mom would tell a story that really wasn’t as funny as dad’s, but we would laugh up a storm just to displease dad. Sometimes being there together as a family we’d be so happy that we all knew that if we opened the window we’d get knocked off our chairs by blessings.”

That is a little of the flavor of the things that I would hope my children would tell theirs about the sort of dad that I was. I probably wasn’t completely the kind of a dad that I described but that is still the kind of dad that I dreamed of being. That is the direction that I wanted to go.

What about you? What kind of dad do you want to be? It’s difficult to be as good as you desire to be. But the right desire will get you closer and closer to camp you want to be in.

The church gives us fathers direction

Doctrinal direction. One of the greatest blessings of the Church is the direction it gives us as parents and families. The doctrines and the counsel of the brethren point the way. To me one of the most meaningful doctrines is the knowledge we have that our lives do not begin at birth but that we lived before we came here. Knowing that gives us answers to questions that we would not otherwise be able to accurately answer.

Without knowing the entire truth we often make inaccurate assumptions. For example:

Two men were arguing over the relative importance of the sun and the moon. The man arguing for the moon won the debate by saying, “The moon shines at night when it is needed but the sun only shines in the day time when it is light any way.

Knowing the facts enables us to set better directions.

And one of the most profound directional foundations for fathers and mothers is the fact that the children born to us come from the presence of God.

Our second son was our third child. At the time I was teaching seminary in Brigham City, Utah. It was my birthday. I was called to the phone. Marilyn, who was close to the time of delivery, said, "I believe I have a special birthday present for you. Come home and let's go to the hospital to get the gift."

I excitedly told the students, "Teach yourselves," and away I went. Soon we were at the hospital. She went to the room where mothers go to have babies and I went to the room where fathers go to wait. Later I was reading a magazine when the doctor interrupted me by asking, "Would you like to come into the delivery room?"

I replied, "Well, I would, but I'm reading this Sports Illustrated magazine." He replied, "Maybe you could read that later."

"I'm right in the middle of an article." I then told him that I sort of got a bit queasy in such circumstances. He told me that he was sure I'd be all right.

In kindness he said, "Come on in. Marilyn would like you to and I'm sure you'll do just fine."

I was out of excuses, and so I followed along.

The kind doctor explained to me all that was happening. Soon the room where we were seemed to be a holy place. A place very much connected to another holy place. I've felt close to Our Heavenly Father at certain sacred times in my life but never had I felt this close.

I stood in spiritual awe as the baby was born. I don't know just when his spirit came down from heaven to give him life, but I knew that he had very recently come to us from God. The doctor held him by his ankles and for a few seconds there was silence and then the baby cried. I cried too. I've never been part of such a miracle.

Priesthood direction. Fathers are given priceless directions as members of the priesthood. That is illustrated by this story which happened many years ago-a time when Sunday Meetings occurred in continuous time frame.

It was Sunday afternoon. We had all been to Sunday School and now the time approached for sacrament meeting. My young son, who felt that he had had enough church for the day, asked, somewhat negatively, "Dad, are you going to church again tonight?"

I quickly replied, "I sure am."

"Why?" He asked in a most disgruntled tone.

Wishing to teach him a lesson on the importance of church attendance, I paused to bring into my mind the best possible answer.

While I needed a little time to think, it seemed that my nine-year-old daughter Kathryn didn't. She spoke right up. In response to the question of why I was going to church again, she said with conviction, "Because Dad is a priesthood man, that's why." Her answer both shocked and thrilled me. My eyes moistened with tears as I considered the truth which she had so quickly and simply stated.

As I sat there I found myself thinking, "A priesthood man--why, that's better than being a Harvard man or a Princeton man, or any other kind of man." "I'm a Priesthood man," I said silently. It sounded good. What an honor and what a joy it is to be a priesthood man!

Being a priesthood man gives us fathers clear direction and much assistance and motivation to always move in that direction.

Recently I saw a priesthood man in action as a father. It was a scene that I shall never forget.

A missionary who had served, some twenty-five years earlier, while I was president, came to see Marilyn and me. With him were his wife and his eight children.

We sat in our front room discussing the memories of the past and the present activities of each of his children. Our discussion turned to his occupation as a farmer. I said, "Figuring your tithing on a farm must be a complicated matter."

He replied. "It isn't that complicated."

His children all wanted to speak at once. It was obvious that this question had come up before in their family. His oldest daughter became the spokesman. She said, "It isn't complicated for dad because he pays tithing on everything. Even things that he isn't supposed to pay it on, he pays it any way." I could tell that all the children shared the view that their dad was paying far more tithing than is required.

As they spoke he first looked down. All were silent as we waited for him to speak.

As he lifted his head and we could see that his was a very sensitive matter for him for his eyes were filled with tears. Finally he spoke almost in humble defense. "I've got so much and i get it all from the Lord and so I just try to be as fair as I can with Him in what I give back."

I could tell that these children and this adoring wife looked upon this great man as a priesthood man. A man they would love, honor and follow all the days of their lives. I sensed that, when it came to tithing, each of them would make about the same kind of bookkeeping errors that their father had made.

So family therapist, ask yourself questions such as:

Am I headed the right direction in the way I lead or don't lead my family?

Do I preside as father in accord with the great doctrines of the Church?

Am I a priesthood man in the way I relate to my wife and children?

We are blessed as "Mormon Dads" to have so many divine clues on how to be a good father.

A LEADER NOT A FOLLOWER

It's very difficult to feel the full feelings of fatherhood unless you are leading your family toward the goals you and your wife have decided upon.

Among the most fulfilling emotions a father can have is to know that he is leading his family in righteousness. This story tells much of that:

Some years ago, while pursuing a graduate degree, I conducted a study on the subject of family home evening and its influence on children. To carry out the research, I located a number of families who had seldom, if ever, held family home evenings. I visited these families, who were less active in the Church, and asked them if they would conduct a family home evening each week for a period of three months. I advised them that I felt that by doing so it would help their children have more self-confidence. To measure the effects of the home evenings on the children, I asked the parents for permission to give their children a "self-image test" both before and after the three months.

Twenty-five families agreed to the experiment. Interesting and unexpected things happened as they carried out this program.

One man didn't seem enthusiastic at all about my request that he and his family enter into the project of holding family home evenings each week for three months. He attempted to escape involvement by saying, with some embarrassment, "I can't teach." I assured him that if he would call the family together and do his best, the teaching part would work out all right; I think he only agreed because he lacked the courage to tell me he wouldn't do it. As I left his house, he had little to say and I felt he wished that I had never called on him.

Three months later, I returned, by appointment, to call on him and his family. As I left my car and closed the door, his front door opened and he came out onto the well-lit porch to greet me. I've never met a friendlier man or experienced a warmer welcome.

He immediately called his family of five children together. He, his wife, and the children sat on a stone bench that ran from the fireplace to the other side of the room. I took a seat in front of them and after some conversation I asked him for a report. The children, ranging in age from teenagers to a five-year-old, burst in before he could respond and each one expressed enthusiasm for what had happened in the family home evenings.

Then the wife spoke. "It has been a wonderful experience for us," she said, and then with considerable emotion she added, "and the very best lessons we had were those Jerry taught."

I thought that Jerry was one of the children. I smiled and said, "That's quite a compliment for you, Jerry." I then asked, "Now, which one of your children is Jerry?"

The wife quickly replied, "Oh no, Jerry isn't one of the children; Jerry is my husband."

I was a bit embarrassed at my error and my eyes quickly focused on the father. He was looking down and for a time he remained silent. In a quiet and humble tone he spoke, "Aw, I didn't do so good."

His wife was forceful and sincere as she replied, "Jerry, when you taught us it just seemed so powerful. It just seemed as if we were a family. We'll never forget the things you said."

Jerry was deeply touched by these heartfelt words. He looked up and into my eyes and spoke, "I guess I did do pretty good." After a pause he said, "You know, I've always been kind of the black sheep of my family. Growing up, I felt that the others in the family were better than me. So I guess I sort of rebelled and didn't do much in the Church. I got so I just didn't even go."

I listened intently as he continued. "I didn't want to have these family home evenings because I knew they were part of the Church, and besides, I just didn't feel I could do it. But one night after my wife had taught a lesson one week and my daughter another week, I decided I'd try one."

His eyes grew moist as he said: "I'll never forget the feeling I had in my heart as I talked about good things with my family. It just seemed that I was for the first time the father that I was supposed to be. I felt so good about what I'd done that the next Sunday morning I decided to go over to the church. I've been going over there every Sunday since then and I've never been so happy in all my life."

We may not all be great teachers, but we are fathers. When ordinary fathers who hold the priesthood of God have the courage to lead our families, we at that moment become qualified to do so and in so doing we become great.

I heard it said that when right after one of Presidents of the Church became president that he went to the first meeting. When it was time to start he was nudged by his counselor and told it is time to start. He asked the counselor, “Who is in charge?”

His counselor replied, “You are president.”

He laughingly replied, “I don’t want to be in charge.”

Righteous leaders have no great desire to be in charge but when they are in charge they lead in humility, love, vision and power. Fathers are in charge. So do it. Lead. Call the family together for prayer, for scripture study, for family home evening. Bless your wife and children. But lead in righteousness. Be gentle and filled with love. Be an equal partner with your wife, but be in charge.

YOU CAN DO IT

Sure being a father is an awesome responsibility. But you do it. You can be a father in deed. All you have to do it to want to do this more than you have ever wanted to do anything in your whole life. Back up this desire with a dream of what kind of a father you desire to be. Then remember the best clue on how to proceed, Is involvement, involvement, involvement. Live and teach the gospel and teach it to your family. Be a priesthood man. Lead.

So you are already or soon will be a father! Wow, what an honor! Because of the way you will care for your children you will forever be great.

Chapter 5

MOTHER: THE HEART OF THE FAMILY

Let us welcome again to this chapter our special guest-our family therapist who is as usual you the reader.

Therapists like to talk to the mother. She is often the most functional one in the family. The mother is the one through whom the therapist has the best shot of helping the entire family.

She is usually, though not always, the heart of the family. What does that mean-the heart of the family? It means she is nearly always the most influential one in the family. The one who heals wounds both physical and emotional. The one who has an intuitive gift that enables her to sense the feelings of all the others. She is the all that we just mentioned plus much, much more.

If you mothers keep doing the great things you are already doing and, in addition, implement the clues found in this chapter you will be an even more functional mother.

As you (mothers) receive a newborn child you have it within you to fulfill the responsibility of being the kind of mother a child deserves and desperately needs in order to cope with this often tough life. As you meet with faith and with love this most sacred of all responsibilities, you will succeed. For there is none so greatly needed in life as she whose deepest desire is to be a good mother.

So with the help of our therapist let's have look and see how you are doing. As a mom.

THE MOST SACRED TRUST IS THAT OF BEING A MOTHER

Next to life itself, God's greatest gift to us was to give each of us each a mother. To insure that women would be up this most sacred and vital of all trusts, Our Heavenly Father endowed mothers with inherent gifts which enable them to fulfil the amazing, demanding and tender responsibilities of motherhood.

A miracle almost equal to birth itself is the miracle which occurs within the inner soul of a woman when she becomes aware that she will soon be a mother. When she first holds a new born in her arms, this spiritual transformation becomes complete and she is qualified by her very nature to meet the divinely appointed familying role of motherhood. Thus a new mother may be "clueless" on many of the techniques of childcare but that is far overshadowed by her desire and ability to care for the child.

No mother is clueless

Recently my older sister told me that mom was not completely pleased when she became aware that I was to be born. She and dad sort of felt that eight children were enough and

that nine might be one to many. She was at first fearful to tell dad the “good news.” But she did and in time each of them became used to the idea and began to look forward to the blessed event. It seems that almost always unwanted pregnancies turn into wanted children.

Like the birth of every child, be it number one or fifteen, my birth was a unique experience for my mother. As she awaited my arrival some two months in the future, she was devastated when she received a telegram informing her that her dear, older brother had died of a heart attack.

Amidst her tears she knelt at her bedside and prayed that her soon to be born child would be a boy so that she could give him the name of her brother. She was comforted by the hope that this would be so.

Her prayers were answered and she named me George. She often told me that I was the answer to her prayer and that I was named after her brother, George, who, according to her, was the “grandest man who ever lived.”

My father was also excited as the time of my birth drew near. But the deer hunting season arrived before I did and so wishing his dear wife well in giving me birth; he headed for the hills.

I was two days old when he returned. My mother greeted him with the question, “I got my dear did you get yours?”

I’ve always been grateful that my mother was the one who was there when I was born. I’ve forever been grateful that during my young years she was always there and that she had so many clues, both learned and God given, on how to be such a wonderful mother.

I can only speak of mothering in “third person.”

So much of what I know and write comes from my “first person” experiences-things which I have known and felt personally. But all that I know of motherhood comes from what I have witnessed as the son of one mother and the husband of another. So that “third person” vantage point is the one toward which I will look in gathering clues about being a mother.

IDEAL MOTHERS ONLY EXIST IN THIRD PERSON ACCOUNTS

No mother ever felt that she was the “Ideal” mother. Ideal mothers only exist in the hearts of grown up children. Following is an account of a near ideal mother:

When Sarah Bush Lincoln first saw her step son it was the look in his face that she couldn't quite describe. She got down from the wagon, took him in her arms, and held him close, and said in a motherly tone, "I reckon we'll be good friends. Howdy, Abe Lincoln."

Sarah was Tom Lincoln's new wife. But much more than that, she was Abe's new mother

She immediately took over and did what only a mother could see needed to be done. She asked Tom to get some wood for a fire so that she could boil some water. She changed the beds, including young Abe's, from dry leaves to feather mattresses, pillows, and blankets. She made clothes. She cooked stew. She made the small log house into a home--a home with a mother.

Those first weeks Sarah felt mighty anxious. Especially about Abe, though he did what she said and never answered her back. Once she saw him looking at her real serious when she was putting some johnnycake into the oven. "All my life I'm goin' to like johnnycake best," he said suddenly, and then scooted through the door.

His father complained when Abe would read late at night by the fire. Sarah would reply, "Leave the boy be."

During these fireside sessions he would read to her what he had written and ask, "Did I make it plain?"

It made her real proud that he would ask her opinion and she answered him as well as anybody could who didn't know how to read or write. When he'd fall asleep reading she would gently cover him with a quilt.

After he grew up and moved away from home, he often came back home to see her. He'd tell her about his law cases, about his work in the state legislature, and about his wife, Mary Todd.

When she found out that Abe was going to Charleston for his fourth debate with Stephen A. Douglas, she went there too, without letting him know. She just wanted to be in the crowd on the street and watch the parade go by. He came, riding in an elegant carriage and tipping his tall black hat to acknowledge the applause of the crowd. She tried to shrink out of sight, but he saw her. He got out and came over to her. He put his arms around her and kissed her.

The last time Sarah saw Abe, he looked tired. The two of them sat silently and communicated. He kissed her good-bye and said he'd see her soon. But she knew she would never see him again.

Sarah Bush Lincoln in that quiet cabin in the wilderness located on the banks of Little Pigeon River in Indiana had--without an audience, without fanfare, without worldly praise or recognition--mothered a boy into a man: a man who changed the world.

When Abraham Lincoln said, "All that I am I owe to my angel mother," he was talking about Sarah Bush Lincoln--his wonderful stepmother.

"Abe Lincoln's Second Mother," February, 1945, Reader's Digest, Bernadine Bailey and Dorothy Walworth.

Mothers know they are not angels

That story describes the spirit of ideal motherhood. But some mothers are more discouraged by such a story than they are encouraged. Some mothers don't like poems or songs about ideal mothers. And they especially dislike programs at church where mothers are spoken of in terms that ought to be reserved for angels.

Mothers know that they are not angels. They often feel that the term "witch" is a more accurate description of their disposition. But we and they know that on a continuum, they are much closer to being an angels than to anything else.

We don't know exactly how angels act and feel. But let us assume that they are always patient, even tempered, loving, giving and perfect. If that is the case, then perhaps they would not be effective mothers. There are some occasions when the kids need to see the "broomstick" side of mother more than they need to see her shinning "halo." But there are often those tender moments when they need to see the halo. If that is not so, then the broomstick will wound more than was ever intended.

So this chapter is not about how to be an "Ideal " mother. (That, "Wonderful mother of mine," label will automatically be awarded to you at your funeral.) Rather these pages will describe a few clues on how to be a "well balanced" mother. And to a family therapist "Well balanced" is highest rating one can achieve.

ALMOST TOTAL INVOLVEMENT IS THE FIRST AND FOREMOST CLUE ON HOW TO BE A WELL BALANCED

Just as the basic clue to successful real estate ownership is, "Location, location and location;" the key to being an effective mother is, "Involvement, involvement and involvement."

"Are you kidding?" you ask as you wish you could reach out and hit me. Then, in frustration, you add, "I'm so involved in being a mother that I scarcely have time to breath."

Wow! That is too involved isn't it? So maybe, "Involvement, involvement and involvement," is not as good a clue for mothers as it was when we used it as a clue for fathers.

Considering your feelings and your wisdom, let's change the third part of this statement so that this clue reads, "Involvement, involvement, **then do something else.**" But never

should this foundational clue be changed to read, “Do something else, do something else, and then be a mother.”

Husband and children-the highest priority

Next to investing yourself in being a wife, you, the “well balanced” mother must make your children your highest priority.

Other priorities

But lest you, as a wife and mother, lose your balance and become, (as we used to say in the army in Korea) “A skoshie bit dingy dingy,” there **must** be in your life, apart from your family, some “other” priorities.

For my mother, these “other” priorities were Relief Society, making quilts, visiting with her friends and milking her pet Jersey cow. She said us boys did not get all the milk and so she did the milking. Now, looking back, I feel her real reason for milking was to have some time out in the barn away from us kids. I didn’t take a backseat in gaining my mothers full attentio to anything except when there was a quilt on the frames in the parlor or a Tuesday afternoon Relief Society Meeting at the old Fourth Ward Chapel. When one of these “other priorities” were in effect, I was on my own in making my daily peanut butter sandwich which she otherwise always made for me. Mom didn’t seem to need many diversions but she needed some. I wish she could have had more.

Marilyn had many “other” priorities. Through scheduled classes and a zillion hours of practice she became, in my opinion, the best calligrapher in Utah and stretching up into southern Idaho. She became a master genealogist and took great pride in letting me know that she had more ancestors than I did. She loved reading, talking on the phone to her sister Sharon, beautifying the home and yard, going to her kids ball games (she was so embarrassingly vocal at these games that she had to learn to keep the score book so as to silence herself enough to not be kicked out.) And she loves all things associated with Relief Society.

Therapists in the army insist that soldiers in battle need at times to go on what is called, “R. and R.” (Rest and Relaxation). On these occasions they leave their hectic front line posts and retreat to a safe place behind the lines. As with soldiers, so with mothers. These “other” priorities were the R and R which gave Marilyn the change of pace she needed to catch the “emotional breath” which would enable her to come back to the home front with renewed vigor and determination. These “other” priorities were never, for her, the “main event.” But they greatly enhanced the part which she alone could play in the main event which was to her the family. When returning from these R and Rs she was always a more exciting wife and a more patient and loving mother. The way she was when she came home from each R and R was more than an ample reward for my time of being up-close and personal with the children.

So as was said earlier, “Lest a wife and mother lose her balance and become a skoshie bit dingy dingy,” there **must** be in her life, apart from her family, some “other” priorities.

Speaking of sanity, I recall when our first son was born I was on military maneuvers and was not present. (Marilyn was there for the birth of each of our children.) We had a Mormon friend at the army base where I was stationed. He was a Psychiatrist-a Captain in rank. Because he was a wonderful therapist, all the nurses at the hospital knew him. The day after Marilyn had the baby he came to the hospital to see her. He asked the nurses, “Where is Mrs. Durrant?”

They indignantly replied, “She does not need you.”

Maybe she did not need him in those early days but eight children later, I’m sure she wished that he had stayed around. Had it not been for Marilyn’s “other priorities” her R and Rs, I’m sure between the children and me, we could indeed have caused her to truly be a “A skoshie bit dingy dingy.”

So clue number one is to keep your balance by following the formula: “Involvement, Involvement and then do something else.”

Now some questions from your therapist:

How are you doing as a person? If you are doing well as a person it is certain that you are doing well as a mother.

Are you putting your family above all else?

Do you take some R and Rs?

Are you keeping your balance?

DETERMINING YOUR DIRECTION AND DESTINATION AS A MOTHER

Another vital clue to being fully success as a mother is to determine the kind of mother you desire to be. Fix in your mind the sort of mother that you wish to be. Then move everlastingly in that direction. By doing so, you’ll end up being exactly the kind of mother you desired to be-at least in the eyes of your children.

To determine your goal, ask yourself the question, “What do I want my children to tell their children about what I was like as a mother?”

The tale of two mothers: Marilyn the mother of my children and Marinda my mother

When we married I sensed that Marilyn had a firm vision of the kind of mother she was determined to be.

She desired to:

Always be accessible to her children, to love them more than her own life, to treat them firmly but fairly, to honestly criticize them when they erred and to praise them for their achievements, to teach them to avoid the gray areas of moral values, to not be “wishy washy” in their opinions and beliefs, to insist on obedience to correct principles, to be involved in all of their endeavors, to kid around with them, to play with them, to work with them, to defend them, and to be first, their mother, and second, their friend.

If you detect Marilyn’s desire was to be a directive and firm mother, you are correct. That is indeed the direction she wanted to go and that is the destination at which she has arrived. She has been a loving, demanding and tough mom. And in so doing she has blessed the lives of her children

It was never her desire to be “sweet.” Marilyn didn’t want that word used to describe her and I believe she has achieved her wish. As a mother, she was more “meat and potatoes” than “chocolate pudding.”

These are some of the stories her grown children tell of her:

Her sharp wit

Matt our oldest child said: “When I was young, I thought I knew quite a bit and I used to like to argue with mom. I was good at making my point but she was more than my equal. I could often be persuasive with reason and logic but she could get me every time with her inspired bits of wisdom and with her humor.”

She said things to me that she would never say to the other more sensitive kids. Once when I was just twelve years old we sold our station wagon and bought a little two-seated car. We were out for our first family ride, a trip to Grandma's place in American Fork. I pointed out several times as we passed through Orem that it was a mistake to have purchased such a small car for such a large family. I complained about being crowded all the way from Provo to Pleasant Grove. Then Mom had the audacity to say in a loud voice, “Matt, this car wouldn't be too small for our family if you didn't have such a big mouth.”

Matt then added, "When we lived in Kentucky there was a huge tornado that swept its way through the city of Louisville. I was a senior in high school. My friend and I followed along in his car right behind the tornado. Later we drove around for two hours looking at the damage and trying to find a road heading home that was not blocked by fallen trees. Finally we arrived at my friend's house. His parents were frantic and ran out to greet us, shouting to my friend and crying, "Oh, our dear son, we were so worried. We wondered if we would ever see you again." Matt described dramatically how the relieved parents allowed their tears to flow freely as they embraced their son.

Continuing, he said: "I then departed and ran home to reassure Mom that I too was all right. I threw the door open and shouted, 'Mom, it's me, Matt; I'm safe, I'm home.'"

Mom was over in front of the TV and just barely looked around to see me. All she said was, "Hi, Matt, I'm listening to this report about the damage."

I couldn't believe it. I told Mom about the more appropriate greeting my friend's parents had given him when he came home. I guess that really got to her, because she stood up and turned toward me and replied, "Matt, I wasn't worried about you. I've been around you enough to know that you are a far bigger wind than that tornado."

At that moment there was pride in Matt's tone as he felt he had proved that Mom was harder on him than she had ever been on any of the other children.

Her demands toward duty

After a few seconds of silence, other of the children added their stories about how Marilyn had made them do their best, had gotten after them for doing wishy-washy things. They asserted that she had made them work harder than slaves in the house and in the yard.

To this Marilyn replied: "Sure, it's all true. All you say is true. The things that I did were exactly the things you kids needed. Your dad was sometimes too soft on you, so I gave you what you needed."

