

Jesus Christ Is the Strength of Parents

By Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Help your children build faith in Jesus Christ, love His gospel and His Church, and prepare for a lifetime of righteous choices.

Once upon a time, a father was about to leave for an evening bishopric meeting. His four-year-old daughter stepped in front of him, wearing pajamas and holding a copy of *Book of Mormon Stories*.

“Why do you have to go to a meeting?” she asked.

“Because I am a counselor in the bishopric,” he answered.

“But you are my dad!” his daughter protested.

He knelt in front of her. “Sweetheart,” he said, “I know you want me to read to you and help you go to sleep, but tonight I need to help the bishop.”

His daughter replied, “Doesn’t the bishop have a dad to help him go to sleep?”

We are eternally grateful for the countless members who serve diligently in the Church of Jesus Christ every day. Your sacrifice is truly sacred.

But as this girl seemed to understand, there’s something equally sacred—something irreplaceable—about a parent nurturing a child. It reflects the pattern of heaven.¹ Our Father in Heaven, our Divine Parent, surely rejoices when His children are taught and nurtured by their parents on earth.²

Parents, thank you for everything you’re doing to raise your children. And children, thank you for everything you’re doing to raise your parents, because as every parent knows, we often learn as much from our children about faith, hope, and charity as they learn from us!³

Parents Have a Sacred Duty

Have you ever thought about the tremendous risk our Father in Heaven takes each time He sends a child to earth? These are His spirit sons and

daughters. They have limitless potential. They are destined to become glorious beings of goodness, grace, and truth. And yet they come to earth completely helpless, barely able to do anything besides cry for help. The memory of their time in God's presence is veiled over, along with the knowledge of who they really are and who they can become. They form their understanding of life, love, God, and His plan based on what they observe from the people around them—especially their parents, who, honestly, are still trying to figure things out for themselves.

God has given parents the “sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to ... observe the commandments of God.”⁴

That's enough to keep even the best parents awake at night.

My message to all parents is this:

The Lord loves you.

He is with you.

He stands beside you.

He is your strength in guiding your children to make righteous choices.

Accept this privilege and responsibility courageously and joyfully. Don't delegate this source of heavenly blessings to anyone else. Within the framework of gospel values and principles, you are the ones to guide your child in the details of daily decisions. Help your children build faith in Jesus Christ, love His gospel and His Church, and prepare for a lifetime of righteous choices. In fact, that is God's plan for parents.

Satan will oppose you, distract you, try to discourage you.

But every child has received the Light of Christ as a direct line to heaven. And the Savior will help you, guide you, and encourage you. Seek His help. Inquire of the Lord!

Just as Jesus Christ is the strength of youth, Jesus Christ is also the strength of parents.

He Magnifies Love

Sometimes we might wonder if someone else might be better qualified to guide and teach our children. But no matter how inadequate you may feel, you have something that uniquely qualifies you: your love for your child.

A parent's love for a child is one of the strongest forces in the universe. It's one of the few things on this earth that can truly be eternal.

Now, perhaps you feel that your relationship with your child is less than ideal. That's where the Savior's power comes in. He heals the sick, and He can heal relationships. He multiplies bread and fish, and He can multiply the love and the joy in your home.

Your love for your children creates a rich environment for teaching truth and building faith. Make your home a house of prayer, learning, and faith; a house of joyful experiences; a place of belonging; a house of God.⁵ And “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that [you] may be filled with [His] love, which he [bestows] upon ... followers of his Son, Jesus Christ.”⁶

He Magnifies Small and Simple Efforts

Another strength you have, as a parent, is the opportunity for daily, ongoing influence. Peers, teachers, and media influencers come and go. But you can be the most constant, steady influence in your child's life.

