

Strengthen Home and Family

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Three principles that will help you strengthen your home and family are nurturing, sacrifice, and prayer.

As we watched the 2002 Winter Olympics draw to a close, we couldn't help but remember those individuals who took home the gold. So many athletes with years of preparation came together to compete, hoping to win. As young women in the Church, you too are preparing and competing for a medallion as the Spirit burns brightly within you.

The Young Women program can provide a wonderful training ground to help each of you reach your goals, and the Young Women theme is a constant reminder that we are not alone in the competition. We are on the Lord's team, and He will always be there for us to help us bring home the gold.

As daughters of God, some of you may have great athletic ability, but all of you have been blessed with many talents and gifts. One of the most meaningful gifts is your ability to "strengthen [your] home and family," a new phrase which has been added to the Young Women theme. Do you recognize these words? One of the assignments given us as girls and women in the kingdom is to love and strengthen our families.

Tonight it is my prayer that the Spirit will burn within you, that you will have a greater desire to strengthen your family now and prepare for your future family. The scriptures are filled with ways to teach us how to strengthen our families. There is no greater teacher than the Savior. As you study His teachings and follow His example, you can make your family life better. Let's talk about three principles that will help you strengthen your home and family:

- • Nurturing
- • Sacrifice
- • Prayer

Nurturing

Who doesn't enjoy playing with a small child or holding a newborn baby in their arms? As women, we were born with a natural ability to love and nurture others. To nurture means to support each other, to encourage each other, to nourish and love each other. Are we doing this in our families?

The Savior Himself taught us to nurture. Many times He said, "How oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and have nourished you" (3 Ne. 10:4).

As you gather together in your family, you can do so much to invite a spirit of unity. When was the last time you put your arms around your mom or dad and thanked them for all they do? Parents do most of the nurturing, but they need to be nurtured too.

As women, we can gather our little chickens under our wings with love and tenderness. Recently I watched a young mother talk to her two-year-old child. When she was crying and the mother couldn't understand what she wanted, the mother said, "Don't cry. Use your words. Tell me what's bothering you." She had shown such respect for this two-year-old baby that the baby stopped crying and "used her words." This young mother is learning how to nurture.

When our Father in Heaven introduced the Savior to the world, He demonstrated good nurturing by using a soft voice. The language of the scripture says, "They heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; ... and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; ... notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center" (3 Ne. 11:3).

In our homes, this can be a model for the way we talk to our family members. Let us not use a loud voice but a soft voice when we talk to those we love. This is the way Heavenly Father speaks to His children.

Sacrifice

The second principle is sacrifice. As young women, you are learning to sacrifice every day. We are so impressed with all the good things you are doing:

- You tend after school when your mothers need to work. You help fix dinner and put babies to bed.
- You stay home from parties on weekends because you won't watch inappropriate movies regardless of the rating.
- Thousands of you get up at five o'clock each morning to attend early-morning seminary before going off to school.

The Savior is so proud of you. He knows what you're going through. He understands how hard it is for you to make sacrifices. The Savior taught us to sacrifice. He sacrificed His life for all mankind.

After He was resurrected, the first thing He taught the Nephites was how He had sacrificed. He said: "I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me. ... I have suffered the will of the Father in all things" (3 Ne. 11:11). He had done what Heavenly Father wanted Him to do.

Heavenly Father wants us to create a righteous family. Becoming a wife and mother may limit your career opportunities, but it can be so rewarding. As a young mother, I remember playing a song for my little girls while they danced around the room. It may sound a little silly, but it says it all:

*When I grow up, I want to be a mother and have a family:
one little, two little, three little babies of my own.
Of all the jobs for me, I'll choose no other.
I'll have a family. ...
And I will love them all day long
and give them cookies and milk and yellow balloons,
And cuddle them when things go wrong,*

and read them stories and sing them pretty tunes.

Well, you get the idea. Being a mother is a great blessing, not a sacrifice.

Prayer

Third, the Savior teaches us to pray.

As you help strengthen your family, prayer must be a consistent, daily part of your life. Prayer will protect you from the adversary, give you peace, and help your families love each other more.

When the Savior visited the Nephites, He had only a few days to teach them the fulness of the gospel. During much of that time, He focused on prayer. Did you know that in chapters 17 through 20 of Third Nephi, prayer is mentioned about 44 times? Many times He commanded the people to pray. He knelt on the ground and prayed for them. He taught them how to pray. He blessed the little children and prayed unto the Father for them. He commanded them to always pray in their hearts.

Perhaps during a Mutual activity you could bring your scriptures, read those four chapters aloud, and underline when the word *prayer* is mentioned—sharing stories and testimonies on the power of prayer. I promise that you will feel the Spirit of the Lord and develop a stronger testimony of prayer.

Our prophets have said that they don't worry about the youth who pray twice a day. Now, if they don't worry about us, then we don't need to worry about ourselves, as long as we sincerely pray twice a day.

Listen to a wonderful story by the mother of the Prophet Joseph Smith about the night he went to get the gold plates. She writes: “[That night] I sat up very late. ... About twelve o'clock Joseph came to me and asked me if I had a chest with a lock and key. ... And not having one I was greatly alarmed. ... But Joseph ... said, ‘Never mind, I can do very well ... without it—be calm—all is right.’”

Shortly after, Joseph and Emma left, taking a horse and wagon. Now listen to what his mother says: “I spent the night in prayer and supplication to God, for the anxiety of my mind would not permit me to sleep.” The pleadings of a mother, a righteous daughter of God, comforted the Prophet and protected the gold plates. Over the years, her constant prayers helped strengthen her home and family (see Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley [1979], 102).

How can you use prayer to strengthen your family? Because Heavenly Father loves you so, He wants you to talk to Him. Whatever struggles you may have, you can pray about anything:

- You can pray for help in keeping family rules, such as coming home on time.
- You can pray that your family will have a desire to study the scriptures together.
- You can pray that you will have better communication with your mom or your dad.
- You can pray that you will be more patient with a sister or brother, helping them solve their problems.

Pray over problems that worry you! Don't give up. Heavenly Father can and will answer your prayers. I have had many prayers that have been answered. I also have prayers that have not been answered yet. Our prayers will be answered in the Lord's time when we are ready.

Tonight I have talked about three principles to help you strengthen your home and family:

- •Nurturing
- •Sacrifice
- •Prayer

The Savior, our Redeemer and friend, has shown us the way. As you practice His teachings, you may never win the Olympic silver or gold, but earning your Young Womanhood medallion can bring a much greater reward and help keep the fire of the Holy Ghost burning brightly within each one of you. As you study and develop a love for the scriptures, I pray that you will find other meaningful ways to strengthen your home and family. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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