Her inspiration

But like Sears, Marilyn had a softer side. Matt, then sixteen came to her and told her that he did not intend to go on a mission because he did not have a testimony.

He then told the rest of the story:

Mom sat close to me as we sat on her bed and told me that I should go on a mission. She explained to me how her testimony had come to her as she had served, and how mine would also develop. I did not argue with her at that time, for I knew she was right. She told me many more sacred things that sank deep into my soul. She helped me know what I should do. She knelt and prayed at my side and my spirit was strengthened and my life was forever changed,"

Her defense of her children

Marilyn was a stout defender of children who needed a defense against the powerful forces of their fathers' expectations.

Of this trait, our son Warren said, "I did not want to play high school sports. I did not dare tell my father because he expected me to play just as my brothers had done.

One day I was deeply troubled about this and I came home early from school to tell mom how I felt. She understood. She and I drove to the store and bought some TV dinners. Mom heated the dinners and when dad came home she told him we were going up Millcreek Canyon to eat our dinner because, "Warren has something to tell you and we need to be alone, just us three."

As we drove the five miles to a picnic area no one spoke a word. As we began to eat, Mom said, "Warren tell your father what you told me." With the support of my mother I gulped and then looked across the picnic table into dad's eyes. "I'm not playing high school basketball," I said softly.

Dad, as was his way, calmly started his rebuttal to my proposal. Mom stopped him by saying: "Warren and I have talked about this all afternoon. He didn't want to talk to you because he knew you wouldn't understand and would try to talk him out of it. So now you just listen."

I continue, "Everybody expects me to play because I am my brother's brother. I'm not as good at basketball as him. I don't like to play for the school. I just want to play on my own for the fun of it. I don't need the fans, the coaches, or the pressure. There are other things I can do better than my brothers. I want to do those things. I want to be myself, not someone else."

To this dad replied, "Don't be a quitter, son,"

Mom sternly interrupted, "He isn't a quitter--he just wants to do the things he wants to do. Warren isn't his brothers. He is Warren."

Warren continued with his account, "After that we silently swallowed our food. We cleaned up the table, mom and I walked close together as we headed for the car.

Warren concluded his story by saying, "I've never felt so much love as I felt for mom at that moment."

Her wisdom and love

Then Kathryn spoke up and said: "Because we moved a lot, I had my share of inward insecurities. My patriarchal blessing indicated I should go to my parents for advice. I had a hard time doing that. For a time I drew away from Mom.

"Finally I was out of high school and left for Provo to be on my own. I was there

for almost a month and had grown a little more homesick than I had supposed I would. One night I had a date with a special young man. During the course of the evening he told me he was uncertain about serving a mission. When I pressed him to learn why, he indicated that he had great difficulty reading. He was embarrassed to announce that he had never read the Book of Mormon or any of the scriptures because he could not. I wanted to help him so badly but I didn't know what to say.

"Later that evening, when I entered my apartment I knelt to pray, to ask the Lord how I could help this humble friend. I had an impression that I should call mom. I dialed the number with some reluctance because I knew she would be in bed asleep. After several rings I heard her say, 'Hello.' It was like finally getting through to an angel in heaven.

"I told her about the young man and asked you what I should do. In a calm and loving manner she gave me several suggestions. We talked for a long time. Finally I said something that I had held back for several years. I told her, 'I love you, Mom.' Her reply was, 'I love you, too.'"

I believe these stories are a testimonial that Marilyn achieved what she set out to achieve when she gave birth of our children.

"But," you say, "I could never be like that." Of course you couldn't. You are not Marilyn. You are you."

Mothers do not have to be alike. But you do need to decide what you can be and then go for it with all you heart.

My mom's old fashioned clues of mothering

My mom was different than Marilyn because they are two different people. Marilyn often reminds me, when I long for some of the good old fashioned spoiling upon which I thrived as a child, that, "I'm not your mother." I'm sure glad that she is not. I needed "my mother's way" while I was growing up and in marriage I need "Marilyn's way" of insisting that I grow up. These are some of my mothers ways:

She spoiled me

I do not know how mom mothered her first eight but I shall forever be grateful for the way she mothered me. I was her baby and because I was her last one I never lost that glorious position reserved for the baby. Some said that mom spoiled me but to counter such opinions I often thought, "Mind your own business. I do not mind being spoiled."

So, if you, as a mother, get a special child such as my mother did when she got me, go ahead and spoil him. Spoiling a child never really spoils him. Instead it just sweetens him up.

She protected me

My older brothers persecuted me. I learned to weep and wail as a protection against their assaults. At dinner I would cry. Mom would ask, "Why are you crying?"

I would reply, "He looked at me."

She would then say to my brother, "Don't look at him, You know he does not like that. You are a bigger baby than him"

I would mockingly reply to him, "That is right."

She taught me

Once when I was playing with my older brother and some of his friends they told me to go in the house because I was too little to play the games they were playing. Heartbroken, I ran as quickly as I could to my mother. She heard my sobs, but on this day she didn't use her normal tactic of calling the others in for a rebuke.

She was making bread at the time, and she now took a large piece of dough and rolled it out flat with a rolling pin. She cut it up into pieces about the size of the palm of my hand and she started to fry it in some hot grease. She was making scones, and scones are good.

The sight and smell of the browning scones was enough to make me quit crying. I wondered why she was making so many. I knew that I couldn't eat but a small portion of them. She seemed to be making dozens. Finally she handed me the pan heaped to overflowing and said: "Take these scones. Go back outside and see if those other kids will play with you now."

I went outside and suddenly my whole world was changed. I had instant friends. I heard remarks such as: "Could I have a scone?" "What do you want to play now?" "Give me another one." "You can be the captain." "Can I have another scone?" "You can play any position you want." "How about one more?"

Those scones were symbolic of all that she taught me about being the kind of person others would like to be with because I had scones in my heart. She always tried to take the scones which she had so abundantly in her heart and put them into mine.

She interfered in my life

My goal as a teenager was to be tough. And I would have been the toughest kid in town if mom hadn't constantly interfered in my life. She wanted me to be a sissy. I was better at being a sissy than I was at being tough and so because of her interference that is the way I turned out. How else could I be when each day when I'd come home from school she would be there to make me a peanut butter sandwich.

Then she would hold me on her lap while I ate it. Soon she would run her fingers through my hair and tell me I was special. I would wonder why others such as the coach and the girls did not know how special I was. Of course I wouldn't sit on her lap when I was in high school, except when the drapes were closed.

How does a kid be tough when a mom interferes in his life that way?

She believed in me

One afternoon she was quilting and talking to the ladies. That day I had to make my own peanut butter sandwich and it did not taste right. By sitting close to the door, I could hear the conversation of the busy quilters. The general subject was that the young people in town were worse than any other young generation had ever been.

One by one the ladies took turns describing the misbehaviors that were occurring at the high school. I was amazed at their accuracy. Mom was unusually silent. Finally her voice rose above the rest. I could hear her every word. She said: "I don't know if the kids at the school are doing all that you say they are. All I know is that my son George does not do those things."

I resolved then and there to stop doing those things.

She'd pick me up when I fell down

I hadn't discussed my joining the Navy with Mom and Dad. I had just announced it to them. Now, as my self and four friends drove to the enlistment center in Salt Lake City, I kept wondering if I was doing a wise thing.

A little later, because of a bad knee, I failed the physical. I'd never in my life felt like such a failure. I hadn't wanted to go into the navy, but to be rejected by them seemed like the last straw.

When I arrived home mom opened the front door of our home. I entered and removed off my heavy coat. I wanted to stand by the coal stove and get warm, but more than that I wanted to be alone. I walked quickly across the large kitchen toward my bedroom.

"When do you leave for the navy?" Mom asked with a fearful tone.

"I don't leave to go nowhere," I said with a voice that was just one degree short of tears.

"Why?"

"Cause. They don't want me. Nobody wants me." With that I closed the door and climbed into bed with my clothes still on.

I didn't pray in the usual manner, but my very breath seemed like a petition of desperation to both heaven and earth.

The bedroom door slowly opened and Mom entered. She sat down beside where I lay. For quite a while she sat in silence. Finally she spoke, "George, I want you to go back to school."

"School," I replied, "I tried that. I don't know what I want to be. So what good is school? I don't know anything. What's the use anyway."

"I've got some money. I'll get some more. I'll help and so will Dad. You'll do better. You could learn to be an artist or a writer."

I didn't answer. Why didn't Mom ever give up? I'd given up. Why couldn't she? Oh, how I loved her! She was always there. But never had her presence been so vital as it was now.

Finally I spoke, "Spring quarter starts in about two months. I could earn some money by then. I could join the National Guard." With each word I spoke, and each tearful nod of Mom's approval, hope was pushing out my despair.

"Supper's ready, George. Why don't you come and eat?"

I didn't answer, but it sure did seem like a good idea. I'd need a lot of strength for the good things that lay ahead. Mom had picked me up again like she had so many times

Warning: don't try these things at home

I could go on and on talking about my mother. But you get the idea from what I have said that to me she was the ideal mother. I just want to warn you, don't try the things I have just mentioned at your home on your kids. Instead try the things that come naturally to you like these things did to mom.

Marilyn didn't do things my mother's way. When my mom used to make me a peanut butter sandwich my older brothers would say, "Let him make his own sandwich. What is the matter with him has he got a broken arm?"

I would not counter their remarks for I knew that would do no good, But when I was alone with mother I would say to her, “When you make these for me they taste better.”

She would reply, “Oh George! I’ll make them for you as long as I’m alive.”

Now she is gone and I say to Marilyn, “Could you make me a peanut butter sandwich?”

She replies, “What is the matter with you? Have you got a broken arm?”

She doesn’t always say that. She is “crazy” about me and I about her. But she sure is different from mom.

CONCLUSION

I wish I could offer more clues on how to be an effective mother. But the two I mentioned are all the clues that seem vital to me. These are:

1. **“Involvement, involvement, then do something else.”** This will help you have the necessary balance that will keep you from becoming a skoshie bit dingy dingy.
2. And **determining your direction and destination as a mother.** This will help you get back on course should you at times lose your way and drift to far from the angels and to near to witches.

Maybe you will also find a little clue in the “tales of the two mothers” of whom I spoke. Each of the two of them was different but each was successful. You are different from them and in your own way you will be successful to.

Everything else, needed to insure your success will follow because of your natural endowments as a mother.

Chapter 6

THE CHILDREN: THE EXCITING INGREDIANT OF THE FAMILY

This chapter is not for little children. It is for you big ones. The really young ones almost always try to do what they can to make the family functional. Oh! they cause some problems and often test the patience of the rest of the family. Most of their antics are a delight. Of them we often say, "He is so cute." Other of their behaviors are an annoyance. "She wrote all over the wall." Nothing we could say here, to them, would alter their behavior. They are beyond our therapy.

But there comes a time when children become mature enough that, if they would, they could exercise a far more functional influence on other family members. This chapter is especially for those old enough to understand that the solutions to the things they feel are wrong in the family are often in their hands. The following pages offer some clues on how a young person can enrich the lives of other family members.

THE FIRST CLUE IS TO HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR ABOUT PARENT WEAKNESSES.

When one of my son's was fifteen, he said to me:

Dad, I had a dream last night, and in my dream I died and went to heaven. When I got there, an angel met me. He led me to a room filled with what seemed to be millions of clocks. I asked him why there were so many clocks? The angel replied, "There is a clock here for each person who is living upon the earth."

About that time I saw the big hand on one of the clocks suddenly jump forward five minutes. I asked, "Why did the hand on that clock suddenly jump ahead?" The angel replied, "Whenever the person on earth makes a mistake, his clock jumps ahead like that." I then said to him, "I'd like to see my father's clock."

By now I was spellbound by this intriguing story. My son's serious tone made me feel that he was indeed recounting an actual dream, and I was sure he was about to tell me something wonderful about myself. He continued:

Upon my requesting to see your clock he said: "Your father's clock is in the next room. That room is rather warm, and we use your father's clock for a fan."

We were driving home from town at the time he told me of his alleged dream. When I finally caught on I stopped the car and told him to get out and walk home. (He didn't, of course.) I wasn't able to look at a clock for the next several weeks without getting ticked off.

Fathers and mothers do make mistakes. Have you noticed that? They are far from perfect but if you work with them, you can do a lot to help them overcome their faults. You can sort of be a "live in therapist" for them. All you have to do is learn how to use a little parent psychology.

CLUE TWO IS TO USE PARENT PSYCHOLOGY

In books which parents read about how to help their children there is often much material that could be categorized as "child psychology." You know, "If the parents do A it will cause the child to do B." That sort of thing. Isn't it only fair, then, that as young people consider how they can help their parents, something should be said about "parent psychology?" "If the child does B it will cause the parent to do A." In order to change negative aspects of family life you must initiate positive action. If there's going to be a truly happy relationship between you, your siblings and your parents, you're going to have to make it happen.

"Parent psychology" is one way to bring about such changes and to move your family closer to the functional end of the continuum.

I tried parent psychology and it works

While I was growing up my mother spoiled me. She fussed over me, she cooked me special food, she treated me as if I was a prince. Why did she spoil me? Because I spoiled her. I would say to her, "I like you to make me peanut butter sandwiches because when you make them for me they taste better." When I'd say that, she'd smile and look at me with love in her eyes and say, "Oh George! I'll just keep on making peanut butter sandwiches for you as long as I'm alive."

I used a lot of parent psychology on her. But I was never insincere. I never told a greater truth than when I told her, "When you make it, it tastes better." It was just something about the way she did it. I never ate a meal at her table that didn't taste like a banquet. It was just simple food, but when Mother set her hands to something it was magnificent. So I'd tell her so?

I used to leave my mother notes telling her how much I loved her. And I noticed that when I did such things she was all the more anxious to be with me and be my friend. My mother really did spoil me. She didn't have any money or any things she could spoil me with, she just spoiled me with her love. As far as I'm concerned, fostering your mother's and father's love is the only way to live.

Some young folks might read this and say, "No way am I going to act that way. My parents would check my temperature if I started acting nice and saying good things like that."

I remember once we were discussing the commandment to honor our parents. I assigned my seminary students to be nice at home. I challenged them at dinner that night to say things such as, "I love this food. Mom you sure are a wonderful mom. Dad, how was work today? I hope they know how great you are and how lucky they are to have you in their company. Sister Sally you are the best sister in this whole town."

A few of the students carried out this assignments and told me it sure did make everybody feel happier. But most told me, "I'd sooner concentrate on the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill. Than the one about honoring my parents."

"Why?" I asked.

"Cause saying stuff like that is too hard."

"Why?"

"Cause my family is to dumb."

One big kid told me he'd fail the class before he'd ever say nice things like that to his family.

I couldn't understand their responses. I mean, I was one tough kid during my teenage years and I didn't want to take on any of the traits of a sissy. But at the same time I was smart enough to know how to make my life at home happy and that was by being nice. Oh, of course I was not always nice to my brother because that was going too far. But once in awhile, on a good day, I'd say something complimentary to him. I wouldn't say a lot to dad because he didn't like to talk much and so I didn't want him to force him to say "thanks" too often. But hardly a day went by but what a lavished at least a little praise on mom. And that praise brought in a multitude of favors from her to me.

Try it. It will change your life. It will change your family's life. You don't have to go overboard but just move a little ways toward "nice."

Don't use psychology on your parents, just to manipulate them. You don't want to take advantage of them. You just want to do those things that will cause your parents to behave in such a way that you can get along with them and they with you.

As an example of parent psychology, an ornery father can be changed to a pleasant father by a kiss on the cheek from his pretty teenage daughter. If you girls don't think so, just try it some time.

As for you young men, a father can be brought into some stimulating physical activity by a teenage son who says, "Shake on it, Dad," and then grips his father's hand in a way that makes him wince. If you do that, your father will say something like: "Let me have an equal chance. I didn't know you were going to grip my hand. Let's try that again and we'll see who's got the strongest grip. So you grip again and your father grimaces again. Then he says: "So what, so you've got strong hands, what does that have to do with anything? Do you want to have an arm wrestle?" Then you can have an arm wrestle with him. Then he'll find out he's not as tired as he thought he was. There he is engaging in some sports events with you. Through parent psychology you've encouraged him into some things that can bring good father-and-son relationships-that is if he doesn't mind being a loser.

The power of Compliments

Using sincere compliments is good parent psychology. I recall a conversation with my daughter. She said to me: "Dad, the guy I'm going to marry is going to be really something. He's going to be handsome. He's going to be good. He's going to have a great personality. He is going to be strong spiritually. He's going to be talented." After several more descriptions of the perfect man, she said, as she put her hand on my shoulder and looked into my eyes, "He's going to be just like you, Dad."

This message came to me at a time when I felt a little bit discouraged and a little like a failure--and most of us parents feel that way at times. Those words filled me with hope; and, oh, how they filled me with love for my daughter! Just the fact that she would say something like that about me really touched me. As a parent I know how much we need to have our children tell us sometimes that they think we are good parents.

Stress their strengths

Listen to the following "untrue" case study, titled "One Boy's Family,"

Sixteen-year-old John, who has just finished his fifth piece of chicken, says, "We had an interesting discussion in my family relations class today."

"Oh," says Mother. "What about?"

"We were talking about today's parents, and we got on the subject of fathers," John replies as he licks his fingers. "We made a list that we felt describes the typical father of today."

At this point Father becomes more interested. John continues by pulling a paper from his shirt pocket and saying: "I copied the list down. I'll read it."

John reads, "Fathers are slightly overweight, particularly around the middle." Father quickly draws in his stomach muscles.

John continues, "Fathers often work too long, spend too little time with their family, and when they do come home they read a newspaper and don't talk to the family." Father gently folds the sports section of the evening paper that is resting in his lap.

John picks up a napkin and continues. "Fathers are often ornery and disagreeable." A pleasant but forced smile appears on Father's face, replacing the frown that John's earlier words had caused.

John reads on. "He spends too much time watching television and he doesn't read enough books."

Father suggests that John put the list away and do the dishes, but John reads on. "A father does not have as good a sense of humor as he ought to have. The hair on his head is not as thick as it used to be."

Father stands and announces, "On second thought I'll do the dishes."

As Father walks toward the sink, John seems to read louder. "He has the final answer to everything and doesn't want to listen to his teenage children's point of view. He wants to give orders around the home without explaining why."

Father returns to where John is sitting, snatches the paper from his hand, and says: "It's really gratifying to know that's the way fathers are. Is there anything good on that list?"

John replies, "No, we were going to list the 'good' things later, but this 'bad' list was so long that the class ended before we could get at the 'good' stuff."

A grin forms on John's face as he announces: "Now don't be upset, Dad. Half of those things on that list aren't even true about you."

"That's reassuring," Father replies in response to his son's gracious statement.

John continues: "You're a pretty good guy. It's just that you parents aren't quite as perfect as we young folks."

A large smile crosses John's face as he speaks again: "Dad, if you want me to, I'll work with you. You see, Dad, I like you even though you need a lot of help. I'm willing to help. I've got a feeling we can make a success of you sooner or later, and then you'll be as perfect as I am."

Father throws a dish towel at John and says, "If you really want to work with me, you can start by helping me with the dishes."

"There you go giving orders again," John replies.

And so ends the exciting case study.

I'll have to admit that I laughed as I wrote that case study. I love it when my kids poke good natured fun at me. It makes me think that they kind of like me. And having my kids like me makes me feel like a million dollars. If your dad doesn't appreciate kidding around tell him to lighten up or you won't let him use the car for a week.

You have a choice: you can walk around the house acting like you are in a consecration camp or you can act as if you are in the world's greatest fun house. I don't mean you

have to scatter sunshine every minute of every day. But try to get a hit once every three times at bat. That will make you a major leaguer every time

Be interested in their lives

Learn to talk to your folks about things that interest them. Learn something about what your father does where he works. If he's a mechanic, learn something about mechanics and talk to him about it. Maybe you are an artist or are going to major in English or music. That's good if it's right for you, but learn what your dad is doing in his trade or his profession and learn to talk to him about it. Ask him once in a while how things went at work that day.

I have one son who at age fourteen used to call me down to his room every evening by calling out, "Pops, come on down to my room."

I'd call back, "I'm too tired."

And he'd say, "Pops, if you knew how much it meant to me, you'd come down."

Now, what other choice did I have when my son treated me like that? He wanted me to come down, so I did. I'd sit in a chair by his bed and he'd say: "How did it go at work today, Pops? What happened?"

We'd look at each other and exchange grins, and sometimes I'd ask, "What do you want to know for?"

He'd reply: "Because I'm interested in you, Pops. I'm interested in your progress and how you're doing."

So I'd start talking, telling him things that had gone on at work that day.

Then I'd ask, "How did it go with you?"

We'd more or less give each other a report, and then he'd say: "Okay, Pops, you can go. I just want to keep track of what you're doing and make sure your okay. If you ever need anything you just let me know."

Those were such special times for me. They were as a priceless gift from my son.

Be amused rather than upset at their quirks

Another tip on talking to your parents is not to question their memory too much about their tougher childhood experiences. When your dad tells you that as a child he walked to school six miles through the snow every day with no shoes, act somewhat as if you believe him. Let him be responsible if it's not all quite true. Tell him something like, "Boy, they made kids tough in those days!" (Not sarcastically, of course.) If he's told you

the same story before, don't say, "You've said that a thousand times, Dad." After all, there's a good chance he's only told it 990 times.

Do you feel that your parents ask dumb questions? Don't tell them their questions are dumb. That kind of response really turns parents off. Through their dumb questions, they're just trying to find out some things. They're not prying. When your dad says, "What did you have at school for lunch?" don't say, "That's a dumb question." When he asks you how you did in the basketball game, don't tell him that's a dumb question. When he says to you, his daughter, "Did anybody compliment you on your haircut?" don't tell him that's a dumb question. Just answer the questions as though they were really intelligent questions. Remember that there's no such thing as a dumb question when it's asked by somebody who is trying to show an interest in you.

Do Things for Them

I recall finding out how much my father liked ice cream. This was back in the "olden days" when we didn't have refrigerators and there was no way to keep ice cream at home. Sometimes on a summer evening I would jump on my bike and ride down the old Alpine Road as fast as I could go to buy a pack of vanilla ice cream. They'd put the package in a sack. I'd grab the sack fast, race home on my bike, and hurry in the house.

My father would be sitting over in the corner of the room in his old rocking chair. He'd grin when he saw the package. I'd dish him out a heaping dish of ice cream and take it over to him. Then I'd get myself a dish and sit there with him. He wouldn't say much to me nor I to him, but we'd sit there and eat ice cream together. We just seemed to communicate, even though we didn't use a lot of words.

YOU ARE UP TO THE CHALLENGE

Trying to act happy when you ain't is about as hard as getting up to go to church on Sunday morning. But you can do it.

I struggled as a young person with a lot of painful inner feelings, and I believe you do too. Sometimes we just want to make our negative feelings explode on our family. Or else we just don't want to say nothin about nothin and so we refuse to talk. The question is, can you in your struggles and frustration and moodiness and orneriness and feelings of inferiority help your parents with their struggles and frustrations and moodiness and orneriness and feelings of inferiority? Of course you can-at least a little.

Some of the most troubled folks in our society are psychologist and therapists and they are helping others all the time

If your home is not a happy place now, you have a responsibility to make it so. And if it is already a happy place, then you have an everlasting responsibility to do your part in keeping it that way.

I recall a time when our family took a picnic to the park. Our oldest son didn't like to go any where with the family but he was there with us. His usual nature was to say very little at family gatherings and to usually be disgruntled. We had just began to eat when Suddenly he spoke up and said so that all could hear, "I'd sooner be here eating this picnic with all you than I'd would want to be anywhere else in the world."

His words were like the sun coming out on a cloudy day. This happened some thirty years ago but I still remember it as if it was yesterday. It was one of the happiest moments of my life.

Calming troubled waters

It's sad to consider, but many families have really fallen apart. Perhaps you feel that such is the case in your home. If so, you can and must do something about it.