Your efforts may seem small compared to the loud voices your children hear in the world. At times it may feel that you're not accomplishing much. But remember that “by small means the Lord can bring about great things.”⁷ One home evening, one gospel conversation, or one good example may not change your child's life in a moment, any more than one drop of rain causes a plant immediately to grow. But the consistency of small and simple things, day after day, nourishes your children much better than an occasional flood.⁸

That is the Lord's way. He speaks to you and your child with a still, small voice, not a voice of thunder.⁹ He healed Naaman not through “some great thing” but through the simple, repeated act of washing.¹⁰ The children of Israel enjoyed the feast of quail in the wilderness, but what kept them alive was the small and simple miracle of manna—their daily bread.¹¹

Brothers and sisters, daily bread is best prepared and served at home. Faith and testimony are best fostered in normal and natural ways, one bite at a time, in small and simple moments, in the constant flow of daily living.¹²

Every moment is a teaching moment. Every word and action can be a guide for making choices.¹³

You may not see the immediate effects of your efforts. But don't give up. “All things must come to pass in their time,” the Lord said. “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for [you] are laying the foundation of a

great work.”¹⁴ What work could be greater than helping God’s precious children learn who they really are and build their faith in Jesus Christ, His gospel, and His Church? Jesus Christ will bless and magnify your consistent efforts.

He Gives Revelation

Another powerful way the Lord supports parents is through the gift of personal revelation. God is eager to pour out His Spirit to guide parents.

As you are prayerful and sensitive to the Spirit, He will warn you of hidden dangers.¹⁵ He will reveal your children’s gifts, their strengths, and their unspoken concerns.¹⁶ God will help you see your children as He sees them—beyond their outward appearance and into their hearts.¹⁷

With God’s help, you can learn to know your children in a pure and heavenly way. I invite you to accept God’s offer to guide your family by personal revelation. Seek His guidance in your prayers.¹⁸

A Mighty Change

Perhaps the most important help Jesus Christ offers to parents is the “mighty change” of heart.¹⁹ It’s a miracle every one of us needs.

For a moment, imagine this situation: You’re at church, listening to a talk about families. The speaker describes a perfect home and an even more perfect family. Husband and wife never quarrel. Children stop reading their scriptures only when it’s time to do homework. And the music of “Love One Another”²⁰ is playing in the background. Before the speaker gets to the part about everyone cheerfully joining to clean the bathroom, you’re already thinking, “My family is hopeless.”

Dear brothers and sisters, relax! Everyone in the congregation is thinking the same thing! The fact is, all parents worry about not being good enough.

Fortunately, there is a divine source of help for parents: It is Jesus Christ. He is the source of our mighty change of heart.

As you open your heart to the Savior and His teachings, He will show you your weakness. If you trust Jesus Christ with a humble heart, He will make weak things become strong.²¹ He is the God of miracles.

Does that mean you and your family will be picture-perfect? No. But you will get better. Through the Savior’s grace, little by little, you’ll

develop more of the attributes parents need: *love for God and His children, patience, selflessness, faith in Christ, and courage to make righteous choices.*

Jesus Christ Offers Support through His Church

Our effort to build faith in Jesus Christ is home centered, focused on the individual. And it is Church supported. Besides providing the sacred scriptures and the words of prophets, the Savior's Church offers many resources to help parents and children make righteous choices:

- *For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices* does not give you a list of dos or don'ts. It teaches eternal truths to help make choices centered on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Read it with your children. Let them talk about it. Help them to have these eternal and divine truths guide their choices.²²
- FSY conferences are another wonderful resource. I hope every youth will attend. I invite young single adults to join these conferences as mentors and counselors. I invite parents to build on the spiritual momentum their youth bring home from FSY conferences.
- Children and youth in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have teachers, advisers, and mentors. Often you enter a young person's life at a crucial moment to build and support faith and testimony. Some of you are single adults. Some never had children of your own. Your joyful service to God's children is sacred in God's eyes.²³

Never Give Up on the Miracle

My dear friends, my dear brothers and sisters, building faith in a child is somewhat like helping a flower grow. You cannot tug on the stem to make it taller. You cannot pry open the bud to get it to blossom sooner. And you cannot *neglect* the flower and expect it to grow or flourish spontaneously.