Sure it will be difficult to try to change things for the better. That is all right. The greatest satisfactions in life comes from doing hard things. Life is not an easy ball game. The opposite team is led by a devilishly good coach. But those who have played ball welcome a tough opponent. It's no fun to be in a dressing room lacing up your shoes when you know that tonight's game is against a team that has lost sixty-nine straight games. You hardly even want to play them. But on a night when the best team in the state, the undefeated champions, are coming to town to play you, that is when you can't wait to get at them. That's when you say: "We'll win! We've got them on our floor with our referees and we're going to beat them."

You'll have to decide, considering your family just how tough the game will be at your home. But you've got the home court advantage and the great Referee is on your side. So get in there and do it.

I know you have problems of your own and you feel you are about to sink. So how can you lift others when you feel like a "sub" sitting on the bench watching your family lose. You feel as though it would take a "star" to pull off such a victory. I recall once sitting on the bench in a vital basketball game. I usually didn't enter the game until the score was 87 to 24. (It didn't matter who was 87 or who was 24.) But this night our main center fouled out with more than a full quarter to go. The coach was panicky as he looked down the bench at me. He stalled; he insisted they count the fouls again to see if our star really did have five. But finally he had to do it. He had to put me in. I was all he had.

I entered the game. We were playing against last year's state champions and the score was tied. The challenge was great for me and I found myself wishing I could be a star. I'd say more about the game, but this is a deep philosophical book, not a cheap sports page. All I really need to say is that foul pitches count one point and I made one foul pitch and we won by one point. There, that night, I found out that all it takes to make a sub into a star is a chance and a challenge and just one point.

So get up off your ornery, inferior, self-pitying bench and get in there and become a star. Lift your parents up on your shoulders. You may not make all-American, but think of the joy it will be if you are named "all-Family"!

HONOR YOUR PARENTS

Obedience brings freedom

While I was growing up, my mother would awaken me on Sunday mornings. I would get out of bed, because I knew Mother expected me to, and I'd hurry off to priesthood meeting.

One Sunday morning when my mother called me, however, I quickly turned over and tried to go back to sleep. In a while she came back and said, "Aren't you going to priesthood meeting?"

Now, I wanted to honor her desires, and normally I would have, because I was a good fellow; but, you see, I was really tired that morning and sleep seemed to be a bit more important than honoring my mother. So I didn't reply to her question.

"Are you asleep?" she asked. Again I didn't reply.

Finally, warmly and lovingly she pleaded, "George, please get up and go to priesthood meeting." But I was a tougher case than was Lazarus.

I opened my eyes and looked at her; in fact, I almost arose, but then my head fell back down on the pillow and I acted as though I had gone back to sleep. My mother then left me alone. I knew I had hurt her, and that worried me so much that it took me several minutes to go back to sleep. But then I slept through priesthood meeting and Sunday School.

That day when I appeared at the dinner table I felt like an unwelcome guest. My mother didn't refuse to serve me, but her heart wasn't in it. She let me know just by the expression on her face that she was deeply disappointed and to a degree heartbroken that her son had not attended priesthood meeting. That was not a pleasant Sunday dinner for me. The food was just as good, but it didn't taste as delicious as usual.

The next Sunday morning she called me again: "George, it's time to get up for priesthood meeting." (She never did give up on me.) I remembered the week before. I was sleepy this morning too, but I didn't want the misery of hurting my mom again, so at her call I bounded from the bed and was off to priesthood meeting. I recall coming home that day and devouring one of her delicious dinners. This time I could tell that her heart was in it. "Be sure and eat plenty of the chicken and tators and gravy," she said. She was so glad to see me after I had been off to my meetings, because that meant I was growing up to be a full member of the Church. I loved her cooking, and the more I ate the more I felt like a full brother.

That's the way it always went for me. I could disobey my parents. I could "sleep in" in the morning, "stay out" in the night. In numerous other matters I could have my own way. But when my way was contrary to their way, I went toward misery rather than happiness. Whenever I failed to honor my parents, that certain something that made me feel right, just wasn't there.

Now I know you have your free agency. I acknowledge that you are not here in this life just to do the bidding of your parents. But come on, you don't want to break their hearts. You can have more fun and be more of an individual within the guidelines they set than you could ever do outside those guidelines. True freedom comes from obedience not disobedience.

It seems it would be easy to honor mom and dad if they'd say:

"Whatever you say, son."

"Come home when you choose."

"The way you look is your business, not mine."

"The car is yours anytime you want."

"Just tell me what you want and we'll get it for you."

"I'll clean your room."

"It's not your fault."

"It's your life."

And if they just wouldn't say:

"Because I said so, that's why."

"Because no child of mine is going to wear an ear ring."

"Because those grades are too low."

"Because it is good for you, that's why."

Or:

"When I get home, it had better be done."

"Ten-thirty and no later."

"You never get your homework done."

"Your room is filthy."

"Stand up straight."

"No more TV tonight."

"Eat everything on your plate."

"Get up."

"Go to bed."

But if your parents said only those things in the first list and not the things in the other two lists, it would be like an umpire not saying "ball" or "strike." But instead saying: "I don't know if it was high or low or just right. Why don't you decide? Whatever you want, Mr. Batter and Mr. Pitcher, is all right with me."

It is your parents' duty to call "balls" and "strikes" and "outs" and "safes." Ball games with umpires who call everyone "safe" would soon become dangerous places to be. At times when we parents seem a bit demanding and when you wish we'd ease up a bit, you should consider the great demands the Lord places on us. There are not many people anywhere in the world who are trying to get their children to do what we parents in the Lord's Church are trying to get our children to do.

I talked to a judge one day. He said, "The trouble with you Mormon parents is that you try too hard."

I replied, "Judge, you are wrong. We don't try too hard. Parents can't try too hard. It's just that some of us sometimes try the wrong things too hard."

Don't make your parents try too hard. There is nothing worse than living with uptight parents. You can help them to relax by "grazing in the middle of the field," and not on the "edge." Then they can do something that is much better than building more, higher, and tighter fences to keep you from straying. Then they can enjoy you and you them.

There's probably no situation in which rules will be created faster than when parents detect that one of their children is rebelling. Most parents just naturally feel that the only way to solve a problem with their children is to create a new rule. Those rules become harder and harder to keep, and that leads to more rebellion and a need for more rules, and soon the young person must either obey hundreds of rules or else rebel more. The solution is to stay in the center of the "field." Then it's almost as if there are no rules at all. All that then controls you are words such as honor, trust, love, and respect. I like all those words better than words like rules and fences and force.

MAKE IT EASY FOR YOUR PARENTS TO EXPRESS LOVE TO YOU

My son was on the high school basketball team. At one point the coach advised the team members that he didn't think they were doing as much as they should to be ready for the forthcoming tournament. With that in mind, he asked them all to make some special sacrifice

My son and some of the others decided that their sacrifice would be to get up early each morning and go over to school and practice basketball before school started. One

morning while he was in the midst of this program I got up as early as he did so as to cook him breakfast

We happened to have some bacon in the fridge. I cooked a lot more of it than I would have been able to had his mother been up. I fried him a few eggs. I made him some toast. I made him a drink by mixing some ice, some milk, some chocolate and a little ice cream. It was kind of a "good morning" milk shake. I had my son sit down at the table, then I served it all to him as if he were a king.

As he ate he was most gracious as we talked, and we had a choice time together--just a father and son in that kitchen. When the food was all gone (and that wasn't long, the way he ate), it was time for him to go. He announced, "I've got to go quick, Pops or I will be late."

"Couldn't you just stay for a minute longer," I asked, "just long enough for you and me to kneel down and have a prayer?"

He could have said, "No, I've got to hurry," or he could have been ornery about it. But instead he quickly said: "Sure, Pops. There's always time for that."

He knelt down, and I knelt as close as I could to him. I acted as the voice for our prayer. I told Heavenly Father how grateful I was to have such a son. And in my prayers I poured out quite a few sentimentalities as I told the Lord how deeply I appreciated the way this young man was living and the things he was doing. I said so many things that the prayer was a rather long one. But he was patient and didn't seem to be fidgety, so I prayed on and on until I finally said amen.

After the prayer we both stood up. The Spirit of the Lord was present and my heart was filled with joy. I felt impressed to embrace my son and give him a kiss on the cheek. I don't do that often, but at that moment I just felt compelled to do it. Sensing what was happening, he didn't quickly take a karate stance as he could have done. Instead he embraced me and allowed me to kiss him on the cheek. As I did so I said, "Sure love ya." He looked at me with kind of a grin on his face and he said, "Sure love you, Pops." Then he turned and went towards the door.

Just as he was about to close the door, he looked back and grinned again. He almost laughed as he good naturedly said, "Gee, Pops, I wonder how many other Provo High basketball players got a kiss from their dad before they went to school this morning?" I told him to get out of there or he would get something more than just a kiss--a kick in the pants. He laughed and hurried away. I watched him from the window until he was gone from sight. Oh, how I felt my love for him that morning!

Now it could be said that the story I have just related is a lesson for fathers and not for sons. After all, the father cooked the breakfast, said the prayer, and did the kissing. All the son did was eat. But my point is that the son did something vital to the experience. For, as you recall, he let his dad do these things. His reaction to my desire to show him

how much I loved him was to go along with it. He didn't shrug it off and tell me to get away. Most parents would like to say, "I love you," but many are afraid it might not be well received.

BE QUICK TO FORGIVE

I used to swing my children around by holding their arms and spinning around on the front lawn so that they would fly out parallel to the ground. It's great fun. Children love it. I recall that once when I was doing this one of my little sons came running up and said, "It's my turn." At the same time my little girl who was nearby said it was her turn. I really felt it was my daughter's turn, so I said to the boy, "You wait, and I'll swing her first." While I was swinging her, he ran to the house in a rage. He lay down on his bed and continued his tantrum. He kicked his feet and looked up at the ceiling.

Time went by and he calmed down. He started to think. He had a decision to make. He could either stay there kicking like that and causing all kinds of trouble in his room, or he could just simply get off his bed and come back. I was still outside swinging kids around. After some time he decided to come back to the front lawn. He came running up to me and said, "It's my turn." And it was his turn. And I spun him around and he had fun. Now, my son could have continued to stay in his room while I was still out there spinning people around. He could have lost out on that situation if he had wanted to. But he decided, as the prodigal son did, to come back. And when he came back I was ready with open arms to grab him and spin him around.

It's about as simple as that. You have to make a basic decision, as the prodigal son did. Of him the Savior said, "He came to himself." You just have to come to yourself, swallow your pride a little, and come back to your parents. Tell them you're sorry, even if sometimes you may think the fault is theirs. Someone has said, "You may be wrong and I may be right, but if it separates us we're both wrong." Come back and break through the barrier. And when you do you will be amazed at how anxious your parents are to make things right.

HELP THEM SPIRITUALLY

While I was growing up, I don't recall that my family ever had family prayer. Just before I was to go on my mission, I was alone with my father and we had a chance to talk. He expressed to me in his own way that he loved me. Then the family all started to gather at our house prior to going over to the church for my farewell. Some of them didn't go to church regularly.

With the family all there, as a young man just about to go on a mission I said, "I believe it's Dad's desire that all of us kneel down and have a prayer." I continued, "Dad, if you'd like I'll offer the prayer." It took a lot of courage for me to do that, but I did it because my father was sick at the time and he really didn't think I'd get home from my mission before he died.

We knelt down and I began, "Heavenly Father, please bless my father." As I said that I had a kind of revelation, and I added, "for I know that his health will be sufficient that when I return he will still be here. I love him very much." I said some other things about the family, and when I said amen I got the feeling that our family was closer and more united than they had ever been before. As my father looked at me I could see how pleased he was with the prayer and how much faith he put in it; how glad he was that he'd seen his family take the opportunity of kneeling together in prayer.

I believe we children can have a profound influence in helping our parents have family prayer and family home evening and in helping them do all the things that would make the home better. Children can exert that kind of influence when they're young and also when they're older. So do it. It could change everything.

I know a fine family who are desirous of doing what they should. For some time, though, they never seemed able to have daily scripture reading as a family. The father tried repeatedly to get the family members up and reading in the morning. But it was making the family upset and instead of bringing the Spirit into their hearts it caused negative feelings. He struggled with the problem for some time, but there was always a somewhat negative atmosphere as he tried to force the issue. He expressed to me that he had a feeling of failure as regards this great principle of family scripture reading.

Later he told me how one night in a family home evening, when he started to bring this subject up, his daughter, a beautiful senior in high school, said: "Dad, I've been thinking about this and I want you to know that from now on you can count on this family. We're going to read the scriptures daily, and I'm going to see to it that everybody gets up and is ready to do it."

As my friend told me this, tears came to his eyes. "I've never had such a thrilling spiritual experience in my life," he said, "as to have my daughter say that." He continued: "Every day since then she has gotten everybody up, and she has done it in a very pleasant way. She gets all the books ready and makes it possible for us to have daily scripture reading. I had wanted to do that all along and I just couldn't get it going. But my daughter has helped me do it."

What a joy it is when the young people of the family take it upon themselves to help the parents accomplish righteous goals! Maybe your folks aren't religious, or don't go to church. If so, preaching to them may not be the answer. You have to be sensitive and wait for the right moment. Now and again some right moments will come up, and then you can inject things into family life that will make it better. Your parents need your help. And when they see that you're helping them they feel an increasingly greater love for you, and suddenly your feelings toward them are warmer than ever before.

ACCEPT THEIR COUNSEL

Respect your mother intuition

Once that several of my friends planned a quick trip to Las Vegas and

asked me to go. I was a senior in high school at the time. You know, that's about the age when you start thinking you can make your own decisions. I told Mom that I was going to Las Vegas with my buddies. She calmly asked me what we were going there for, how long we would be gone, and so on. I gave her what I thought were good answers. I was polite and kind and considerate.

She didn't say much more about it, and finally it came time for us to go. I had a little bag packed; and as I walked out toward the car my mother followed me out. "George," she said, "come back just a minute, will you?"

I said, "Sure, Mom," and stepped back into the house.

"George," she said, "don't go."

"Gee, Mom," I protested, "they're waiting for me. I promised to go. I want to go. It'll be a good little vacation for me, and I've got the money to go."

"George, don't go," she repeated.

"But why, Mom?" I asked.

"I don't know why," she replied, "but please don't go."

"Mom, I've got to go," I insisted.

Yet again she said, "Don't go."

Now a strange feeling began to come over me. "Mom, why?" I asked again.

This time she said, "I just know you shouldn't go."

The feeling had now become so overwhelming that I walked out of the house and said to my friends, "I can't go."

"Why not?" they asked.

I replied, "Because my mom says I shouldn't go."

Of course, they tried to persuade me, then finally to taunt me into going. "Ah, come on. What are you, some kind of a mama's boy?"

I simply said, "No, I'm not a mama's boy, but she said I shouldn't go and I'm not going."

They finally gave up on me and drove away in some degree of disgust.

Two days later I learned that my friends' car had turned over several times as they were travelling down the highway late at night and that all four of those fellows had been thrown out. Not one of them had been seriously injured; one was knocked unconscious for a time, but he was revived and he had no after effects. The police officer said it was a miracle someone hadn't been killed. I've always wondered what would have happened if there had been five fellows in that car. I wonder if five would have been as lucky as four. I guess I'll never know. But I do know that my mom knew I shouldn't go; and I know now, as I knew then, that she was right.

Seek your father's counsel

Fathers too can display great wisdom. I know of one young man who wanted to get advice from his Church leader, advice about his girl friend and his prospective marriage and a number of other personal matters. He particularly admired this leader, so he went to him and asked for advice.

The leader's advice was, "Go home and talk it over with your father." The young man became quite irritated at this. "My father wouldn't understand this," he said. "I don't talk to him about such things."

When he saw this leader some time later he told him what had happened. "I was most upset with your counsel at the time," he said, "but some days later I was hauling hay with my father. As we worked together I got to thinking about what you had said, and I decided to ask his advice as you had suggested."

He continued: "We sat down on a bale of hay and talked. I was amazed at my dad's response. I didn't think he understood about such things. But he told me about how he met Mom and about their courtship. Suddenly I found myself enthralled with what he was saying. I asked him more and more searching questions about things. The answers he gave me seemed to ring loud and clear and true to me. I took my dad's advice. It turned out to be exactly the right advice."

Yes, there is great wisdom available from our parents. They might appear to be "old fogies" at times, but they've been down a longer road and they've seen many things their children have not seen, and thus they have a greater perspective.

Be proud of them

Many years ago I was helping decorate for the senior dance at my high school. Into the hall walked a rather attractive woman. I was sort of surprised to find out that she was the mother of one of my classmates. This family had just moved into our town and I had never met the parents.

The woman commented on the decorations, then she said to her son, "Let's dance for a minute." He started dancing with her, and she was really a special kind of dancer. They went round and round as the rest of us watched in awe.

As I looked on, I found myself thinking, "It must be something to have a mom that looks young like that, a mom who can dance like that, a mom who just fits in with the gang the way she does."

For just a few seconds the thought flashed into my mind that I wished she was my mother. I wondered in my heart: "What would I do if my mom walked in? She's not young like my friend's mother. My mother is a little heavy and she just combs her gray hair straight back and fixes it in a bob at the back. I don't think she knows much about dancing at all."

As I stood there thinking, it occurred to me that I might be a little ashamed to have my mom come by while I was with my friends decorating for a dance. I felt bad about having that feeling, but that's the way I felt. At home I was really glad she was my mom, but sometimes out in public ... I don't know. During my teenage years I started not wanting to have her come around when I was with my classmates. It wasn't because I didn't love her, it was just that I had the feelings which I've just described.

Maybe you have that feeling about your mom or dad sometimes. Maybe they're not impressive-looking, or maybe they aren't very flashy in public. I don't know what point I have in saying this, except that I want you to know how I felt just in case you ever feel that way. Later I felt very proud of my mother, felt it was grand to have her as my mom. Sometimes in the insecurity and thoughtlessness of our youthful years we overlook the true greatness of our parents because we put all the emphasis on physical appearances. When I grew up I learned to show my mom how proud I was of her. I hope you grow up much sooner than I did.

LOVING OR LIKING OR TOLERATING YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Try to like your brothers and sisters. That is easier with some of them than it is with others. Usually you will have one sibling who will "bug" you constantly. The little wars raging between the two of you on a day in and day out basis will be a constant disruption to family peace. Try to make a truce. I don't know how to advise to do this. But I do know he is not going to change and so the only solution is for you to change.

Fake him or her out by doing something for them. Help them with their assigned chore. Bring them their favorite candy bar when you return from the store. Stay out of their space as much as is possible. When you feel a fight coming on, walk away.

The more you try to cut down on the friction between the two of you the easier it will become. Of course you love them but it is so difficult for you to like them. Be tolerant toward them. Try with all your heart to live in peace with them. Good luck!

SUMMARY

I hope this chapter was not too preachy. I feel you'll understand. Happiness with your friends is happiness indeed. But happiness with your family is pure joy, You can make it

happen by doing the little things suggested in these pages. If you give it a go you will be great at the best skill of all-the skill of familying.

Chapter 7

CHASTITY IS THE FOUNDATION OF FAMILY HAPPINESS

Those of us who have seen the film, Field of Dreams, were most touched when, , was finally able to play a game of catch with his father. All the other magical moments in that touching film led up to that point. The baseball diamond, carved out of a cornfield, was not built so that his baseball heroes could come. It was built so that his father could come. No dreams are as sweet as are those wherein family members are brought together. No dreams are as painful as those wherein family members are pulled apart.

The sacred nature of power of procreation

Before we go on to the less important aspects of family life, let us discuss the supreme family matter-namely the power of procreation. It is this power and the emotions associated with it, which brings the family together. By this power we become parents. The physical and spiritual aspects associated with this power allow us to experience the joy of expressing pure love and total commitment to our marriage partner. “Chastity” is the word we use to describe the sacred protection with which we guard this power. This power must be kept sacred by strict adherence to the divine law of chastity. If chastity is disregarded our family dream will end in tragedy.

Because of the Atonement of our Savior, the law of chastity can be broken and then repaired. Through deep regret and painful and continual repentance we can be forgiven for a violation of this law. But how much greater it is, if from our youth onward, we keep this central and foundational principle of happiness.

Sometimes good people allow foolishness and selfishness to enter into their lives. They flirt, they compromise their commitments, passion destroys reason and they fall. They sometimes rationalize their behavior by making what they consider to be valid excuses. But, on the matter related to breaking the law of chastity there is no valid excuse.

The power is in us to resist temptation and to be true to our spouse and our family. Shakespeare might well have said, “This above all. To thine own (family) be true, and then it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.”

THE JOY OF BEING TRUE TO YOUR FAMILY

But that is the heavy, dark side of subject of the law of chastity. Now let us talk of the light and joyous side of this eternal law.

While serving as a stake president in a young adult stake, I often spoke of experiencing the joy of the living the law of chastity. The joy of coming to the altar of marriage having kept or restored yourself, through repentance, to a perfect obedience to this law.

Then I’d discuss the future destiny awaiting the worthy. To do so I would paint a vision of what marriage truly is. By doing so, I could teach most clearly the blessing that come

from obedience to this sacred law. In teaching of matters related to chastity, I'd say something such as this to the two young folks:

During your serious dating days, the two of you might kiss each other good night at the door. Then you will go in to your home and you will journey to yours. But when the time comes that you are married, you can walk up on the porch, get out your key, unlock the door and you're both home.

The best time to get married is in the winter when it is freezing cold outside. Hopefully there will often be a raging blizzard beating against your window. But you are inside and you are together and there is no one else there.

Oh the joy of being married and having just you and your spouse in your little house. Hopefully when that happens, you won't have much money. You'll have to cook macaroni mixed with hamburger. You can toss in half of a can of tomatoes and a bit of onion (if you are both going to eat it). You'll drink cool-aid because you can't afford Sprite. Then you'll sit at a card table because you won't be able to afford a fancier model. Maybe you won't even have chairs and will have to sit on your suitcases just as you did near the end of your mission. As you look across the table at each other the food will taste better than a T-bone steak served at the most exclusive restaurant in the town.

You'll look at him and your heart will be all a flutter, for he will have written, "I love you," and he butter.

After dinner, you'll go about your evening duties and then finally it will be time to go to bed. You'll kneel in prayer and tell the Lord of your deepest desires. Then as the winter wind outside howls you'll hold each other close. Through the intimacies of marriage you'll feel as though you are the only two people in the entire world. The two of you will be totally one. Your physical relationship will be spiritual and an expression of deep loyalty and perfect love. You'll have a shared feeling that no matter what comes toward you, the two of you will still win. Your marriage partner and you, what a team! There is no other partnership that will even come close to this one. This partnership is the very essence of pure happiness.

As time goes by, through a bit of reason and a lot of prayer you'll feel that the time is right (sometimes it happens before that), for a third party to come to live in your home. Soon you'll learn that through this sacred creative power, this grand expression of love, the two of you are going to become the parents of a little child. Of all the news you'll ever learn none will be as sweet as when you learn that you are going to have a baby.

As the children come and time passes the love you felt for each other on your wedding day will mature. You will keep your romantic eyes singularly focused upon each other. In time you will arrive at middle age. Perhaps by then you'll not

be as physically attractive as you once were. But the loss of any such outward beauty will be compensated for by a gentle ever increasing spiritual beauty. These inward feelings will more than make up for any loss of hair or gain of waistline. These feelings make marital relations sweeter and more fulfilling with each passing year. Such loyal love for the two of you will be eternal.

I loved writing the part that I just wrote. To me it describes perfectly the blessing of the law of chastity.

As Father Hespris, the president of Notre Dame University once said, “The greatest thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother.” And to that we add, “The greatest way to preserve and enhance that love is to be everlastingly faithful and loyal to her.” And she to him.

The law that is at the foundation of family unity is and will forever be the law of chastity. Upon this foundation can be built an enduring and ever increasing abundance of happiness. To attempt to build on any other foundation is like attempting to build upon sand. To build upon this foundation is to build upon a rock

Chapter 8

THE HUSBAND AND THE WIFE: EACH DESERVES THE BEST

Up until this point in the book you have been asked to be your own therapist. Now it is time for the husband to act as a therapist for his wife and she for him. Therapists give emotional support to their clients. The best thing you can do for your spouse is to give him or her abiding emotional support.

GIVE EACH OTHER THE BEST

When I met and became well acquainted with Marilyn I said to myself, “She deserves the very best.” So I asked her to marry me.

Now many years later I still feel she deserves the best. And it is my dream to give her that. Fortunately the best is not embodied in the word “handsome.” (I could never give her that. Except a little maybe.) And the best is not money and the things money can buy. But that is a good second best.

What then is the best? The best a husband and a wife can give to each other is loving emotional support. All other exchanges between spouses are a distant second to that.

Emotional support is a basic need for all of us

Even the toughest of us are vulnerable to life’s constant little messages which whisper,

“You are less than you ought to be.”

“When compared to others, you don’t measure up.”

“The best” which we each deserve are messages coming from our spouse which say,

“You are everything to me.”

“When compared to others, you are far beyond the best of them.”

To send such messages in word, in attitude, and in deed is to give our spouse the very best.

Doing better is the best

Most of us send such messages some of the time. But we often stumble and become insensitive and move away from the best toward the worst. But the hopeful thing is that we can each do better and as we do so “our better” magnifies itself into “the best.”

WE ARE ALL EMOTIONALLY VULNERABLE

Even quality marriages have times of difficulty. Discouragement creeps in and sometimes settles in to our hearts as depression. Times of financial struggles, times of pregnancy, times of overwhelming demands on time and energy can push most of us to the edge of our emotional limits.

Money, medicine and counseling can act as salve for such deep wounds. But in marriage there can be no lasting relief except as each spouse gives to the other continual doses of emotional support.

An appeal for emotional support

I remember a letter Marilyn wrote to me when our children were young. Maybe you will be able to see yourself in this story:

Marilyn wrote, "George, you just don't realize how difficult things are for me. I know that you try, but there are so many things that you don't understand because you don't experience them. With Matt, Kathryn, Devin, Marinda, and Dwight still so young, and as I near the time of the birth of our new baby, I sometimes wonder if it is all worth it. Sometimes with all the demands on me and the physical and emotional strain involved, I wonder if I can make it.

She added, "You are busy in your work and in your church assignments and you are so proud of our little family that you can't quite see that I need more of your support and love. Most of all, I need your understanding. "I can tell that sometimes when you come home from work you are a bit disgusted that the house is a little cluttered. I sense that you wonder what I've been doing all day.

"I snap at the children for some small thing they do wrong and you look at me like I am a tyrant. I feel like a tyrant. I don't want to be ornery with you and them. It's just that at times I feel like a failure as a wife and a mother and even as a human being."

She closed the letter by appealing to me that we sit down with her and talk about these things.

That letter was the most painful wake up call I have ever received. Some how my success at work, the respect that I felt I had among my associates there and at church, and my feelings of success as a father caused me to ignore what I really knew. That was that I was failing in the most important role I will ever have-the role of husband.

I knew that the best way I could help Marilyn during those difficult years was to give her emotional support. Yet so often I reacted in just the opposite way.

An exchange of support

I remember that when we did sit down to talk about the letter, Marilyn again expressed some of her frustrations. I listened and tried with all my heart to understand. She got after me pretty good and even though it hurt, I knew that I deserved it. I solemnly pledge to do better.

As I listened I believe she sensed how much I cared for her and how much I was pained by my own shortcomings.

With great tenderness and sensitivity she smiled and said:

I know that I have painted a pretty dark picture. There are bright spots, and I really would not trade places with anyone in the world. I am always proud of you and I am grateful that you try so hard to be a good man and a good father. The children are cute because they look like my side of the family. They are good most of the time, and I am deeply grateful to be their mother. It's hard for me not to brag about them. That's why I like to visit your mother. I can sit and brag to her about you, her son, and about our children, her grandchildren and she completely agrees.

Then she said something that I desperately needed to hear. She put her hand on mine and said, "I love you."

As much as she needed to talk and to have my support and my love I needed the same from her.

After that, I tried, oh how I tried! I still fell short, but I did better.

An everlasting hope to do better in providing emotional support

Several years later Marilyn gave me permission to search in her cedar chest for something I needed for a historical project I was working on. She keeps many of her life's most significant items in that chest. As I search for what I needed, I accidentally saw that letter there. As I read it again I hoped that I had done better in the intervening years. I wanted to destroy the letter. But I knew that was not my right, Marilyn alone could do that. All I could do is to so live that she would someday read it again and say, "This letter is not the way George is now. So I shall destroy it." I think that she has done that. I hope so. But I dare not ask.

HUSBANDS ARE THE MOST VULNERABLE

Wives need much emotional support from their husbands. But even more so, husbands need such support from their wives. Men are so super-sensitive. Some men would not admit that, but it is still true. The more a man tries to cover up his vulnerability with a macho attitude the more certain it is that he dare not let anybody get into the area of his heart that is so easily wounded.

I long for indications from Marilyn that she feels I am not only “okay,” but that I am “tremendous.” The whole world could applaud my accomplishments but the only applause that makes me feel successful and secure is her applause. The overwhelming amount of the feelings I have about myself comes from the reflections I see in the mirror that she holds in her hand. If I feel that in her eyes I am a quality person then my feelings of self worth soar.

Knowing that she understands my feelings is essential to my happiness. So often I “over act” my feelings just so she will see that something is wrong. When she sees that I am upset, it causes her to ask, “What is wrong?”

Then I can say, “Nothing is wrong!”

That answer will tell her that something is really wrong. Then with just two or three words she can change everything for me. But if she doesn’t come to my emotional rescue I about have an emotional breakdown.

For example, I lose things around the house. When I do so, I search and search. I start to feel that it is Marilyn’s fault that I can’t find it. When she sees that I am in great turmoil she steps in and either finds it right where I just searched or somehow she comforts me by letting me know that she understands why I feel so upset.

I wish I was not the way I am, but I am. I don’t want her to treat me like a little child but it sure helps when she does.

A monument to emotional support

I once created a monument to the emotional support I receive from Marilyn. It happened this way:

Many years ago, before our children were born I was majoring in art at Brigham Young University. In my sculpturing class, I had an assignment to create a figure out of a log. We had no car at the time, and so I couldn't really get to the woods to get such a log. I walked around the neighborhood in hopes that I'd find one in someone's yard.

It was on a day when I was feeling a little sorry for myself anyway. I felt frustrated that I didn't have a log. Then I decided the reason I couldn't get a log was because we didn't have a car. I concluded that the reason we didn't have a car was because we didn't have any money. "Why do we have to be so poor?" I asked myself.

Abandoning the hopeless search for the log, I dejectedly returned home. I decided to lie down on the bed and feel sorry for myself like I used to when I was a young kid. Marilyn asked me what was wrong. I gave my usual answer, "Nothing." She persisted. Finally I said, "I need a log to carve for my sculpture class. And we

don't have a car so I can't get one so I guess I'll fail the class and fail college and fail everything else in life."

Instead of giving me the sympathy I thought I needed, she put on your coat and walked out on me. A half hour later she opened the front door and entered, dragging a log behind her. She never told me then or since where you got that log. It was really a beauty--the very log I had envisioned in my mind that I needed.

When she laid it at my feet I was completely choked with emotion. I mean how many wives have gone out and found a log for their husband?

I took the log to the art class. I began to chip away the outer bark and finally the wood itself. I carved almost unconsciously. Finally, a figure of a woman emerged from wood. The teacher came to me, and as we both backed away to have a general look, he put his hand on my shoulder and surprised me by saying, "George, you have carved the exact image of your wife."

It was then that I realized that my heart and not my head had directed my hands. I had created a monument to Marilyn .

Through the years she has figuratively found and brought to my heart one emotional log after another. I don't really know if I would have survived if she hadn't sensitively done so. For that reason more than any other, her image will be in the center of my heart forever.

AN EMOTIONAL SUPPORT BACKUP, "I'M SORRY."

I don't want you to get the idea that Marilyn is perfect and I am not, even though that is largely true. But she has her imperfections just as I do. We have both learned that when we fail in being sensitive to the emotional needs of the other the best of all backups is to say, "I'm sorry."

I remember a time in Brigham City when the children cried most of the night. Because I had a very important meeting early the next morning in Salt Lake City, I felt I'd better get a good night's rest. So when the children woke up, I'd remain in bed while Marilyn attended to their needs. After all, I reasoned, "All she has to do tomorrow is to stay home with the children."

When morning came, with great sensitivity, I slipped quietly out of bed so as not to wake her or the children. I began to get dressed and discovered that I did not have a white shirt that was ironed. As I plugged in the iron to try to iron only those parts of the shirt that would show under my coat, I wondered, "What does Marilyn do all day?"

As I began to prepare my own breakfast I discovered there was no bread. I felt a slight twinge of disgust as I wondered, "How could she forget something as

important as buying or baking a loaf of bread?" I hurriedly made hot cakes. I took the first bite and was repulsed at the taste of what I had created.

By now my disgust was fully mature. I wanted Marilyn to know how I felt. Usually the best way I could do that was to be silent and not speak to her. But, with her not there to observe my disgusted silence, all the negative emotion I was feeling was being wasted.

It was then that I decided to bang around. The best time to bang around--move a chair, throw pans in a cupboard, and so on--is in the silence of early morning. I was sure that if I banged around, she would wake up and say to herself, "George is banging around. I must have done something wrong."

Finally, when it was time to leave, I came back into the bedroom. I got my suit coat from the closet and put it on. Then I decided that if I really slid the sliding door hard, it would make the loudest bang of all. She'd really know then that I was upset.

In that mental state I drove the two blocks to my office to get some papers for my meeting in Salt Lake City. Because of the importance of the meeting I knelt to pray. As I did so, all I could think of was her. I said, "Heavenly Father, please bless Marilyn that she will have a happy day!" Then it seemed that I heard a voice say, "George, you go back home and bless her yourself--you are much closer to her than I am."

I ran back to my car and drove home. By now she was out of bed. Something had awakened her earlier. It took courage for me to do it, but I said, "Marilyn, I'm sorry." Then I said something that was easier to say after what I'd just said. I added, "And I love you." I gave her a kiss and as I went out the door I shouted back, "I sure hope you have a happy day." And she did and so did I.

So often in life there is a stimulus and a response. In the foregoing story the stimulus was the un-ironed shirt and the un-baked bread. My response to that stimulus was to act with immature disgust. But there was in this case a chance for a second response. A chance to say, "I'm sorry." What a wonderful expression those words are when they originate in your heart and escape through your lips. But unfortunately, when too many, "I'm sorries," are used to attempt to nullify to many insensitivity's those words lose their power.

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL INTIMACIES

Physical intimacies when combined with emotional intimacies are a supreme manifestation of perfect love. Beautiful unions of the physical and spiritual nature of husband and wife do much to unravel frustration, to relieve pent up emotions, to blend two hearts into one and to renew hope for the future.

The two dimensions of marital love-physical/spiritual

I was interviewed near the end of my mission by Elder Spencer W. Kimball. Of that experience I recall:

He asked me, “Elder Durrant, how do you feel about yourself and your mission? Do you have any special concerns that you would like to discuss with me?”

I did not reply for several seconds. Then I spoke, “There is one concern. There is a sister missionary serving in our district. She has been here her entire mission, as have I. I have seen her often. She now serves in Scarborough. She has brought many to the truth. I have seen her teach, and I’ve felt the power of her testimony.”

I paused and then continued, “I have such great respect for her. I really feel I am falling in love with her.”

I said no more. He asked, “Is it Sister Burnham?”

I looked into his eyes and answered softly, “Yes, it is.”

He smiled and replied, “I don’t blame you for feeling as you do. I just interviewed her, and she is impressive.”

I smiled and nodded my head in agreement.

He leaned forward and said, “Elder Durrant, you have fallen in love spiritually. That’s all you can do on a mission. But that is not enough to allow you to know what the future will bring. So now you must put this matter aside and lock your heart until your mission is concluded. Then when you return home, you can determine if you not only love her spiritually but also physically. Because, you see, love must be both of those ways, both spiritual and physical. Neither the physical side of love and marriage nor the spiritual side can be complete without the other.”

I did as he advised me and put the matter aside.

But after we both concluded our missions and returned home we dated and kissed and the physical sparks really flew. With a perfect blend of spiritual and physical love we married and really have lived happily ever after.

Not for punishment or reward

If the physical intimacies of marriage are used by one or both of the spouses as rewards or punishment, then the emotionally dimension of such intimacies is reduced. If this continues, soon things will not be as they should be and the entire mutual emotional support begins to erode until the marriage suffers to the point that it effects the emotional climate of the entire family.

You can make it right

So what do you do if this most basic function of your marriage loses its emotional rewards and thus adds to already existing frustrations of day to day living? You talk, and you listen and you discern the feelings of each other, and you reach out and you love. You also repair your personal character weaknesses that inhibit you from giving yourself to the other because you are too tied up within yourself.

Sincere prayer at the bedside enhances the spiritual nature of the physical marital relationship and adds to a beauty that surpasses description.

MOM AND DAD'S LOVE IS THE FAMILIES GREATEST BLESSING

The greatest blessing you; a husband and a wife, and a father and a mother; can give yourselves and your children is to love each other. And the foundation of that love is to constantly strive to give each other loving emotional support. By doing so you will give each be a powerful therapist for the other- you will give the very best and that is what each of you deserve.

CHAPTER 9

MAKING TIME FOR THE FAMILY

Most of us would give our life for our family. We'd stand right up and take a bullet for any one of them. Instant acts of heroism, wherein one gives his or her life to save another, are often easier to perform than are those acts of life long courage wherein one gives a bit of his or her life each day to help the family.

The best way to give your life for your family is to give them, on a day in and day out basis, a generous amount of the stuff our life is made of-our time. But as you and I know spending more time with our family is much easier said than done. We resolve to do so and we feel guilty when we do not. But somehow, life's other activities which matter less grabs our time before it before it gets to the family which matters most.

Some parents feel really good about the amount of time that they spend with their family. For others, the lack of time with their family causes them great heart ache. Others feel that because they are so involved in things other than the family that they need to be part of occasional really big family events to make up for missing frequent small family events. They call such special family experiences, "quality time." It is good to be a, "quality time," parent if there is no other choice. But it is an appropriate amount of, "quantity time," that makes the family more functional and more fun. Of course we can't be with the family all of the time. But perhaps we could do a little better in the future than we have in the past. The ideas in this chapter will help with that.

Your family therapist, yourself, asks you:

How are you doing in this matter of time with your family?

Do you feel good about things as they have been?

Do you sometimes feel a bit guilty that you re not home more?

If there is a bit quilt in your heart in regards to this matter, your therapist would advise you that quilt feelings are good if they prompt you to do better in the future than you have in the past. So let's talk about that.

THE JOY OF BEING WITH THE WHOLE FAMILY

One night, long ago, our family was having family home evening. Our three year old daughter Sarah looked around the room and then excitedly announced, "Our whole family is here."

There is no greater joy than being together trying to do something good with your whole family.

The closest we come to experiencing heaven on earth is for mother, father and all the children to be together in the same place laughing, playing, working, contesting, reading, discussing, deciding, driving, learning, seeing, experiencing, eating, performing, praying and loving. Oh sure, at such gatherings there will be some disrupting, some disputing, some complaining, some criticizing but even through these experiences there is touch of heaven as the whole family strives to work things out.

Fond memories of family

Children, when grown to adults remember best and most fondly those times when they were together with the whole family going on vacation, camping out, playing hide and seek, flying kites, eating out, having family home evening, being secret Santas, going to ball games, planting gardens, going fishing, going bowling, having a talent show, fasting and praying for grandmother to live, and picnicking in the park.

SCHEDULING FAMILY TIME

But for these, “Our whole family is here,” experiences to happen the whole family must arrange their schedule so they will be there.

Teenagers will be there if they know in advance

Teenage children, who are pulled toward activities with their school; with their church group; with their sports, musical or dance groups and with their friends; must be willing to make family activities their highest priority. They can do this if father and mother and themselves plan family activities well ahead so to avoid scheduling conflicts.

It is a busy world out there and to pull off regular activities with the whole family is a major cue. The whole matter is dependent upon scheduling.

Young children love family time

When the children are young they live for the chance to do something with the family. Thus the scheduling problems rest with the parents. And most often the problem is with the father. Will he have time to do things with the family or will he be busy with non-family matters?

FATHERS CAN BE THERE

Young fathers of today live in a demanding work and financial world. Their success in the work world often requires long hour and much energy sapping work. If they have their own business they may have to be overly devoted to that activity or it could fail. Making enough money to pay the bills and to enjoy at least a small part of the good life may involve a second job.

Sports activities and other hobbies can consume much of the little time the father does have left over.

Church work often sends us out and away from home.

When the children are young fathers needs to be there

Often these frenzied activities occur when your children are young. It's easy not to be home because the little ones don't seem to miss you. But those young years are crucial. If father is gone too much during those years it will plant seeds in the children which in the older years will bear bitter fruit.

The best guarantee that teenagers will be fairly good citizens of the school, the church and the family is for the parents, especially the father, to spend much time with them when they are young children.

This story is like unto raising children:

In the army I played ping-pong with a friend who was much better at the game than I was. But I often beat him because I made certain that I won the early points of each game. It was his style to play recklessly in this first part of the contest using every fancy shot he could muster. Soon because of my steady play I would lead 15 to 6. He would then sense that the score now demanded that he become serious or he would lose. But by then it was too late. I would win 21 to 18.

Score points, by being with your children in their earliest years. By doing so, seeds will be planted that years later will bear the sweet fruit of a more functional family.

I recall giving a talk on the benefits to the children of having regular family home evenings. A distraught mother talked to me after and explained. "My two teenage boys are running wild. They have no regard for anything their father or I tell them. I felt the truth of what you said about the way family home evening could help them." Then she tearfully asked, "How can we get started doing that?"

I sadly replied, "It is too late."

It is never too late to do better

But of course it is never too late. It is just that it sure is good to start gathering your whole family together when the children first arrive at your home. But it is far better late than never.

I told the lady that her children would probably not object to going out to eat each Monday night. Maybe then some good family communication could take place. But she and I sure did agree that it sure would be good to turn back the clock to the time when

those children were young and at that age they would love to get together with the whole family.

So, if you are a young family start now while the children are willing and do all you can to have your whole family together as often as we can. If you are an older family and from long ago until now you have spent much time with your children keep spending more and more time with them. And if your children are like those of the lady who we mentioned earlier, teenage children who are running a little wild and who have little regard for anything you tell them, then go home very chance you get and try to make up for lost time.

THE KEY IS TO SCHEDULE

If you schedule something in writing it will happen.

Sit down with your whole family and a calendar and do some planning. Ask the children to suggest some things they would like the whole family to do. Maybe plan the next three months. Summer is a fun time for which to plan. So is Winter. Spring is good too. And you can't beat the Fall. Along with the fun and learning you can do each Monday night for family home evening; and the quiet family things you can do each Sunday after church, and all the spontaneous things that will happen because your whole family is at home so often, you can plan some special family outings and activities which can be anticipated with great excitement.

Don't go overboard. You can complicate your life by over scheduling. But if you don't schedule a couple of extra things a month you will miss some wonderful experiences of having the whole family together doing some very special things. You'll know what is too much or too little. Remember no scout troop ever had a good outing without some long distance scheduling and much planning, the same is true of families.

FOCUS ON THE FATHER

Now let's focus on the father. He is often the culprit when it comes to being away from the family too much. He'll be committed and will be there for the things the whole family plans. But that isn't enough. He needs to schedule into his busy life some special things to do for the entire family or for individual members of the family. If he doesn't schedule these special things many of them will not happen. Of course many family things happen without being planned because they just happen spontaneously as fillers during times when nothing more pressing beckons

Spontaneous family activities

Examples of such things are:

Dad is home and so is mom and it is a warm night so the two of them go for a walk.

Or dad and his son have a one on one basketball game before he hurries off to a meeting.

Or mom and the three kids go to a Saturday afternoon movie when they discover there is nothing else to do.

Or Dad and mom and the kids watch TV together for two hours in the evening.

Or excetera, excetera, excetera

To schedule it and plan it will insure that it will happen

All these unplanned things are wonderful and vital. But they are not enough. Some extra special things need to be planned in advance, and written down so that nothing can supersede them and push them aside.

I have an aversion to planning ever detail of my life. But I'm really big on looking ahead and planning things to do with my family. On a Sunday I look at the week and write in what I could do for Marilyn, for each child and for the entire family. Once these things are written down it is the same as a guarantee that they will happen. It becomes a matter of my personal integrity.

Examples:

Get Marilyn some flowers and go out to dinner with her Friday night.

Go to Sarah's volleyball game on Tuesday night.

Write a letter to Dwight on his mission on Sunday afternoon.

Take the family to the state fair, as planned by the family, on Saturday

Call my Sister Afton on Tuesday and see how her minor surgery went.

Have dinner at six with the family on Monday through Thursday

Looking ahead and planning these things-the most important of things you will do this week- will make them happen. If something comes up in the way of other duties I can say to those who ask, "Oh, I see I already have a commitment at that time you are asking me to come."

Keep your promises

I recall a time when I told Sarah I would come to her volleyball game at six o'clock on Tuesday evening. That day my boss asked me to stay after work to help on a project that

had just come up. I told him I could not stay but that I would come in early the next morning. He wanted to know why I could not stay and I told him. He did not understand and was a bit upset. I think he lost some respect for me. But I'd sooner have that happen than to lose respect for myself.

Of course I know that one needs to be reasonable. But broken promises to the children are a very serious offence and should be avoided if at all possible.

Things which do not have to be planned and they will still happen

Some things do not have to be scheduled in writing and they will still happen. The things that happen without needing to be recorded in your daily planner are: work things, church things, and civic duty things. Things you feel like you have no choice about doing. You have just got to do them because they take precedent over all else-especially over time with the family.

Special family things if not planned often do not happen

The things that most often do not happen unless they are planned in writing are family things.

If Sarah's volley game, which I mentioned earlier, had not been written in my book I would have probably stayed at work and missed the game. That was the game she wanted me to see more than any other game. Yet I would have missed it if it hadn't been written right there in my book. I still remember the game. We lost and Sarah cried. We had a real daughter dad talk on the way home. A talk that was far more important than any project at work.

I know you have to do good at work or you will be fired. But you also have to have a little courage and stand up for the things that matter most. If you do that, things at work will go better than they otherwise would have.

Traveling fathers

In today's mobile society some fathers travel and are gone from home many consecutive days. I'm sure they wish this was not so but it is. Such fathers can compensate for the time away by making special efforts to get home as soon as they can and by planning and carrying out many family activities when they are home.

To such traveling fathers and to all fathers we say, "Let's all go home whenever we possibly can. And until we can go home, let's think about the time when we can. The most uplifting thought that I can invite into my mind is the thought which says, "Pretty soon I'm going to go home."

Longing to go home

While serving with the army in Korea, I was away from my wife and son for a year. I had many reasons to become discouraged. When on guard duty or some other difficult task, I felt a bit discouraged. But then my thoughts would turn to Marilyn and my little son, who were thousands of miles away. It would warm my whole soul to think, "Very soon I'll be going home." That thought kept me going all that lonely year. But even if you've only been gone since seven o'clock that morning it is still uplifting to think of your family, to smile and say to yourself, "Very soon I'll be going home."

The journey home is the best one

There will never be a journey as important as the one that takes you home. Go home as often as you can and as early as duty will allow. Spend both quality and quantity time at home--both are essential. Some of us fathers know that we are not home enough, and we say to ourselves and to others, "It isn't the quantity but the quality of time that a father spends at home that matters." There is truth in this statement, but we must not let it be a salve to a conscience that says we are too much away from the family.

There will never be a journey as important as the one that takes you home. Go home as often as you can and as early as duty will allow. Spend both quality and quantity time at home

CHURCH DUTIES AND FAMILY TIME

Church callings can encroach on a father's time with his family. I once knew a young bishop who was among the most dynamic and loving spiritual leaders I have ever known. He was at the time of his service a new college professor who was an amazing teacher and scholar. But he had to study late into the nights to prepare his lectures and do the research necessary to teach with perfection and to gain tenure as a professor. He and his wife had a beautiful two year old daughter and he spent much time with her. I watched him and wondered how long he could maintain his pace. I'm sure it was the Lord's purest and richest blessings that got him through. I knew in this case as in all cases the Lord looks after his faithful servants.

But we must be wise in the way we do our duties. We cannot be a hero bishop who is in every home to help his flock but who is too seldom at home to help his family.

I recall my own case:

Some years ago I was serving as a bishop. At the same time I was working on a doctor's degree at a university and holding a full time job. My children felt I was spending too much time away from them. I was under some strain, fearing that because of my desire to succeed in so many areas I was really failing as a man.

One Sunday evening all the members of my ward had gone home. I had stayed on for a while to complete some work. I walked into the chapel to turn off the lights before departing for home. I felt lonely in the empty chapel. As I stood there I felt that my back would not bear for another day the heavy burdens which I was carrying.

I fell to my knees near the pulpit and cried to the Lord. I told him, as one friend would another, my deepest concerns. I poured out the feelings of my soul to him and described in detail my seemingly insurmountable tasks. When I finished I remained kneeling. And as I did I heard him speak to me in my heart. The answer he gave me was all I needed, for he said just three things:

Go forward.
Do your best.
Love your family.

I arose a new man. My burdens had been made light. I'd keep going. I would spend less time on the unimportant things in the ward, and I might not get "A" grades in school, but I'd keep going. I'd do my best, and that would be success. And most of all, I'd love my family. Oh, how I'd love them! I'd love my wife and I'd tell her so. I'd spend time with my children, and I'd know that such is the highest form of Church work.

Family time is church work

Because the faithful attach such great emphasis on doing their church work first and foremost. It would be well to always be aware that time with your family is the highest form of church work.

While I was mission president, I would quite often resolve that it was again time for some high-priority Church work. So I'd bid the missionaries goodbye and head home and gather Marilyn and the eight kids and head off to do some church work. On one such occasion we all went to an amusement park called Opryland in Nashville, Tennessee. It is a beautiful park where groups perform country-western music. I know of few more pleasant places. 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 today I did six hours of glorious Church work." I'd eat a little more cotton candy and let the children lead me wherever they wanted to go.

Church work with your family doesn't mean you leave other Church work undone. It merely means that you do both--and you can do both. Some days, as scheduled, you can spend a whole day with the children. Other times it will have to be an unscheduled ten-minute wrestle or one paper airplane constructed between dinner and the evening meeting. A few minutes' informal fun with Father every day makes a million memories for the children.

Misguided dedication

Some fathers who spend undue amounts of time at work or in Church callings take pride in these long hours away from home, which they feel is a mark of dedication. Perhaps it is dedication, but in too many cases it is just a way of not going home. Some feel more confident and capable away from home than they do with their families. We should examine ourselves to see if, under the guise of "dedication," we've left to our wives the most important of all causes to which we should be dedicated--our families.

Family and church are one

Church work when done wisely is never in conflict with family time. For these two great causes are in reality one cause.

When I was called to be a mission president, I was fearful that at a most critical time in the lives of my eight children I might not have sufficient time to be a good father. I was determined that being a father was a more important call from the Lord than being president. That meant that even though I would dedicate myself to the mission, I would double my dedication as a father. I knew that in order to preside effectively in the mission, I must first preside well at home. I spent much time with my family, knowing they were the only ones who would still be mine at the end of my mission. If they felt secure and happy in the early days of our mission, things would go from good to better.

One of the first orders of business was to throw a big rope over a high limb on the huge ash tree that towered over our front yard. An acrobatic elder climbed the rope and tied it to the limb. Thus the giant mission home swing was born. With the swing came instant neighborhood friends for our younger children.

A few months after our arrival, we attended a mission presidents' seminar. Each president, asked what he felt was his best idea so far, reported on some program which he felt had enhanced the work. When my turn came, I said, "The best thing I've done so far is to build a swing." Everyone laughed. President S. Dilworth Young was amazed and asked, "What?" I described the swing and explained that my major goal was to be a good father. I told of a young wife who had visited me just a few days before and had said, "My experience as a mission president's daughter was a nightmare from which I shall never recover." I felt the Lord had sent her to me to teach me to look first to my family and then to the mission duties. The swing became my symbol of this setting of priorities. Later came a

basketball standard and a sand pile. Our yard became a park where I spent much time with my children and where they settled for three happy years. I believe they will forever remember with joy their time in Kentucky and Tennessee.

Our eternal dream is to be able to look around in life and in heaven and to say with joy, "Our whole family is here."

OUR WHOLE FAMILY

By eating together nearly every night, by having family home evening each week, by doing quiet things together on Sunday, by doing fun and meaningful spontaneous family things and by scheduling and carrying out whole family activities and other special family "thoughtfulnesses" we can have our eternal dream come true. Our whole family will be there and they will each be whole.

So there it is. Was the message of this chapter a difficult one for you to bear? It would have been a tough one for me to read when I was younger and so anxious to succeed in the world and in the church. In those days when my children were small, and Marilyn needed me so much. In those days I often felt guilty.

When I did I made some new resolves and tried do better. Now I've retired from work and the work goes on just fine. But now, each day that goes by, I become more and more important to my children and grandchildren and to Marilyn. Putting your family first in your schedule and in your heart will insure that life will become sweeter with each passing day and year and life.

Chapter 10

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN YOUR FAMILY

Spouses who communicate reasonably well seldom have unsolvable marital problems. Children who can talk to their parents will rarely go far astray. Unfortunately most of us can communicate more effectively with those outside our families than we can with those within.

This chapter offers some valuable clues. Clues which will enable you to communicate with your family members a bit more effectively than ever before. Ideas will be presented on how to use family home evening as the heart of your family communication system. Even a slight increase in family communications will do much to make your family more functional.

HUSBAND AND WIFE COMMUNICATIONS

Marilyn and I are just barely average at communicating. When we plant petunias in the front yard she wants to plant them right and I want to plant them fast. If she corrects me on how to plant them, I get upset and the joy goes out of gardening faster than you can say Martha Stewart. So, usually we find it best for me to work in the back yard while she works in the front. When I drive if I make a mistake and almost crash she speaks sharply to me and I back to her. But then I repent and do not speak to her again all day.

Yet through all this we communicate enough to cause her to be crazy about me and I about her. I jokingly say that when I go away from home she stands with her nose against the front window watching for my return. I add that when I do return she sees me before I see her and she moves away from the window and busies herself doing something else when I enter the house. But I know that she stood waiting at the window all during my absence. Ha ha!

Once in awhile I'll give a talk on the subject of happy marriages and happy families. One night as Marilyn and I drove home from such a talk, she told me that she wished I was as good at being a husband as I advised other men to be. That sort of upset me and I ask her where she felt I should improve. She said, "Well you never talk to me."

"Nonsense," I replied. I added, "I say several sentences each day and sometimes I even get into paragraphs."

We rode the rest of the way home in silence because I was upset at her allegation of me not being communicative.

Of course I knew that she was right. I get most upset when I know that she is right. I wished that I were better at talking to her. I try to do better and at times I improve. But it is hard for me. I just sort of like silence. I like it when she talks to me and I just listen. I love it when she tells me things about what she thinks. Especially when it isn't something critical of me. But she feels I should do as much of the talking as she does and that is where I come up short. I think I could do better had we not made a rule that we would not gossip about others. That really cut down on our best conversational material.

Relax and the problem will probably remain but you will feel better.

Fortunately for me Marilyn doesn't make my shortage of communication skills into an international crisis. She wishes I could and would do better but she still adores me. Don't be too hard on your husband if he is not a talker when just the two of you are together. Wish that he would open up more but don't harp at him. Or if it is the wife who doesn't talk as much as you desire, don't harp at her.

In defense of myself, once in awhile I really get going and almost tire Marilyn out with my much talking. This usually happens on those occasions when we are facing some sort of crisis such as a child in trouble, or some type of exciting success, or plans to move to a new home, or a new job, or a lecture we heard at religion seminar or at church, or when I am in the middle of a project that really excites me, or when I just get in one of those unexplainable good moods.

Silence can be communications

I talked to one couple and they told me that they drove from Idaho Falls to Salt Lake City and all the while there was not a moment of silence. He said they just love to talk. To me that might be too much communication. Well timed silence is also a real way of communicating. I feel that Marilyn and I can almost read one another's thoughts. And we thrive on sessions of silence. This could be considered an excuse for my weaknesses but it is still true.

Seek to improve

So have a look at how you and your spouse do on communicating with each other. Try to do better. But don't get too caught up in the endless seminars on the need to increase your communications skills to the point where you feel that your world will come to an end if your communication with your spouse does not improve.

You've got to be alone-just the two of you

The best remedies to get more talk going is to go for the two of you to go on walks, or drives, or to take the TV out of the bedroom. Going out to dine is good but only works if it is just the two of you in your dinner party. So find time for more walks, drives, dinners lectures and other things of that kind.

The family problems that arise usually stimulate communication. We wish all our struggles would go away but if they did we would miss some of the very richest husband and wife communication. Communication which make us fall more and more in love with our wonderful spouse-the very one who we wish would talk to us more.

PARENT CHILDREN COMMUNICATIONS

One of the foremost parental desires is for their teenage children to be more communicative with them.

To have them talk to you have to be with them

I have found, through careful observation that the only time my children have ever talked to me is when I have been with them.

If you want your children to talk to you, you need to be with them. And if you want them to talk to you more, you need to be with them more. That is one of the reason *quantity* time with your family members and not just *quality* time is necessary.

Parents need to be the listeners

In a conversation one of the two parties needs to listen and other one needs to talk. Most of us want to be the talkers because we are so smart and so interesting. But, if we are the parents we should be willing to be the listener. It is through listening that we are helpful. We can build far better relationships with our children by listening to them than we can by talking to them.

A psychologist told me something that amazed me. He said a mother brought a boy to him who had serious emotional problems stemming from something that had occurred in the boy's life. In their private meetings the boy would not discuss the thing which had happened but was quite willing to talk about other things. The psychologist listened to the boy with great interest and respect. Later the mother was elated to report that the boy's problem had been dramatically reduced and she thanked the psychologist for talking to the boy about the troublesome matter in such a way that it had solved the problem. The psychologist told me he was not successful to that to that time in getting the boy to discuss what had happened. He had listened to the boy express his feelings on other things. The deep interest with which the psychologist had listened to the boy had caused the young man to have feelings, which enabled the problem to begin to be solved even though the problem had not yet been directly addressed.

There is something very therapeutic in having someone really listen to you with out any condemnation, without giving you pat answers, or with out trying to fix things.

The only way to begin talking about things that really matter is to have many talks about things that don't seem to matter. Things such as sports or favorite TV show and why the

weatherman is wrong so often. If we spend time talking about light things, such talk helps us form bridges of understanding which, every ounce in awhile, helps us to cross over to some very meaningful communication.

Doing things with our children creates opportunity for talk

We all know that there are times when we feel like talking and times when we want to remain silent. You never know when your children will feel like talking. When they do desire to express their feelings it would be good if you were there. The statistical chance of your being there when they want to talk is increased if you are there a lot.

If you take them to an auto race they may talk much about cars and drivers, but then they just might start to talk about what they desire to do with their life. That might lead to a discussion on how they are doing in school. But if you do not take them to the race, or some other event, then you will miss the things they would have said had you been there with them. If you work in the yard with your children and let them know how much you appreciate their help they might start to talk about their friends and what their friends think about drugs and music and all sorts of interesting things. If you are with them Sunday afternoon and you read something in the paper or a church magazine or the scriptures that you feel would interest them. You could say, "Listen to this." Then read the material to them and ask them what they think. They may say, "I'm not interested." Or they might start to talk.

Fishing for talk

It is like fishing. You have to cast the bait out and see if they will take it. You won't get a bite every time. Sometimes you will sense that your son or daughter has a problem and, try as you will, to get them to express it to you, they will not. If that happens don't press the matter. Reel in your fishing line and wait for a time when they will be biting -talking.

As you fish for them to talk to you about something you feel is bothering them, talk about things which do not have the emotional dimension that their problem has- things such as Dodge trucks or football or dance or politics or favorite ice cream flavors. Tell them a funny joke you heard and if they do not laugh, you know that this particular time is not a good time. When you sense that they don't want to talk or laugh or anything, just reel in your line and let it go until another time and place. But be sure to be around and ready to fish on another occasion.

Don't cut them off when they are ready to talk

Once in awhile you will sense that they are really biting. You'll sense that they are in a good mode and that they are talkative. Then with a few well-timed questions from you, they will express their feelings on some important matters. And even if they don't get into heavy topics, the light topics and banter will build better relationships. You just never know when they will start to talk about matters which matter. But you have to always be hoping that they will begin to open their mouths and hearts. And when they do

begin, close your own mouth and open your ears to both their words and feelings. Having your children talk to you even if they criticize you or say things with which you disagree is process of supreme importance. Once they begin to talk let them go as long as they will and if they start to slow down nod your head or say something such as, "I understand what you are saying. Tell me more." Do this with total sincerity and it will encourage them to go even deeper into their feelings.

Of course if you are not there or if you are in a hurry to get on to something else then none of this will happen. And if you are more interested in giving advice than you are in listening, then the understanding part of this will not happen. But if you are there and if you really want it to communicate heart to heart it will happen-at least once in awhile. Then the technique you need to employ is simply to keep listening until they run dry, all the while listening with your ears and your heart to understand their words and their feelings

It is easy to listen when the issue is not intense and personal and critical of you. I could listen to your kids and be perfect in doing so. And you could listen to mine. But neither of us are good at listening to our own. We feel so responsible if it seems to us that our children are going the wrong direction. Our emotions cause us to want to jump in and tell them what they need to do. That is where we must have a firm resolve to listen and not to defend. If we do lose our cool and erupt when we are talking to our children or our spouse that is all right sometimes. But after such an outburst, we need to take some time to think it over and then come back and say that we are sorry and then listen. This "second effort" has saved more family relationships than any other thing. The process of getting a child to tell you what is really in his or her heart is the finest of the parenting arts.

Don't be quick on the draw to give advice or to straighten out their thinking

When we listen long enough, our child might ask, "What do you think that I should do about what I have told you?"

The best answer is to reply "Wow! I don't know. What do you think you should do?" They will often come up with the right answer if we will listen.

Often when our children tell us certain things we can hardly wait to tell them how we had a similar problem once and how we dealt with it and solved it just like that. Don't succumb to temptations to use your amazing wisdom to solve the problem on the spot. Keep the focus on them instead of trying to turn the attention to yourself. Telling someone that you had it worse than they do leaves them feeling misunderstood and frustrated.

Talking about TV

You can get some good out of TV if you talk about the content of what is being viewed. The child might at first be defensive and say that she sees nothing wrong with the

content. If you do not jump in and tell her she must be out of her head if she likes such trash, it could be that a good heart to heart talk might ensue.

Talking as you do other things

I recall an experience I had with one of my sons. This young man was as ornery as they come. He was a real charmer at school and had a friendly word for everyone there. But at home he was about as talkative as a rock.

One evening when I came from work I was tired and I just wanted to sit in my chair and read the paper. But he loved basketball and wanted me to play with him. So I took a deep breath and follow him out to our basketball standard..

One night as we played he made a basket. I took the ball out of bounds. I looked into his eyes and just before I launch my jump shot or began my drive to the basket, I paused long enough to asked him a question. He seemed a bit unhappy and didn't want to talk even though my question was profound. It was, "What did you have for school lunch today?"

He replied, very negatively, "The same old stuff. Don't ask questions. Just play ball"

At my next turn I asked, "What exciting things happened at school?"

"Nothing. Just shoot."

Then I asked, "What did you do in gym class today?"

He brightened a little and said, "Hey, Dad, I did good today. If I can keep getting better I'll make the team. I made three long shots in a row."

"Wow! That is great. I can see how good you are when we play. You are getting so good it is scary." That sort of primed the pump, and he started to talk. After that there was a lot of time between baskets. Most of the time we just stood on the court and watched the sun go down and talked.

Our conversation deepened. He said, "Dad, I'm sorry I treat you and all the family the way that I do. It's not you guys that I don't like, it is me. I just don't feel good about things."

I replied, "You don't feel good?"

He answered "I just don't feel good about myself."

I listened without any comment and he continued. "I don't like the way I look."

I kidded him a little and said, "I don't understand that. You look just like me."

He smiled and said, "You look all right, Dad. It's just that I wish I were bigger. I wish I looked more like an athlete." He went on and poured his heart out to me. And as he talked and I listened, I understood and we were as one.

Finally we heard a shout from the house announcing that dinner was ready. As we walked toward the house, I put my hand on his shoulder. I couldn't make him any larger or look more like an athlete. All I could do was listen. But somehow I could see that just talking to me had sort of relieved the pressure for him. His mood had changed. He seemed to feel better.

Avoid pat answers

When my son said that he did not like the way that he looked. I could have told him, "Hey, my boy, all that is wrong with you is that you are too self conscious. I used to feel that way. I used to be smaller than you, and I was not a good student like you are. It was really tough for me. But I just decided to make the best of it and I got over it and so will you. Okay son? Now let's see a big smile and a good jump shot." If I'd said that I'm sure I would not have heard anymore about that or any of his other problems.

You and I are often willing to listen just long enough to think we understand the problem. And then we break in and tell the child just what he should do. Such solutions are not what the child usually wants. The son says, "All right." But he doesn't mean it and he still hurts. And if he keeps hurting, trouble lies ahead. Your greatest aid to him is to listen, listen, listen, and then speak just a few of the right words. Not words to belittle his problem, but words of understanding and perhaps, when the time is really right a suggestion or two.

Listening helps you settle sibling disputes.

Many times you will have to serve as referees for sibling disputes. To achieve fairness you need to do a good amount of listening.

Once our family was on a month-long journey to Canada. We had been in the car for days and were together so much that the children began to get on each other's nerves. After the first week of the journey we stayed in a vacant house owned by a friend of ours. One morning I was shaving when my oldest son came in and announced, "I want to catch a bus home."

When I asked why, he replied, "I've looked forward to this trip for almost a year. But I didn't know then that I'd have to be around my brother so much. I just can't stand to be around him any more. He bothers me. I want to go home."

I felt like saying, "Don't be ridiculous; you can't go home. Why don't you grow up? It's probably more your fault than it is his. Now get out of here and forget going home. Just quit causing trouble."

This might have been the correct answer, but it wasn't the right time for the right answer and, for once, I didn't give the so-called right answer. Instead I said, "Okay, let me finish shaving and we'll talk about it."

In a half-hour I asked both of the boys to join me in an empty bedroom. We sat on the rug in the middle of the room.

I said, "Tell me again, son, what you told me before." He went through the same speech as before. The younger brother listened intently, and as he heard more and more it seemed his heart would break. He started to cry.

When the opening remarks were concluded, I turned around and looked into the tear-filled eyes of the younger brother. I asked, "What do you have to say?"

He replied as best he could through his tears, "I know I bug you a lot, but it's just that whatever game we play or whatever we do you always win."

The older brother quickly replied, "Sure I win--I'm better than you."

The younger brother then added, "I know that. But every time you win, I lose. And I get so tired of losing I can't stand it." Then he sobbed.

The older brother's countenance changed as he said, "Just don't bug me so much and things will be better."

The younger boy replied, "I'll try not to."

We talked--that is, they did--and I listened. The spirit of love came among us. The boys could now understand each other. The older boy was ready to continue on, and our vacation was saved. Listening had brought in a feeling and voluntary manner a solution which was satisfying to both boys. A lecture might have worked but neither of the boys would have had good feelings about the outcome.

FAMILY HOME EVENING-THE HEART OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION

There is nothing of more importance in helping your family communicate in a more functional manner than being faithful in holding regular family home evenings.

Being there to be part of the wonderful things which will happen

Be at home on Monday night or you'll miss your greatest opportunity for family communication. Every family member needs to be there. Close the doors, pull the drapes, relax and have what has come to be called a "family home evening."

Family home evening is a time for many things: a time for fun, a time to display talents, a time to play, a time to plan and follow-up and a time for instruction. But the greatest blessing of family home evening is that it is a time for the family to communicate.

With all the family together in one room things are bound to happen. And everything that happens, the controlled and the uncontrolled, the planned and the unplanned, the positive and the negative will be in one form or another family communications. Some of this communication will come through activities such as praying, laughing, arguing, singing, wrestling, talking, eating, competing, planning and expressing feelings.

Family home evening-the heart of family communications

Family home evening is much more than an event that takes place at a certain time each week. Family home evening is a spirit that is at the heart of your complete family culture and communication system. The spirit of family home evening should permeate all aspects of family life. It is a time to make family the most important aspect of life. In that sense family home evening should last all week.

Eight tips to aid your family in having successful family home evenings:

1. Father: Make it happen
2. Have some good refreshments
3. Pull the drapes.
4. Father must be relaxed and do not get upset.
5. Let the children present the lesson.
6. Let things unfold rather than trying to unfold them.
7. Watch for the golden teaching moments
8. Make sure you are having fun already

If you do these eight things I guarantee you your family home evenings will be chaotically successful. Remember chaos is the state out of which success springs

Some commentary on the eight tips

1. Fathers: Make it happen

I did my dissertation on the effects on children of the family home evening program. One interesting and heartwarming discovery was the effect that conducting these family home evenings had on the father.

The fathers who I invited to be part of the study had never held family home evenings before. Many of them felt nervous about conducting the meetings. They expressed feelings of inadequacy, saying such things as "I'm not a teacher; I never was and I never will be." I reassured them by explaining that many fathers have such feelings but are still able to have rewarding family home evenings. I promise them that if they would call the family together each week in a warm and relaxed atmosphere, the teaching part would not be the problem that they might imagine it to be. Later in this chapter I'll say more about this.

So fathers whether you feel you competent or incompetent in such matters, "just do it." You'll never do a greater thing for your family than calling them together each week for family home evening.

2. Have some good refreshments

Banana cream pie and Sprite are the near perfect family home evening refreshments. Have the pie in the fridge so that when the kids come home from school they look in the fridge and say, "Wow! Banana cream pie, I love it."

You reply, "Don't eat that now. It is for family home evening."

Gleefully they'll respond, "Oh yeah it is Monday night. I love family home evening."

That is what you call a preview of coming attractions.

Of course other refreshments will also work. Just make sure it is something the family loves. Try to avoid Fig Newtons or rice pudding with raisins.

3. Pull the drapes.

Before beginning your family home evening pull the drapes. This will insure that no one can look in your window and say, "That family sure is a dumb family. They don't know what they are doing. They don't do family home evening the right way. All they are doing is having fun." With the drapes pulled you can do it your way which for you is the right way.

In our home, family home evening is not the same as the formal classes at the chapel. No law says we must sit in chairs; we often sit on the floor to make sure everyone feels relaxed. We don't follow a set procedure. Usually we talk for a while about whatever we

want to talk about. We might then sing one or two or even five songs. Then, sometimes near the beginning of the evening, we all kneel down and have prayer.

4. Father must relax and determine to not get upset.

Father, listen up! Resolve and make a firm commitment not to get upset at family home evening. Nothing can destroy a family home evening as quickly as when the father gets upset. This happens most often when the children don't behave exactly as the father feels they should. He gets frustrated, raises his voice, and....Well we don't need Paul Harvey to tell us the rest of the story.

As the father is teaching a lesson, a small child might turn a somersault right in the middle of his most important point. Dad might be prompted to stop talking and say, "Look at that. Did you see what Marky did? Everyone move back and give him room. Why, I didn't know you could do that. You are getting to be a big boy. Don't all of you others think he's getting big?" By then Marky has been noticed and you say, "Okay, big boy, now you can sit down again because Daddy has a few more important things to say."

Another way to handle that would be to get upset and smack him on the rear as he performs the first half of his somersault and tell him to sit still or he will get a few more swats. Either way works, but one way makes the child feel good, the father feel good, and the family feel good, and the other way makes everyone feel just the opposite. If you as a father are willing to relax during family home evening, your family will enjoy home evenings. And they will also enjoy just plain being at home together.

One father tells me that if he feels that he is beginning to be upset at family home evening, he holds his hands in the shape of a "T" and calls time out, as athletes do in the heat of a contest. After calling time out he goes and gets a drink of water. He said, "I don't get upset anymore, but I do drink a lot of water."

Note: This seems a good time to say to fathers, Don't get upset at family home evening. And an even bigger order is not to get upset very often at all. Your family will be blessed indeed if you can be pleasant rather than surly. Some fathers feel that it's their role to be a hard sort of man. They speak sharply to their wives and children. Our families don't deserve such men. We avoid smoking and drinking, and that is as it should be, but some of us may feel that there is nothing wrong with being discourteous and unkind at home. It is possible, however, that a house filled with discourtesy and perhaps even with hatred is worse than one filled with smoke. Smoke hurts the lungs but discourtesies and unkind words and deeds hurt the heart.

So be pleasant. Save your best and friendliest behavior for home. If you must be ornery, be ornery at work, where it matters less than it matters at home. At work you can say, "I told you workers to quit making so much noise. If you don't calm down I'll confine you all to your desks for three days. I'm the boss here and what I say goes. I don't want any

back talk. Just close your mouths and do what you are told.” Then go home and be pleasant. Resolve to be pleasant at home--and especially during family home evening.

5. Let the children present the lesson.

One of the great stresses of Mondays is the thought, “Oh no! Tonight is family home evening and I must find time to prepare a lesson.” Forget that, you’ve got pressure enough all ready. Let the children do it.

They can also take turns giving all or part of the discussion. All they need is a picture or two and off they go. It might be a short lesson. Children seldom complain, “Hey Dad, the lesson tonight was too short.” Dad’s main duty is just to make sure that your family home evening is held. Call the family together and preside. This means that you are in charge; it is your decision to determine who will conduct and they, under your direction, will carry out the program.

6. Let things unfold rather than trying to unfold them.

When the children start to talk, don't be quick to move in with a lecture-type lesson. Let them talk. Find out what they think and how they feel. Listen!

Once, in a family home evening, I asked my family, "Now, do any of you have any problems you want to talk about?"

My son said, "Yeah, why do we always have carrots so often at dinner?"

I replied quickly, "Because they are good for you, that's why." And feeling a little upset at his comment, I continued, "I get so sick of you kids complaining about the food. You learn to eat what you get. Your mother is a great cook and I don't want any more said about carrots. Besides, if you don't eat carrots, how are you going to see at night?"

I then asked, "Now that we have resolved that problem to everyone’s satisfaction, do any of you have any other problems you want to talk about?"

"Yeah, Dad. What time will we be through?"

We can chuckle at such an experience, but unfortunately its humor comes from its realism. As fathers, we have to think about and pray about and forever work on our ability to listen longer and form judgmental opinions more slowly.

A different, more supportive reaction to the carrot criticism might have opened the door to discussion of some deeper problems. An answer could have been: "Carrots aren't your favorite, are they? I guess my problem is with broccoli. Anyway, we've got to see at night, so try to eat those orange little mosels. Your mom is a great cook, and even broccoli is--well, anyway, do you have any other problems or concerns?"

"Yeah, Dad, we do. What about...."

I loved the line in the movie, “Raiders of the Lost Ark,” when the hero did some incredible things to work his way out of danger. When the situation got more desperate, and all hope seemed lost, the other fellow with him asked, “What are we going to do now?”

The hero replied, “I don’t know. I’m making this up as I go.”

Sometimes we need to do that in the midst of a family home evening. I did that once and this is what happened:

I’ve never seen my son Dwight happier than he was at a certain family home evening. He was five years old at the time, and a bit rowdy as I talked to the family. I was upset with him and said in a somewhat harsh voice, “Dwight! Come over here by me.”

I believe he sensed that he might be in trouble. As he came closer I felt a bit of inspiration. “Dwight,” I said, “you are a pretty smart boy so I’ve something for you to do. It will be hard, but I believe you can do it.”

I then continued as all the family listened intently. “White Crow (that is what we call Dwight), I’m going to ask you to do some difficult things. I want you to go up those stairs. Go in my bedroom. Open the drawer where I keep my stockings. Get a pair of the stockings. Put them on the bed. Close the drawer. Go in the upstairs bathroom. Turn on the cold water. Turn it off. Come down the stairs. Go in the kitchen. Get a drink of water. Turn off the water. Come back in this room. Go up three stairs and back down. Come into this room and go around that chair right there. Then come over in front of me and say, “Dad, I did it.”

White Crow’s eyes were opened wide with excitement as I asked, “Can you do it?”

Before he could answer, his older brothers and sisters tried to help by saying, “Dad, White Crow can’t do all that can’t do all that.”

His expression indicated a feeling of excited confidence and I said, “Take off.”

The house was silent except for the sounds made by little White Crow. We heard his footsteps go up the stairs. The drawer was opened and closed. Then into the bathroom. The water on, then off. Down the stairs, past where we sat as he rushed into the kitchen, the water on, and then off. Back into the room and up three stairs and back down. Around the chair. And then, with his mission completed, he stood in front of me. He caught his breath and proudly announced, “Dad, I did it.”

His brothers and sisters were amazed and said, “Wow! White Crow, we did not know that you were that smart.”

I asked him to come over to my side. I put my arm around his shoulders and pulled him close to me. I then said, "White Crow, you are really something. I'm proud of you. I'm so glad to be your dad. You are so smart." Marilyn beamed her approval as she looked adoringly at her young son.

He beamed until he almost glowed. I believe he'll never have another moment like that. Even if he were to someday stand on top of the winner's stand as an Olympic champion, he'd not feel as special as he felt in that room on the night with his family, and especially his father, singing his praises.

I believe that although he didn't realize it, he really felt as he stood before me, "I can do things. People love me. I have great worth. I am a child of God."

For years after, White Crow would sometimes quietly say to me, "Dad, remember the night I did all those things? Can I do that again tonight?"

That was supreme family communication.

A family home evening might be likened to a trip to Yellowstone Park. One way to visit this wonderful park would be: "Children, we are about to enter the park. Now, our goal is to see the park. So we'll need to hurry or we won't get through. As we travel we will see bears and rivers and elk and birds. But if you see these things, don't ask us to stop to look closely or we won't get through the park." In other words, you decide that seeing the park is the purpose of the trip. Then when you get home you can say, "We did it. We saw the park. We went all the way through."

That's not the way to see the park. A better way is to enter the park and see what you can see. You must stop along the way and see that day what you may never see again. You must let what you are doing sink completely in. Who cares if there will be some things that the park offers that will go unseen, at least on this trip? The important thing is to enjoy to it's fullest what you do see. It's better to see one part of the park in a hundred relaxed ways than to strive to see a hundred parts of the park under the tension of haste. Enter the home evening discussion with a relaxed attitude. "Let's see what we can see as we go along and when the time is gone, we'll eat banana cr me pie and drink our Sprite." Such an attitude allows a father and mother to see their family as the true blessing they are. And under those conditions family communication is insured.

7. Watch for the golden teaching moments

Moms and Dads should always be ready, when the children are teaching the lesson, to say something such as, "What Eliza is saying reminds me of something that happened to me while I was in elementary school." Then go on and teach the kids heart to heart. When you can relax with your family there will come those glorious moments when, in your own way, you can open your heart and share with your family the good things that are there. So, fathers and mothers, let's do it. Let's have family home evening in a relaxed,

enjoyable way. By all means let's use the family home evening manual and other material, but most of all, let's use the resources of our hearts. And in those golden moments, perhaps one minute this week, five minutes next week, and so on, let us, as fathers, open our hearts and pour out the contents to our children. Such moments of amazing communications can and do make all the difference in making the family more functional.

Sometimes, in family home evening, we take turns telling each other how much we love each other. Sometimes we get real serious and have some touching spiritual moments. Sometimes we don't do much but just sit there and drink Sprite and eat banana cream pie. You can get your kids to agree to any system of chores or other family rules if you take a vote while they are eating banana cream pie and drinking Sprite. Such treats open wide the channels of communication.

8. Make sure you are having fun already

As I said earlier, we sometimes we on the floor rather than in chairs. The children usually do the teaching. That way our lesson is quite short. Sometimes we don't sing, and other times we spend the whole evening singing. Sometimes for part of the evening we talk about sports or politics or a movie or a TV show. We figure that whatever we talk about is important; not because the subject at hand is important of itself but it is important because our family is talking about it. And whenever we talk as a family, that is as important as it gets.

Sometimes we spend more time on games and fake rodeos and wrestles than we do on learning the names of the twelve sons of Jacob. Sometimes when the time is right I tell the kids how glad I am that they don't cheat in school or they aren't mean to other kids, or that they don't smoke or drink. Sometimes I tell them that being their dad makes me feel like the coach of a bunch of national all-stars.

Sometimes one of us hides and another finds him and hides with him and another finds her and hides with all the rest, and then another, and then another, until the entire family is hiding under a bed. That game really made us a close family.

We had an unusual family home evening one night. One of the children had brought a phonograph record of various college fight songs. We pulled the window drapes, put on the record, turned up the sound, and as a family we marched all around the house. We went upstairs, downstairs, and all over. Finally the record ended. Tired out by the fervent marching, we collapsed together and talked. It seems easier to talk about important things after an activity of this sort.

Once we put down a sheet on the floor, put the popcorn popper in the center of the sheet, take off the lid, and let the popcorn zing out wherever it will as each of us dives to get our share. You dive too, and later wonder what got into you. You were grateful that night that the drapes were closed.

Family home evening, along with the things I have mentioned, is not just a once-a-week thing. Family home evening is a spirit of family life that goes through the entire week. Each meal is sort of a family home evening, each journey to the store is also. If you can just keep a bit of fun in family life it makes so much difference.

One family's experience

While doing my dissertation I asked families who were not doing so to begin to have family home evenings each Monday night for at least twelve weeks.

I shall forever remember one family's experience.

When I went to this family to make my original request, I found a ruggedly handsome father, a beautiful wife, and five young children. The home was lovely and well kept. Upon my arrival in the home, the father put his smoking pipe aside and talked to us in a most cordial way. A can of beer was open near the side of his chair. As we spoke of several subjects, I learned that he refereed high school basketball games. Thus we had a common interest--sports.

Finally I told him the purpose of my visit. I made the request, and he accepted, saying that he would faithfully conduct a family home evening each week. His wife and family seemed pleased at his response. I gave them a few guidelines to follow, administered the self-image test to their children and told them that I'd visit them again in three months.

Winter had turned to spring before I saw them again. I called them by phone and made an appointment to come to their home. As I was greeted by this family; I felt almost overwhelmed by their welcome. We visited for a time and then I asked, "Well, did you do it? Did you have a home evening every week for the past three months as you said you would?"

The father looked at me intently and said, "I'm not sure. Most weeks we did, but there was one week we aren't sure if what we did was a family home evening or not."

I was pleased at their faithfulness and said, "Well, if you had one every week but one, that's pretty good."

The mother then said, "I think we could even count what we did that week. Anyway, we wanted to ask you if what we did would count."

I said, "Tell me what you did and we'll see."

The father replied, "That's the week we went to the temple to be sealed together forever as a family." His eyes were moist with tears as he asked, "Can we count that?"

I was caught off-guard by this unexpected response and I could hardly speak because of emotion. I softly replied, "Yes, I believe we could count that."

The mother's eyes and face shone as she said, "We went to the temple on my birthday."

He quickly added, "I couldn't even get her much of a present. Since we started paying tithing, there's not much money left over for presents."

Tears fell freely from his wife's face as she looked into his eyes and said, "When you took me to the temple, that was the best present that I've ever received because that's what I wanted more than anything else in the world."

By now the children all wanted to tell me about the temple and what going there meant to them. After listening to their happy reports, I asked the father, "What happened to cause this mighty change?"

His simple reply was, "Well, I did what you said. Each week I'd call my family together and we'd have family home evening. After a few weeks, I saw the children sitting there real close to me and their mother. We all felt so good and so happy. I just decided it was time we started changing things. We talked about going to the temple so that we could be together forever. We talked to our home teachers and then to the bishop. And in a few weeks we felt we were worthy to go to the temple."

The pipe that had lain smoking by the father's side three months before was now gone, and so was the beer can. Things had changed at that house. What had been given up had been replaced by something too beautiful to describe. This father had made the wisest of all trades when he had put aside pipe and can and gained the blessings of being the priesthood father of an eternal family.

To me this story illustrates the most powerful form of family communication-communication through the Holy Spirit if Truth.

Family home evening-don't miss it. It will make all the difference.

SUMMARY

Improving husband and wife communication, parent children communication and family communication will do much to make your family more fun and functional. Being there and listening with love and understanding will make much difference to everyone's

happiness and growth. And family home evening is at the heart of family communication and love.

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Chapter 11

DISCIPLINE: LIVING IN HARMONY WITH FAMILY STANDARDS

Discipline and control are two closely related words. The dictionary says that one of the meanings of discipline is to control through forced obedience. If force was the total answer to disciplining our children, we could skip the remainder of this chapter. The problem is, force will work for a time but then look out. Constantly forcing children to obey is a surefire remedy for eventually having all hell break loose. A better definition of discipline for our purposes is to control through occasional force and more often other more positive forms of motivation and reinforcement. “To force or not to force,” that is the question? That’s part of what this chapter is all about.

Before we become parents we have a feeling that some of the children we see are out of control. We say to ourselves, “I do not know why those kid’s parents allow them to do what they do. When we have children they may not be perfect but we sure won’t let them get away with some of the dysfunctional behavior we see in other children.”

Well, maybe you have children now. How are they doing? Are they the models which are a living witness to your expert ability to raise functional children? Do others looking upon them exclaim, “Oh my! If only our children were as well behaved as those children.”

Often the behaviors of our children cause us to long for a therapist who can come in and help us solve some of the problems which we face. As we said earlier you have a therapist right there in your home. Talk to him or her. In other words, talk to yourself. The ideas in this chapter will help you do so.

Marilyn recently remarked, “If I had known how good my children were going to be as adults I would have treated them better when they were children.” But it was the way that she treated them as children that enabled them to turn out so well as adults.

STANDARDS OF FAMILY CONDUCT

Out of control

While serving as mission president, Marilyn and I were shocked to get a letter from an anonymous ward member telling us he/she had never seen a child so out of control at church meetings as was our three year old son. We were so upset by this assertion that we would have attacked the messenger had we been able to identify him/her. We agreed that our young son was a bit restless at sacrament meeting. We agreed that he was in the top ten of the most uncontrolled children in the history of the Church. But we did not feel that he was “number one.” Besides, he was our last child and the youngest one traditionally gets away with more than the older ones were able to.

In time we got over our desire to do the necessary detective work to find out just who it was who had the audacity to criticize one of our own. We tried to be more effective in controlling this boy. We didn't do much better but we tried. And in a few months he had grown beyond some of his unruly behavior and was now tolerably obedient to our controlling command, "Sit still and be quiet!"

I'm glad Stephen, my son in law, is advising me a bit as to some things that ought to go into this book. He is a psychologist and he understands how to discipline children. But the problem is, he can't control his children any better than I did mine. So maybe if the two of us, who so often get negative results, pool our ideas, we can come up with a positive approach. Isn't that the way it is—two negatives make a positive?

ESTABLISHING FAMILY STANDARDS

But for force or any other type of discipline to be effective we need to determine just what it is that we want our children to do and to be. All of us as parents desire our children to act in certain ways. Some of these ways are:

- ◆ To do reasonable well in school and to not sass the teacher or to throw rocks through the school house window.
- ◆ To respect their brothers and sisters and not to bicker and fight with them more than fifty per cent of their waking hours.
- ◆ To do their household chores and not have to be coerced into doing so more than 60 percent of the time.
- ◆ To say several kind and polite words each day to family members and to not swear or be vulgar
- ◆ To join in family activities and to not act like being with the family is sheer torture.
- ◆ To do things that will make them healthy and to not use drugs, alcohol or tobacco.
- ◆ To help the family have an upward trend, as time goes by, in functioning better and not worse.

We could go on with this list but such things are up to you as parents to determine for your family.

Helping the family members move toward the standards

If the children have the self-control needed to do these things on their own, that is the ideal. If they don't have such control the parents need to employ practices of discipline

such as force, rewards and enticements, reason, and some form of non-abusive punishment, of one type or another, to get them to do so.

Five Principles of Discipline

Specific practices of discipline to be effective must be part of a broader set of principles. These principles are:

- Establish family standards
- Be unified with your spouse in disciplining the children
- Prayerfully and rationally seek a balance between hard and soft discipline.
- Immerse all discipline in love.
- Use as a gauge of success an upward trend in moving toward these standards

In this chapter we will not discuss these principles one at a time in isolated from the others. They are so intertwined that separating them causes them to lose some of their meaning. Keep them in mind as we read along.

YOUR INHERITED DISCIPLINING STYLE

Much of your philosophy, feelings and practices regarding disciplining your children come from the experiences you had in your childhood and youth.

A Personal Background Check

We can't get an important job of high trust without a background check. Never has there been a position of higher trust than that of having children and controlling them through the wise use of sound disciplinary practices. Thus the need for a background check.

Some questions from your family therapist

What was discipline like in the home of your childhood and youth? Let me have the first crack at answering that one.

My fathers manner of discipline. As a boy my dad never spanked me. He never even scolded me with words. His method of controlling me was to "look" at me when I did something wrong. His "look" unaccompanied with any words asked, "How can you be so stupid?" It was with pure dread, that I constantly tried to conduct myself so as to not be the recipient of that look. I knew that when I behaved foolishly I'd sooner or later have to face Dad's ominous glare. And try as I would to not foul up, I often did. And when I did, I knew I would be the victim of "the look." If there was ever a form of cruel and unusual treatment, it was to have to endure that "look."

I can't explain to you why "the look" was so effective in making me want to stay in line. I think that part of it was the times. The look was given its power by the way that things were in that era. Those were the days when the father was the king and all the family

members, including the mother, were his subjects. To incur the wrath of the king was not a desirable thing to do. Those were the days when a father, though often benevolent, was in many ways a dictator. Back then a traditional respect for fathers was common. Thus family members did not want to go contrary to his wishes and win his disapproval.

Note: “The look” was so effective that I determined to use it as a tool in disciplining my children. When they misbehaved and I gave them “the look.” But it just didn’t work. They looked back at me as if to say, “What is that supposed to mean?” Times have changed.

But in a different way I use “the look.” My children know that I have a vision of what I desire them to be. They do not want to not fall short of my expectations. When they do they can see a hurt look in my eyes. And they do not like that so they try to conform.

My mothers manner of discipline. Balancing the austere nature of my father, was the soft and forever encouraging influence of my mother. Almost all her “looks” at me were looks of adoration. She thought I could do no wrong. But that is not true. More accurately stated, she looked at me as if her deepest desire was that I would never do anything wrong.

Her apparent adoration affirmed me and caused me to want to be what she could see in her heart that I could be. This affirming adoration was so deeply imbedded in my heart by my mother that it is deep foundation of my feelings about and relationships with my children.

Marilyn’s parents. Marilyn grew up in a different family. Her father was a giant of a man and he didn’t tolerate much nonsense. If she and her siblings misbehaved her mother would say. “You wait until your father comes home.” When he came home, the mother told him the story, and he applied some justified punishment. So Marilyn learned what tough discipline is and she knows how to employ it.

Differing inherited styles of discipline

That is a brief and perhaps somewhat incorrect background check on the two of us. You can see that because of our past family experiences, Marilyn and I could come at discipline from two somewhat different directions.

I’m not good at disciplining in the traditional manner. Marilyn is. When she speaks harshly the kids jump. When I speak harshly they wonder if I’m play acting or something. So what do we do? We each go with our strength. She commands and I encourage. Just because she is so good at correcting the children, I don’t drop out of the difficult disciplining process and cause her to have that total responsibility. Instead, I constantly employ my form of disciplining the children. My style of helping the children stay under control is to give them my, “I’m disappointed in you look.” I tell them how much I am counting on them to hold to the standards of our family. I say things such as:

“Our family members are honest. So we expect you to be.”
“Our family is kind. So you need to be good to your little brother.”
“Our family does what they say they will. So be sure to do what you said you would do.”

I praise them for the thing they do, that to me, are the “right direction things.”

When the children desire to do something that is not 100 percent reasonable, they ask, “Can we do this or that?” Marilyn responds, “No you can’t and that is it, so don’t ask again.” My words are more wishy-washy. I tell them things such as:

“We will see.”
“I can’t see why you want to that but lets not decide now.”

Sort of putting it off in an attempt to soften the blow of, “no!”

That is just a bit of the flavor of the differences in Marilyn and me when it comes to disciplining our children. Differences are all right. They can be a strength is they are discussed between the two of you. But it is essential that, in the presence of the children, each of you must not deride but rather support the efforts of the other.

A background check on you

What do you learn when you, as your own therapist, do a background check on yourself? How did your parents discipline or control your family? Your answer will reveal much about how you discipline or control your children. In matters of discipline there are at least three ways the past can effect the present:

1. Perhaps you did not like the way you were, or were not, disciplined by your parents and you have decided to discipline just the opposite way with your children.
2. Perhaps you liked what your parents did. So, with some adjustments, you are determined to do things that same way.
3. And perhaps you feel that you are destined or conditioned to be the exact image of your parents in the manner in which you discipline your children.

The last of these three options is the easiest and most natural course to pursue. If you just put your self on automatic pilot, the patterns of the past will determine the way that you will act. To be, in any degree, the opposite of the way your parents were, requires that you be “a transition person.” A transition person is one who breaks away from some of the negative traditions and practices of the way that things were and establishes new patterns of family life. It is not easy to be such a person, but it can be done through a mighty effort. We will say more of this later in the chapter.

What ever your feelings regarding discipline, those feelings, as time goes by, will be highly flavored by a give and take with the feelings of your spouse.

EVALUATING YOUR PRESENT DISCIPLINING STYLE

Some of us are soft on discipline and control and others are hard. How would you rate your self? Are you a tough disciplinarian or a bit of a softy?

I'm a "Softy"

When I was called as a mission president, a friend of mine came to congratulate me. He told me that he wished me well but that he feared for my success. He said, "You are so soft hearted that you don't like telling people what to do and then staying on their back until they do it."

He was right. I am a bit of a softie. Sometimes I wish that I was not a softie, but I am. I can be hard at times but it takes a real strong situation to bring that out. And when I am required by circumstances to be tough, it drains me emotionally.

Marilyn is a Soft "Hardy"

Marilyn is a "softy" too. But she is able to cover it up and come off as a "hardy." Her first answer to most our children's request, that they be allowed to do something out of the routine, is to definitely and bluntly reply, "No!" In so doing she often causes them to get their ire up. But in the moments and hours that follow she considers all aspects of the idea and if she can see it is all right, she will change her tune. Because of her straight forward manner, the kids always know where she stands and where they stand with her. They know they had better shape up or else. I, on the other hand, don't know what "or else" means. I guess it means about what dad used to convey to me with "the look."

If you and your spouse are both "hardies" like Marilyn, then it could be tough on the children but at the same time good for them. If you are both usually "softies" as I am, then it could often be pleasant for the children but in the long range it would not be good for them. If you are both too hard, then both of you must strive to do a bit of changing and get softer-not a lot just a little. If you are both too soft then you will have to attempt to get a bit harder-not a lot just a little.

Note: In our case I was more naturally inclined to be the good guy and Marilyn was a natural candidate to be the bad guy. The thing I can't figure out is why, if I was the good guy, did the kids usual like her more than they did me. Maybe it was like my young friend told me about his demanding English teacher. He said, "I really like her. She is real cool but she sure is hard." That is sort of where Marilyn always was with the children-real cool but hard.

BLENDING THE HARD AND THE SOFT

You have got to be you

Often the father is the hard guy when it comes to disciplining the children- Mr. Justice. And the mother, is the soft one-Mrs. Mercy. The man is good at commanding and demanding and the mother is more gentle and permissive. But with Marilyn and I, it is just the opposite. So should we try to reverse ourselves or should we each discipline in the way our natural inclinations prompt us to do? The way that you discipline others is closely tied in to the way you are. Thus it is very difficult to change from being a “softy” to a “hardy.”

But you can change a little

But the good news is, that if it would benefit your family for you to change just a little-becoming a little harder or a little softer, you can do it. And that little change will make a very big difference to your effectiveness in familying. The important thing is that neither of the two of you drop out of the process and leave the matter of disciplining the children up to a spouse who seems to have more talent for that sort of thing than you do. You should not say, “Wait until dad gets home.” Or, “When your mother finds out about you did, she will blow a gasket.” Well at least you should not say these things as a common practice.

I don’t think an exclusive diet of my kind of discipline would have been the best for as well being our children. On the other hand, I don’t think Marilyn’s type of discipline alone would have been the best for them either. But when we blended my usual softness (with just a touch of hardness) and Marilyn’s usual hardness (with a table spoonful of softness) things seemed to work out. The best thing about it all was that, in spite of our differences, we stood as one. The blending of the two of us into one was what made it work. It wasn’t that what I was trying to do was right and what Marilyn was trying to do was wrong. Nor was it Marilyn who was right and me that was wrong. It was that when we stuck together and did not undermine each other, we came up with something that worked tolerably well. It wasn’t “her way,” the hard way, nor “my way” the soft way, it was “our way”-hard and soft all mixed together in the unity of love.

SOFT CAN BE HARD AND HARD CAN BE SOFT

That fellow who said I would not do well as a mission president, he would have been right if I had tried to change my basic nature and tried to be a tough disciplinarian. I knew I could not do that or it would not be me. So I had to go with my strength and try to be successful that way. Just before I was called to serve, I saw the movie “Camelot.” I liked the way that King Arthur tried to govern that glorious kingdom. I decided, while being mission president, to be as King Arthur was. I would have all my missionaries be as my Knights. King Arthur governed by the principles of trust, integrity, respect, honor and love. I decided I’d maintain order and discipline in the mission in that way.

I announced to the missionaries that all but the most basic rules were out the window. I added, “We all, henceforth, shall live by the principles of trust, honor and love.” Some of them told me that that doing things the way I desired would never work. They were right. Some others were impressed deeply in their souls by the prospects which I had portrayed and they told me that it would work. They were right.

I announced that the only punishment that I could give them, if they ignored these principles, was that, no matter how I tried not to, I would lose some respect for them. And, far worse, they would lose some respect for themselves. Their disobedience would make it difficult for me to trust them. The trust and respect could be regained but it would, by natural law, take time.

One missionary told me later, “You make it so difficult for us. We use to break the rules a little and doing so seemed fun and exciting. It seemed that if we could, ‘get away with it,’ then it was all right. But now we can’t disobey the principles without feeling empty and disloyal inside and it makes it so hard on us.” Then with a smile he asked, “Couldn’t we go back to the old, easy way?”

Others, of course, did not feel that way. One said to me, “President you are trying to govern terrestrial and telestial thinking missionaries with celestial laws and it just doesn’t work.”

But it did work, when it worked. But when it did not work, it did not work. A more militant form of leadership also works when it works and does not work when it does not work. What do I mean by this seeming double talk? I mean that whatever approach one uses as a means of disciplining or controlling, some will respond to it better than others will. Missionaries, and your children, are each different, what will work with one will not necessarily work on another. So which ever way you choose to discipline, you come out in the end about the same as far as controlling is concerned. But more lasting self-discipline is better fostered by the Camelot approach.

Three forms of controlling your children.

My friends who know much about discipline, because that has been the discipline of their advance studies, tell me that there are three forms of getting children to do as you desire them to do:

1. Force-You leave them with no choice but to do it.
2. Let’s make a deal-You let them know that by doing this they will get that.
3. Teach them correct principles- You encourage them to do it because it is right.

Some feel strongly that the way to raise children in their years beyond infancy is to hover between two and three with an emphasis on three. I guess the combination of Marilyn’s

style of discipline with mine puts us in a position of drawing a bit from 1 (force), a lot from 2 (making deals) and constantly emphasizing 3 (teaching correct principles).

Personally, I'm big on 2. I like the idea of rewards. But seeing as I don't have the money to give elaborate rewards I have to use rewards such as,

"Do it and then we will go play." Or,

"If we all do it, we can go camping this Friday." Or,

"Then we can all go to Lagoon." Or,

"If you do it, I'll tell you a story." Or,

"Do it and I'll give you a big kiss."
(You have to use humor with that one.)

Constantly trying to catch the children doing something right is the best detective work that can be done in the home. And the immediate feedback of approval is a powerful force in influencing behavior.

Words of approval can be used frequently without ever losing their power. Other affirmative statements which come to my mind right off are:

"Way to go!"

"You sure do things the right way."

"You sure did do that good."

"You are amazing the way that you do things."

"I loved the way you shared that."

"He sure is lucky to have a brother like you who takes him places."

"Thanks for introducing me to your friends. That meant a lot to me."

"Thanks for calling to tell us you would be late. That sure saved us a bunch of worry."

"I know you are a little old for kisses but I love you so much I just need a quick kiss"

These verbal, heart felt statements of approval, are the best rewards of all and they constantly reinforce the direction you desire the family to move.

Marilyn loves these ideas. They are not her primary style of discipline but she knows that they blend well with her commander style. And I know that her commander style blends well with my softer approach.

Building upon the foundation of respect

The foundation of discipline is respect and love.

I'll always remember a story Boyd Beagly told me years ago when we were both young fathers. He said,

“My little boy who had been outside playing and eating candy came in the house with a very dirty face. Some of the dirt seemed to be caked on. I picked up a handy, cold, damp wash cloth to wash him clean. As he looked up at me I thought, ‘Would I like my face washed with a cold, damp wash cloth?’ I decided I would not. So I turned on the hot water and rinsed out the cloth until it was soft and clean. Then I made it nice and soapy. With the warm cloth I gently washed his face just as I would like mine washed.”

To me that story says it all. Now I know we lose our patience with our children and tell them publicly and privately, “I said stop that and I mean it.” We would never say that to a respected friend. But of course a friend usually does not try our patience as a child does.

We should not be ignorant with our child just because we can get away with it. We are responsible to correct them when their behavior or words take them away from family standards. But the point is that in all matters of discipline there is an underlying respect which makes it so that even though our children are little, we do not treat them in a belittling manner.

The more respect that is shown in disciplining the little ones, the smaller will be the disasters that can come with the change in the balance of power as the children grow into their teens.

“Do it now because I said so.” Is the most expedient way to exert control on little children. It takes less effort than to reason or discuss. But any degree of reasoning and discussions your patience will allow you to extend; will, in the long run, pay great dividends. But this is only true if the parents know where they are trying to lead their children. To reason and discuss and then let the children rule, will lead to disaster.

Immersed in love

The Lord, in the scriptures, advise us that it is all right and even good to: “...reprove betimes with sharpness when moved upon by the Holy Ghost.” He then adds, “...showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reprovéd, lest

he esteem thee to be his enemy.” (D and C. 121 43.) Oh my! What advice. I feel the Lord would not mind if we took this principle a step farther and said:

When we reprove a child just because we are irritated; because we lose our cool, because our patients runs dry, because we are tired or sick, because we are stressed, because we feel a need to save face, because he deserves it, or for any other reason; we should take time to catch our emotional breath and afterwards go tell him, in love and humility, that we are sorry and that he is dearer to us than life itself.. By doing this he will know that we are not his enemy. In all discipline we must move toward being the child’s friend and not his perceived enemy.

Apologize even if you feel you were the one who is in the right. Someone needs to apologize and you are the only one you can get to do it. So do it. I once heard and totally believe this profound statement. “You may be right and I may be wrong; but if it separates, us we are both wrong.”

A LITTLE CHANGE IN THE WAY WE DISCIPLINE OUR CHILDREN BECOMES A MIGHTY CHANGE IN THEIR LIVES.

We hope that the ideas in this chapter will help you have a look at where you are in matters of disciplining your children and where you and your spouse are as a team.

If you like what you are getting (the way your children are behaving) keep doing what you are doing. If you are a bit dissatisfied with what you are getting then maybe you could change a little.

Any change in matters as big as the basic nature or the way we discipline our children is difficult. It is like changing the direction of an ocean liner. But just a little change in these matters makes a vast difference.

Let us compare family discipline to a large swinging gate. You, as a parent, are located at the place in the gate that is very near the hinges. If you can change the movement of the gate where you are just a little, it really effects the part of the gate out on the end. So if you can change a little it will change a lot in the long run.

Success is any slight movement toward family standards

Are we there yet? Probably not. Are we on our way? You bet we are. We are on our way because we are trying. And trying with all our heart, in the long run, always brings blessed results. Constantly striving to be obedience to the laws of righteous disciplining will bring the blessings of children who gradually are transformed into wonderful adults. And seeing that happen is the grandest of all blessings known to mankind.

They will come back

Someone has said, "Parents can never be any happier than their most unhappy child." That is mostly but not altogether true. A child who is out of control in regards to family standards is often deeply unhappy. And the unhappiness of that child is the source of great heartache to the parents.

But hope soothes pain with an ointment of peace. And because of that peace we can be happy in times of deep family trials because we know that someday, some how, the child will return to family standards and to happiness.

As long as we keep trying, with undying love, we are moving constantly in the right direction and that is success.

Chapter 12

FAMILY FINANCES.

Money, be it too plentiful or too scarce can cause problems enough to employ an untold number of therapists and can make an otherwise functional family painfully dysfunctional.

Do you want to know the secret that will enable you to avoid the stress of financial family woes?

Well don't ask me, I don't know!

I guess family financial stress is a lot like crab grass in your lawn, you just sort of live with it. "Pax Crab Grass Remover" will cutback on our crab grass. But as far as I know, the Pax people have never tried to attack our financial woes. Such stress just seems to be part of this world's legacy. But when these woes begin to dramatically infringe on the family's happiness; that is when we must draw the line. But how do we do that? On that I do have some advice.

You and your spouse can reduce the degree of financial stress to a tolerable level by doing these four simple things:

1. HAVING A WEEKLY FINANCIAL MEETING,
2. HAVING A FINANCIAL PLAN AND SYSTEM,
- 3. HAVING DISCIPLINE IN YOUR SPENDING,**
4. PAYING YOUR TITHING.

The way things are

Marilyn and I just moved to a new home in a fast growing area. As I look out of our window, I can see a dozen new homes in various stages of construction. Soon wonderful families will have the thrill of moving into these lovely homes. For many of them this will be a dream come true.

For some of the families, it was probably a great challenge to arrange the necessary financing. The next challenge will be to get the new furniture that they feel will be appropriate for such an attractive house.

Our area is a good distance from little league parks, dance studios, shopping centers and work places. So two or maybe three cars will be necessary. The kids here, like those in most places, desire to dress in the latest fashions. Braces, music and dance lessons await the young ones. Big screen TV and Nintendo almost seem like necessities rather than

luxuries. Movies, ball games, bowling, alleys, arcades and a multitude of other recreational attractions beckon. And college and missions are not many years distant.

The description I have just given is a snapshot of our times. Like all snap shots it has a positive appearance which shows much happiness but sadly there is negative to the picture which reveals much stress relating to family finance.

In many homes there is a secret that only the parents share. This undisclosed information is that mom and dad are experiencing major stress in paying for all these things. For some keeping the “outgo” of dollars less than the “income” of dollars is a concern that overshadows almost every other aspect of their family life.

The most ready solution to ease such concerns is for the wife to go out of the home to work so as to provide a second income. Another answer is for the husband to take on an additional job. These seem to be far less painful than cutting back on what the family needs and desires. In weighing these options it so difficult to know whether the profit in these solutions is greater than the loss.

Well that describes the sad problem which many face. But lets move on to the brighter side. Let’s look at some solutions.

HAVING A WEEKLY FINANCIAL MEETING AND

If there is one subject, which personal experience has made Marilyn and me into experts, it is “Family Financial Stress 101.”

I’ll always remember coming home from work one day many years ago. As I came in the door, Marilyn was putting on her coat to go out. She told me that the supper was in the oven, the table was set, and I was to have the children in bed by eight. She didn’t tell me where she was going and I could tell by her abruptness that I should not ask.

The children and I sat in somber silence eating food that had lost much of its flavor because our wife and mother was not there. I put the children to bed without a story. I did not feel like telling stories.

After three hours, as I sat with half of my mind reading the newspaper and other half wondering where Marilyn was, she returned home. As our eyes met her heartbreaking announcement was, “I can’t do it.”

It took all the courage I could muster to ask, “You can’t do what?

“Sell pots and pans!” she blurted out.

“Pots and pans?”

“Yes pots and pans.”

She knew I needed an explanation and so she told me that a pot and pan salesman had come to our door a week earlier. He had told her of the money that could be made in doing what he was doing. Two days later she had been in touch with the company and had gone to a meeting on how to sell these items. So tonight she had ventured out to call on people to sell them pots and pans. She told me that she had kept the entire idea from me because she knew that I would discourage her from pursuing this venture.

“Why did you do such a thing?” I asked in an insensitive tone.

She started to cry. I sat in shocked silence. Finally she was able to speak again. She said, “I just don’t know what we are going to do. We can’t pay our bills and you don’t seem to understand that. I thought maybe this way, I could earn enough so we could make it.”

“We can make it,” I said as if my words of hope would remove her despair.

Instead it only seemed to increase her frustration and she pled. “How can you say that? Why don’t you take a turn at trying to pay the bills with the money we have?” She added, “We just about had enough to get by and then the car broke down and the washer quit working. I just don’t know what we are going to do.”

Her words hurt me deeply and I sat in silence.

She added, “Because I pay the bills and keep the books, the burden of all this is on me.” Before I could reply, she continued, “I try to talk to you about it, but I know it hurts you when I tell you how hopeless I feel about these things.”

Trying to offer some help I suggested, “Maybe I should pay the bills for few months and take the burden off from you.”

She responded in a hurt tone, “If you think you can do better than me, then you are welcome to it.”

I replied, “I know you can keep track of the money better than I can. It is just that I can’t stand to see you so concerned and unhappy about things.”

I now sensed that her decision to try the “pot and pan idea” was one of pure desperation.

Hearing of what she had done and why she had done it, was a wake up call for me. But what could I do? We weren’t spendthrifts. We drove an old car. We lived in a little house. Our kids dressed well but not fancy. We didn’t buy shotguns, golf clubs or any things that could be considered luxuries.

I told her of my sorrow for putting her through all this by saying, “I’m sorry I don’t earn more. Maybe I ought to change jobs”

She softly answered, “I don’t expect you to earn more. You love your work and you are good at it. I don’t want you to change jobs. What I want you to do is be more willing to sit down with me and talk about these things. Then I wouldn’t feel that I was carrying all this alone.”

Her words touched my heart and I said, “I understand what you are saying. I’ll do better.”

We discussed all the possible things we could do.

We talked about me getting an additional job in the evening. But my work was such that, to do it right, I had to spend many of my evening there. We talked of her getting a job other than the pots and pans thing. But long ago we had decided that we would not go that direction.

It was then that we had a great revelation. It was just a simple revelation but it was great. We sensed that talking together seemed to lessen the stress of our financial problems. So out of all the emotional travail of that memorable evening we only made one decision. The decision that from then on, each week, we would have a meeting about family finances.

Well that was a long story to tell you how we came up with such a small answer to such a big problem. But talking with each week about family finances is the one of the foundational solution to money problems. Sharing the load with your financial partner makes the load bearable and causes the stress to decrease. Part of what happens when we talk together is that ideas seem to come from heaven. Little revelations that when implemented makes our money stretch further than a rubber band.

Instant forgiveness

But such family financial meetings must be conducted in a spirit of love. Two of my friends, Clint and Jim, who teach family finance, said this of such meetings.

“Have a weekly financial planning meeting in which you review your available income, analyze your past expenditures, and plan for the coming week. The key to the success of such meetings is to agree that you will not condemn each other... You must have a rule of “instant forgiveness.” Don’t worry about who spent what or didn’t keep track of this or that. Just instantly forgive any errors you feel your spouse has made. Then go on to plan what you will do the next week. If you follow this plan you will see things begin to improve in your financial situation and in your communications with each other.”

HAVING A FINANCIAL PLAN AND SYSTEM,

As I said, Clint and Jim are experts in family finances. They have devised a system of money management that is ingenious. They go about the country conducting workshops

on how families can solve the many problems associated with the stresses related to money.

Fifteen years ago Clint and Jim wanted to write a book detailing their helpful ideas so that they could reach more people than they were able to in their workshops. Because they were not authors they asked me to assist them in this venture. Marilyn and I had used their system and found it to be simple and very helpful. So I eagerly accepted the invitation to help.

One of the most vital aspects of writing a book is to come up with just the right title. It was lunch hour in Salt Lake City where I worked. I was walking down West Temple Street on my journey to their office where we were going to have a meeting regarding the progress we had made in writing the book. As I walk along my mind was not on the journey but was totally consumed with an attempt to come up with a title. I tried several ideas out within my mind but none seemed right. Then, in a flash, I knew I had the title. I said it silently at first and then I whispered and then I shouted, “Rich On Any Income.” I knew that that was it-“Rich on any Income.”

I could hardly wait for the meeting to begin so that I could announce the proposed title to Jim and Clint. As we sat down in their boardroom, I told them that I had something exciting to share with them. I then blurted out, “Rich on any Income.” They were as excited as I was. That was to be the title.

Clint and Jim explain in their seminars and in their book how you can be rich on your income. Marilyn and I are really smart-especially her. But oh my! As I explained earlier, have we ever had problems in trying to spend less than we earn? One factor is that we never have earned much. Sometimes just paying for the absolute necessities (light bill, groceries, etc.) seemed to exceed our income. We had to watch things like a hawk. And even then we’d get behind. Dental costs, car breakdowns, and other unforeseen needs for money would almost drown us in debts. But guess what? We used the system Clint and Jim taught us and we made it. Guess what else? You can make it to.

Note: See details at the end of this chapter on how you can, if you desire, learn more about the *Rich On Any Income System*.

You may desire to use a different system. You may want to use your computer and some software designed for this exact purpose. Maybe you could make up a system of your own. But you must have a system. The only thing all money system must have in common is they must enable you to spend less than you earn. Managing money without a system is like trying to hold water in a sieve-it all runs out before you can even get a drink.

HAVING DISCIPLINE IN YOUR SPENDING,

We all feel that if our income could be increased that would solve all of our financial woes-not so! If we get more money we spend more and we are right back where we

started. Even if we could afford all the things in the world we would still need more money to build a building large enough to hold it all. The only way to manage money is to be rich on any income. That is: we must spend less than we earn.

But that is easier said than done. It is so difficult to do that many in your neighborhood are not doing it. It almost seems to prove the old axiom,

They said that it couldn't be done,
But with a grin he went right to it.
He tackled that job that couldn't be done.
And by golly!
He couldn't do it.

But spending less than you earn can be done and by golly you are going to do it.

Even the most perfectly devised system, without discipline, is like a light bulb without electricity. It just does not have what it takes to make it work. If most of us could take just two words out of the dictionary it would likely be the painful words "self-discipline." But an even more demanding challenge is, "couple-discipline." Each of you individually and the two of you together must have the power to say, "No."

Marilyn and I had bought our first little house. We couldn't afford much furniture but we did feel we just had to have a couch for the front room.

We drove from our town to a larger city near by. We entered a large furniture store. We wandered among the couches. As we stood gazing at one a man appeared at our side. He softly said, "Isn't that one a beauty?"

"It sure is," we replied.

"Do you like the early American style?" he asked.

"Yes, that is the style we want to get."

"Why don't you get this one. We can deliver it next Wednesday. Can't you just see it in your front room?" After a pause he continued. "Should we write it up?"

"We really can't afford it. We just don't have that much money to spend."

"What has money got to do with it," he asked. "You will not have to make a payment for three months and then the payments are only a few dollars a month. You can afford that much." Again he asked, "Should we write it up and deliver it next Wednesday?"

Both Marilyn and I stood ready to day yes. It was such a beauty. But then we both spoke at once and said, “We had better think it over. We then walked out of the store as quickly as we could.

As we drove home we felt good. We already had many things we had charged. Each of the payments were small but if we added this payment to those we had we old not have made it. We didn’t have the early American couch but we also did not have another bill.

The next week we went o Deseret Industries and found a couch that was really early American. It looked a mess but we could see what it could be. Marilyn took an upholstery class and restored the couch to it’s original beauty. We loved that couch. It looked so good in our front room. For several years It stood as a reminder to the time we said, “No.” to a purchase that we just could not afford.

Remember the “big” “little” rule

If you say “no” to purchasing one big thing, one that will strain your budget to the nth degree, you will be able to say “yes” to the purchase of many little things. But if you say “yes” to the purchase of that really big thing, you will have to say “no” to purchasing many little things. And being able frequently purchase little things makes you feel rich. And it is the little things which bring greater happiness than the big things. As Emma Lou Thayne said, ”Give me a heart that can receive joy from just the little things.”

Make it into a game

Actually when you turn the discipline associated with finances into a game it is kind of fun. Part of the game is doing amusing things such as:

- Looking for sales,
- Clipping coupons,
- Planning inexpensive but tasty menus,
- Going to home shows to steal decorating ideas you can later make out of some inexpensive material,
- Befriending the family down the street who has a boat (it is better to have a friend who has a boat than to have one yourself),
- Camping out in a tent instead of a tent trailer,

The best game in town is just plain going “head to head” with the opponents of your balanced budget namely-long distance calls, new Reeboks, braces, disposable diapers, the \$100 deductible on the insurance, violin lessons, and on and on. You just got to keep on saying in the locker room of life, “Hey! We can beat these guys.”

And in such a game you have to do what you have to do to win. Our family even went so far as to drink powdered milk. Well we didn’t really drink that much of it. (It tasted terrible). But Marilyn would use it to make hot cakes and stuff like that. We even brain

washed our children, when they were little, into believing that a hamburger was a more scrumptious meal than a steak. That idea was a three-pointer if there ever was one.

Athletes love to play in tight games. Games where they can never be sure who will be ahead in the end. The best way to raise children is to have a tight budget. (No pun intended in using the word “tight”). Then, when they ask you for a “Four Wheeler” you don’t have any other choice but to say, “No.” What a wonderful answer that is. But you can’t say it with an, “I’m so sorry tone,” or they will eventually begin to be a little bitter and resentful. You have to say, “No!” with a big smile. Then add, “If there was ever a young person who deserved a “four wheeler” it is you. And someday our ship will come in and when it does, I won’t buy you a “four wheeler,” I’ll buy you a “six wheeler.”

They will moan and groan and say sarcastically, “Tell me about it.”

Our children used to get a few A grades on their report cards. They would say, “Do we get five bucks for each A?”

“No,” I’d reply.

“Well the other kids in the neighborhood get five bucks an A.”

I’d reply with a look of love mixed with mischief, “You can’t have five bucks for each A, but come over here and I will give you a big kiss for each one.”

“We don’t want no kisses,” they would reply with a tinge of disgust in their voice.

I guess that reward system is why our children were not too motivated academically. They did not know then, but they do now (as adults) that a kiss from mom or dad is worth a lot more than five bucks.

In dealing with your children, you can make up for a multitude of financial inadequacies, by telling them with your words and actions, “We don’t have as many fancy things as some of the other people, but we have more love than any other family in this whole town.”

No comparisons allowed

Winning a head to head contest with your finances requires that you not compare yourself with your sister and her husband or with the other guys on your softball team. When you compare, you always choose someone who seems to have it all. And using your inward feelings against their outward appearance you will go down in flames.

Guarding against self pity

In the long and ongoing “tight game” to make ends meet you get sweaty, out of breath, worn out, weary, discouraged, and ready to drop. At such times you will feel sorry for yourself and exclaim: “It is not fair!”

You deserve to have such feelings. Through all your discipline, you’ve earned the right to a little self-pity. Not a lot because, it takes a way the fun of the game, but a little.

PAYING YOUR TITHING.

As Marilyn and I look back we feel that: strict budgeting (If you don’t resent the restrictions at times, then it isn’t really budgeting.), weekly meetings and a system-got us through. But there was something else that completed the miracle that kept us out of debtor prison. That was the Law of Tithing. A friend of mine, as a young father, was less active in the church. He went to a meeting where member of the Quorum of the Twelve was the speaker. This apostle promised all those present that if they would pay their tithing faithfully, they would be able to pay all their bills. He told them to do it and if there were unpaid bills to send them to him. He would pay them. My friend decided to take him up on this. That month he paid his tithing and has continued to do so for the past forty years. He has never yet had to send his unpaid bills to this apostle because he has always been able to pay them himself.

Family finances is an area of life that the blessing of heaven are needed. These divine helps make it possible for us to be a team, to formulate a plan, find a system, and most of all to have the discipline to be able to say, “No” when “No” is the only answer that will work. And sometimes it will give us the miracle of learning that somehow we also find many ways to say, “Yes.”

Paying tithing brings us the blessings of heaven which enable us to be Rich on any income.

SUMMARY

So there are some ideas to go along with your own. Remember:

1. Have a weekly financial meeting,
2. Have a financial plan and system,
- 3. Have discipline in your spending,**
4. Pay your tithing.

You’ve been your own therapist now take on the role of being the two financial consultants who will tackle the financial job that needs to be done and by golly you will do it.

Chapter 13

HAVING COMMON FAMILY INTERESTS

A common family interest doesn't just mean that you live in the same town with your family, that you have the same last name as them, that you all love anchovies on your pizzas or that or go to the same church. Your family's common interest is something you do together that all the family members love to do. Dad would rather do this with his family than play golf with his friends. (Of course he still gets out on the links in addition to this.) Such an interest is something the teenagers would rather do than they would hang out at the mall. It is something mother enjoys as much as reading a novel. It is something that a daughter at college would tell her friends, "Our family all loves to get together to ..." She would add, "I can't wait to go home so that we can all spend some time together doing ..."

A common family interest is something that while your family is engaged in doing serves as a catalyst to cause other family things to happen. If your common interest is rock hounding then it is the talking and the laughing and the eating you do on the drive to where the rocks are. It is the talk of school, of friends, of politics, of religion, of snakes, of frustration, and of victories, which take place while you are polishing the rocks. It is the appreciation of beauty the family shares while making jewelry.

Common interests bring family unity

In today's fast paced world family members often go in their individual direction pursuing their own activities and they seldom center on a common family interest. To bring unity to the family, the most functional families have a common family interest. Something they can all do together. Something they all love to do.

Pursuing their common interest stimulates them to talk about something other than the interest for which they are together. Something that cause them to play together, hope together, laugh together and bond together as one.

Now Mister or Misses Family Therapist what is your family's common interest?

SOME COMMON INTERESTS

Music

I have known families who have a common interest in music. They can each play an instrument and even have a family orchestra. They go to concerts and music festivals together. They sing together. Music brings them great unity.

Other interests

Some families spend years in the mountain building a cabin. When it is built it isn't as valuable to the family as it was while they were working together to build it. Others plan all year for the annual deer hunt. Mom and dad and all the kids go. They don't care if they get a deer, they just want to be out there in the hills together.

FOR OUR FAMILY THE COMMON INTEREST WAS SPORTS

I don't know if there will be sports in heaven, but I do know there is a bit of heaven in sports. Many heavenly blessings have come to our family because of what happened to us before, during, and after ball games. I started taking my young kids to athletic events before they could tell the players from the cheerleaders. Although basketball is my favorite game, I think going to a football game is among life's most glorious outings. A family can go to a football game and sit there in the brisk fall air, hear the band, sing the national anthem, and watch the kickoff. Such an activity creates in me a happiness beyond measure. Just writing about it makes me wish it were Saturday afternoon. I can see and feel it now. There is a nip in the air, and the leaves are red and yellow—we are just entering Cougar Stadium. It's such thoughts as these that make me think that God approves of ball games. I know that individuals like ball games, but I think that when athletics mix with family, sports can become one of life's genuine highlights. It almost seems that the reason God inspired man to invent ball games was so that the family could go to watch those games or better still to play those games together.

Our home court advantage

As we raised our family we moved a lot. Each time we considered purchasing a new home, a prime consideration was always whether there was a suitable place on the property to build a basketball court. That was a more important matter than whether the house had indoor plumbing.

As we would walk around the prospective property, I'd say to the boys, "Look! Right there is a perfect spot for our basketball court." They would excitedly agree and the realtor would know he had a deal.

After we got moved in, we'd all go out and clear off the land. We'd put some nice straight two-by-four planks around the outside borders. We'd get everything level and estimate the number of square yards of concrete we'd need. Then I'd call my old friends Wayne Lynn and Lee Miller. They'd get there just as the cement truck would. Words just won't allow me to describe the excitement we would all feel as we'd see that cement get smoother and smoother. Wayne knew how to finish it so it looked real good. The boys would all help as best they could and the girls would pitch in to. Marilyn would bring us cool-aid and encourage us to a greater effort. Even as I write this now, it makes me want to turn back time and build a home basketball court again with my family.

In a day or two the cement would be hard. We'd put up the pipes that my friend Bob Cutler had welded for us. Then we'd attach our homemade wooden backboard. Next the hoop would be bolted at the precise height. After that we'd play and play and play.

There is always energy to do what you love

In the days that followed, I'd come home from work tired. The kids would ask me to come out and shoot a few. At first I'd say, "No, I'm too tired." They'd persist and I'd

give in. Once out on the home court, I'd discover that I wasn't really tired at all. Oh, I was tired of office work and things like that. But I wasn't tired of important things like basketballs and family. Out there, new energy would flow into my body and I'd really come to life.

You don't have to win

It was especially fun when the kids were little. In those wonderful days I used to win. Then, for a while, I was able to gain a few more victories because I doubled as both a player and as the referee. As time went by, they gradually learned the rules and began to protest many of my calls. That forced me to give up the refereeing aspect of the game. After that I lost every time. That's when I started trying for the sportsmanship trophy. I found out I could get closer to my kids if they won.

A time to talk on the home court

And as we would play we'd laugh and talk. I remembered once one of my sons and I even had a talk about religion during a game.

It was at a time when I could see that defeat was inevitable. My son Mark was acting pretty smug, I called time out. I looked up into his eyes and said, "Mark, let me tell you something. Let's put my athletic prowess into the proper perspective. You and I know that there will be a resurrection."

Mark is a religious young man, so he was interested. I continued, "When the resurrection occurs, our bodies will come back to life. Once again the strength we had when we were at our prime will return. When that happens and my full physical powers return, I'll meet you again on the court. I'll go one-on-one with you, just as we are doing today. Then, I assure you, my young son, my hook shot will hit dead center and I'll block every shot you put up. Then it will be me who will hit long shot after long shot. It will be me who will fake right and go left. It will be me who will soar high for each rebound. The results will then be much different than they are now." I detected that Mark was trembling a bit, so I threw him the ball and we resumed the game. Our talk then turned to less weighty matters.

About the prettiest picture I can create in my mind is the scene of a family and a ball. It seems to me that a ball can tie a father and a child together like little else can. A ball can close a difficult gap between a parent and a son or daughter. It can also help a mom and dad and a whole family dream together, talk together, and live together in love and closeness.

And lest you think I'm leaving out girls, some of my greatest athletic thrills came as I watched my daughter, Sarah, play. I recall that one night before her most important game, she called me to her room and said, "Father, I need a blessing." Her voice choked with emotion as she added, "I've just got to play well tomorrow night. We've got to beat Olympus."

In an attempt to comfort her, I said, “Come on, Sarah. Don’t take it so seriously. It’s just a game.”

“No, Father. It’s not just a game, because their center has been calling my boyfriend, and if they win I just know I’ll lose him.” I could see this was indeed more than a game and so I prayed with all my might.

The next day I cheered myself hoarse. We lost—and she lost him, too. Now, looking back and realizing how young she was, I’m not sure we really lost at all. On second thought, I believe we were the winners.

A unifying influence

Our family life just seems to be more well oiled when there is a ball game coming up out on the front lawn, or at the cultural hall, or at the high school gym, or at the twenty-three-thousand-seat Marriott Center. Before the game, there is the surprise of what might happen. During the game, there is the excitement of what is happening. And after the game, there is the expert analysis of what did happen. The profound lessons that come from experiencing the joy of victory and the agony of defeat are not felt anywhere nearly as keenly as they are within the sacred walls of home.

Good sports heroes can help

Life seems to have more direction when we have some true sports heroes to watch, to admire, and to emulate.

When Matt and Devin became old enough to understand about a state high school basketball tournament, we got in the car and with unbounded excitement headed up to watch the semi-finals. I can still remember walking into the Special Events Center on the University of Utah campus. We got ourselves a hot dog with a lot of mustard on it and climbed up to our high-level seats.

Weber High School was playing somebody. As we watched, I became aware that one player was different from the rest. His name was Haws. He was a superb athlete. But that wasn’t what made him different. It was his demeanor, the way he smiled and acted. I wish I could describe it better, but it was just that “something” you see only once in a while. I was hoping my boys would catch a vision of what a real athlete could be.

“Matt and Devin,” I said excitedly, “seven. See how he acts. See how hard he plays. See how he treats the referee.”

A technical foul was called on the other team. Haws strode up the foul line to shoot the desperately needed point. The coach called him back; he wanted one of the little guards to shoot it. Haws looked at the coach for a minute like, “Come on, Coach. Let me shoot it.” Then he smiled. As the players all lined up, Haws quickly ran to the other player who stood at the foul line. He reached over and ruffled the little guard’s hair. The guard smiled, took the ball, and swished it through. Haws did something for the whole team. I said to the boys, “That’s the kind of player you want to be. You don’t want to get on the referee’s case, and you don’t want to get down on yourself. Just get out there and have a good time.”

On that special night Rich Haws became a hero to my boys. Through the years, I've reminded them about the night when we saw Haws play. Haws didn't know what he did for my family, but I'm sure glad he did it.

Sports is a good way to learn to deal with disappointment

During Devin's junior year in high school, his team, Provo High's undefeated Bulldogs had been rated number one all season. But in the state tournament the unthinkable happened and they lost on a last second shot. I thought the world had come to an end. There was no way I could go on, no way I could continue to live. I couldn't take it any longer. I dejectedly headed for the exit.

That night when we got home, there was complete gloom at our house. I sat at the kitchen table. Marilyn was cooking dinner; I didn't want to talk about the game. Just then the door flew open. It was Devin. He threw his green and white athletic bag in front of the closet door. He turned to his right and entered the kitchen. I didn't want to look at him. I knew his heart was broken. The thing I dreaded most since we had lost the game two hours before was talking to him. I knew that my grief would be multiplied ten times by his sad heart. To my surprise he shouted, "Hello, Pops, what's going on? Is dinner about ready?" I lifted my head. I knew that his sorrow at losing ran deep, but he was determined to console all of us. He spoke again, "Hey, Pops, don't be sad. It's just a game. We'll get them next year." Just those trite words gave me consolation. I stood up, looked into his eyes, and could feel his inward pain. All I could say was, "I'm sorry."

He joined us all at his usual place at our round table. We had a short prayer and started to eat. The phone rang. It was a friend calling to encourage us. After that call, we talked about the future as we continued to eat.

By dessert time we were no longer talking about basketball. Our conversation had evolved to just talking about our family. Kathryn got up from her seat, went behind her younger brother Devin, and massaged his tired shoulders. We all moved our chairs close together. We decided to pray. We thanked the Lord for our family and the blessings of living together in love. We thanked him for Devin and for his successes. Most of all we thanked him for the gospel which gave our lives direction. After the prayer we sat and talked some more. The Spirit of the Lord was with us. It was as if we were totally surrounded with blessings. That night was the sweetest night our family ever spent together. We had lost the game but once again we had won each other's love.

Mark, my youngest son also played for Provo High and also lost in the state tournament. Of that loss and what happened after I wrote in my journal:

Mark got home at about ten-thirty. We talked. He said, "When I look at the future, all the tests I've got to take before I graduate, I get a bit over-whelmed." He then talked about his heavy load in school his final months of high school, about his

entrance in a few months into college, of his mission which was now just a year away, of his chance to play basketball for BYU.

He was sad but very talkative and so Marilyn and the children who were there just listened as he poured out his heart to us.

As we talked he said, “I guess it’s time for me to grow up. I’ve been a kid long enough.”

By now it was nearly midnight. He said, “Do you know what I really miss? I miss little Lexi and Ben [his niece and nephew].” He added, “They used to come and see us every day for a year. Now they don’t come anymore because they live in Kentucky. I miss them more than I can ever say.” He and all of us nearly came to tears over that one. I told him, ‘That’s what really matters- family and those kind of things.

Sensing that he had said all that he felt, I told him, “You’ll do well in the days ahead. Marilyn and I then talked about his good sense of humor, his multitude of friends, and his family who all love him. We could tell he was tired and that his heart was heavy. I asked him if he’d like us all to kneel in prayer. I was able to tell him of his family’s love for him and of his Heavenly Father’s love for him. He embraced each family member, said good night, and went to bed.

Sports teaches us how to lose and then bounce back

Losing never dampened my enthusiasm for sports. Oh, it broke my heart a few times. But a few cracks in the heart never really hurt anybody. It just helps them to understand other people. Others have similar wounds. As a matter of fact, if sports does any harm at all, it’s the harm it does to those that are always winning. Fortunately, you seldom find any winners that haven’t had some heartbreaking losses somewhere along the line.

Losing can bring deep sorrow. But out of that soil of sorrow can grow compassion and understanding.

SUMMARY

So sports is our common interest. What is yours? I suppose it is not absolutely essential that you have one or two or there such interests but I do know that to do so sure does help the family find the kind of unity that makes all things move forward in a more functional way.

Chapter 14

FAMILY SPIRITUALITY

Church is not the place we go to be religious. Rather it is the place we go to get the commitment, the power and the knowledge so that when we return to our home we will be desirous and able to be religious in our family. It is not the act of attending church that determines our level of spirituality. Rather it is how the doctrines and teaching we receive there are implemented at home in our relationships with our family.

An example of the power doctrine has in our lives is the truth that we had a pre earth life. No doctrine has so influenced Marilyn and I as parents as has the knowledge that our children lived with their Heavenly Father before they came to live with us. We have always known they were in very deed the children of God. That thought made us ever aware of the great trust that the Lord had placed in us to teach, nurture and love them.

Religion pays great family dividends.

Once we realize the power we gain in personal and family relationships by attending religious services we would be willing to break down the doors of the chapel to get in. Of all our investments none pay such rich family dividends as does our investment in religion. When all our family values are rooted in religion then their chances of bearing rich and sweet family fruit are greatly enhanced.

Church attendance, scriptural teachings in the home, and individual and family prayer add a dimension to family life that makes all other family systems and practices have a depth they would not otherwise have.

Teach your family the reasons for your faith and values

It is not enough to show the children by our acts that we have deep spiritual values and beliefs. We must also teach them the religious doctrines and principles upon which our values are based. When we are doing family chores, riding in the car, sitting in our homes, eating family meals, tucking them in bed, at family home evenings, and on Sunday afternoons we need to seek opportunities to tell our children of the history and doctrines that give us reasons to live honest, kind, and responsible lives. Usually such teachings are accomplished best in short rather than long discussions. But on occasion they

will be receptive and you can explain to them why you believe in eternal life, and prayer, and the atonement and its related principles and ordinances. This does not all have to happen in a year but it must happen in the eighteen or so years that they are in your care.

Live so that your teachings will ring true.

Be cautious in not being domineering or long winded in your attempts to teach your children. Such practices could bring negative rather than positive results. And of course your words will seem hollow to your family if it is obvious that you do not attempt to live in harmony with the things you teach. This does not mean that you must be perfect in your daily life. It means that you would be perfect if you could because with all your heart you desire to be. They will sense your desire to be good and it will give your words power and meaning.

THE POWER OF PRAYER TO HELP THE FAMILY

Private and Parent Prayers

It seems we all have plenty to pray about in our families. And while praying that other family members will change, let us be sure to pray for the strength to change ourselves. Pray for the power to have good feelings—feelings of hope and patience and love. Pray for the strength to move ever closer to your family members. Pray for the power not to lose patience with those who do not want to move in harmony with your views. Privately pray that they will have a change of heart and will overcome their weaknesses, but in your relationship with them praise them for their strengths.

Don't pray for a victory but do pray for your child's success

When we lived in Kentucky, Devin's Seneca High School ninth-grade team was playing a crucial game. There were only a few fans on the north end of the bleachers cheering for Seneca, and a few in the south end cheering for the other team. Regulation play ended in a tie. During the first overtime each team scored six points. During the second overtime Devin scored most of the points for his team. The score changed hands several times and was tied with just three seconds to go. The small but vocal crowd was in a frenzy. A teammate passed the ball to Devin. He jumped and shot over the hand of the defender. As the ball arched toward the basket, time in the game ran out. The shot looked on target but was just an inch or so too long. It hit the back of the rim and rebounded to the foul line. My disappointment changed to hope when I realized that a foul had been called. The referee said that the foul was right after the shot—Devin would get to shoot a one-and-

one. I sat there looking at my son, who could now win the game if he could just make his first free throw.

I decided that I shouldn't pray about the foul shot. Just as the ref was about to hand Devin the ball, the other team called time out pounded within my chest as I wondered, "Should I pray? No," I said to myself, "I shouldn't." I glanced down to the other end of the gym. The opposing fans there Baptist and I was sure that they were praying that he would miss the shot. I was beside myself with anxiety. I considered again whether I should pray. Again I decided against it. Both teams came back out on the court, and the referee was about to hand Devin the ball.

By now Devin had the ball. Again I was tempted to pray, but again I didn't. His knees were bending, he held the ball in position, and finally he shot. Just as the ball left his hand I couldn't restrain myself: I cried out with a silent appeal, "Oh, dear Heavenly Father, let it go in." A second later the ball was in the net. I bounded out of the stands with total excitement. I embraced my young son and told him that I loved him. I still don't know whether I should have prayed for that foul shot to go in. But I do know, and I will always know, that it's right to pray, for a son or a daughter. In circumstances such as this basketball game, the answer to the prayer is not as important as the fact that a prayer was said. I quickly admit that since that day in Kentucky I've prayed for the success of other shots, some of which turned out to be air balls.

Family Prayer

There is a lot of bad and hurtful stuff out there in the world that you and other family members will encounter each day. Family prayer can give each one of you the strength and guidance you need to cope with all that comes at you.

Sometimes it is difficult to get the family together for prayer. Some families get up and have prayer before the first one who has to leave, leaves. But others desire family members who can do so to sleep in as long as possible. So you'll just have to decide. To have family prayer, one mother would pray with each child just before that child left the home in the morning. Sometimes the evening meal is a good time to have family prayer. But sometimes not all the family members are there for the meals. Of all the experiences we had as a family, none was as important as having every one home for the evening meal. But if you can't do it, that is okay. Just do what you can, remembering how important family prayer is. If you have a spouse, at least the two of you can usually have prayer together each night and morning.

Of all parenting skills none are so profoundly important as is the skill of being fervent in prayer. So often when all else seems fruitless, prayer works it's marvelous spell.

Do your best to bring your family together for family prayer. If you try to do so the Lord will bless you as if you were perfect in doing so and He will reward you with the quiet blessings that will make all the difference.

FAMILY LEADERSHIP

Perhaps in your family there is no one who can hold the priesthood. If so, ask the Lord to bless you in such a way that much of what I now say about the priesthood will apply to you in your role as a family leader.

The Blessing of the Priesthood

Receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood and being ordained an elder in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a great event in a person's life. The power received that day enables us to govern our own lives and provides us with the means whereby we can be an influence for good in the lives of others.

As Marilyn grew up she had a teenage dream of marrying a handsome man. But by the time I met her she had decided that a priesthood man was more important than a handsome man. So I qualified. As I became well acquainted with her I decided that she deserved the very best, so I asked her to marry me. (Ha! Ha!) But I did have one thing that was the best, and that was the priesthood.

I'm sure life with me has not always seemed like the best to her. But sensing my desire to be a worthy priesthood man she has not condemned me for my weaknesses. Instead she has encouraged me to be better. I have been far from a perfect husband, but because of the priesthood I have been far better than I otherwise would have been.

The area of my life wherein the priesthood has blessed me most is in my desire to be a good father. I have greatly hoped to give my children the very best. I couldn't give them things that cost a lot of money, because we have never had enough money to buy fancy things. But somehow the priesthood gave me the power to give my children something far greater than the things money can buy. I have a good batting average as a father. I sometimes struck out by making mistakes, but quite often, through the influence of the priesthood, I would get a hit that would help my children win.

Be a priesthood man

In the “olden days,” when our children were small, the pattern of the Church was that we would all go to church on Sunday morning for priesthood meeting and Sunday School, then we would go back in the early evening for sacrament meeting. One Sunday afternoon my young son, hoping I had had enough meetings for one day and would excuse the entire family from the evening meeting, asked, “Are you going to go to church again?”

I replied, “I sure am.”

Saddened by my response, he asked, “Why?”

I wanted to give him a profound answer about the importance of sacrament meeting, so I paused to consider what to say. While I did so my little daughter Kathryn, who was younger than her brother, softly replied, “Because Dad is a priesthood man, that’s why.”

That answer—“Because Dad is a priesthood man”—has since that day been a guiding light in my life. In considering why or why not I should or should not do certain things the answer is: “Because I am a priesthood man. That is why.”

When it was not convenient, or when I did not feel like gathering the family together for family prayer, or family home evening, or when they did not really want to come, I’d wonder why I should do so. And then I would know why. “Because I am a priesthood man. That is why.”

When I’d wonder why being overly friendly with women at work or at church was wrong, then I would know why. “Because I am a priesthood man. That is why.”

When I’d wonder why I should spend less time with my friends and more time with my family, then I would know why. “Because I am a priesthood man. That is why.”

When I would feel really bad when I was less than Marilyn deserved and I’d wonder why I should try to be good when it was so hard, then I would know why. “Because I am a priesthood man. That is why.”

Of course, there were other reasons for doing these things, but the sum total of all those reasons was encompassed as part of my desire to truly be a priesthood man.

And when I added the temple covenants to the priesthood it really gave my life direction and meaning. I knew that all the other things I did, even my Church callings, were temporary, but the family I led would be mine forever.

Somehow Marilyn has a power from something deep within her that is equal to the power I get from being a priesthood man. Her power comes from her natural and powerful integrity. She can do all that matters in a manner that is better than mine. But because she knows what she knows, she lets me lead. She just barely lets me lead because we are so “side by side,” but she honors me as the leader. Why? “Because I am a priesthood man. That is why.” She does not follow my leadership because of my priesthood title but rather because of my priesthood desires. I get to call on who will lead our family prayers, and prayers at meals, and prayers in the car as we leave to go here or there. I preside at family home evenings. I get to do all these things “because I am a priesthood man. That is why.”

But if Marilyn had been in a home without the priesthood, she could have led the family equally well because the power is in her. And you can do it too. It is not easy, but you can do it.

Whether your home is one in which there is priesthood influence or not, give your family righteous leadership:

by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

By kindness, and pure knowledge, . . .

Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love (D&C 121:41–43).

Things Will Work Out as We Have Faith

My family is not like yours, and yours is not like his or hers. Maybe you have a priesthood holder in your family and maybe not. Maybe you are a single mother with a young son or daughter. Maybe you live alone and have no children. Things are the way they are and they will stay that way for a while. Do what you can. As we have been promised by a prophet, “Things will work out.”

Pray for better family circumstances and then pray for the power and grace of Christ and the comfort of the Holy Ghost to help you be happy in the circumstances you are now in. Or if those circumstances are abusive, pray for the power and the way to do whatever is necessary to break away to the safety of a better place.

Do your best to provide righteous family leadership, to have family home evening, and to have family prayer. If you conscientiously do this you will influence your family to be more functional and happy in this life and to be together throughout all eternity.