What you can and must do for the rising generation is provide rich, nourishing soil with access to flowing heavenly water. Remove weeds and anything that would block heavenly sunlight. Create the best possible conditions for growth. Patiently allow the rising generation to make inspired choices, and let God work His miracle. The result will be more beautiful and more stunning and more joyful than anything you could accomplish just by yourself.

In Heavenly Father's plan, families' relationships are meant to be eternal. This is why, as a parent, you never give up, even if you are not proud of how things went in the past.

With Jesus Christ, the Master Healer and Savior, there can always be a new beginning; He always gives hope.

Jesus Christ is the strength of families.

Jesus Christ is the strength of youth.

Jesus Christ is the strength of parents.

Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. "Innate in almost every parent is the desire to teach his or her children moral virtues. This is part of the miracle of Heavenly Father's plan. He wants His children to come to earth, following the eternal pattern of families that exists in heaven. Families are the basic organizational unit of the eternal realms, and so He intends for them also to be the basic unit on earth. Though earthly families are far from perfect, they give God's children the best chance to be welcomed to the world with the only love on earth that comes close to what we felt in heaven—parental love. Families are also the best way to preserve and pass on moral virtues and true principles that are most likely to lead us back to God's presence" (Henry B. Eyring, "Gathering the Family of God," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 20).
2. Of course, we know that God's will is not always accomplished "in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Mortal parenthood certainly pales in comparison to God's ideal. He surely sees that. He must weep over all the sorrows and heartache in family relationships. And yet He has not given up on the family. And He will not, because God has a glorious plan for the eternal destiny of His children. And at the center of that plan is the family.
3. See Matthew 18:1–5; Mosiah 3:19.
4. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28.
5. See "Learning at Home Is Founded on Relationships," *Teaching in the Savior's Way: For All Who Teach in the Home and in the Church* (2022), 30–31; see also Doctrine and Covenants 109:8.

6. Moroni 7:48.
7. 1 Nephi 16:29; see also Alma 37:6–7.
8. See “Learning at Home Consists of Small, Simple, Consistent Efforts,” *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*, 31. President David O. McKay taught: “Let us not think that, because some [things] ... seem small and trivial, [that] they are unimportant. Life, after all, is made up of little things. Our life, our being, physically, is made up of little heart beats. Let that little heart stop beating, and life in this world ceases. The great sun is a mighty force in the universe, but we receive the blessings of [its] rays because they come to us as little beams, which, taken in the aggregate, fill the whole world with sunlight. The dark night is made pleasant by the glimmer of what seem to be little stars; and so the true Christian life is made up of little Christ-like acts performed this hour, this minute—in the home” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* [2003], 219).
9. See Helaman 5:30.
10. See 2 Kings 5:9–14.
11. See Exodus 16.
12. See “Preparing Your Children for a Lifetime on God’s Covenant Path,” *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families: New Testament 2023*, appendix (digital only).
13. See “Learning at Home Can Be Planned but Also Spontaneous,” *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*, 31; 1 Peter 3:15.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 64:32–33.
15. See Matthew 2:13.
16. See Alma 40:1; 41:1; 42:1.
17. See 1 Samuel 16:7.
18. See 1 Nephi 15:8.
19. Alma 5:13.
20. See “Love One Another,” *Hymns*, no. 308.
21. See Ether 12:27.

22. “In the case of children, the responsibility of giving moral guidance rests with the parents. They know the disposition, understanding, and intelligence of each child. Parents spend a lifetime seeking to establish and maintain good communications with each of their children. They are in the best position to make the ultimate moral decisions as to the welfare and well-being of their offspring” (James E. Faust, “The Weightier Matters of the Law: Judgment, Mercy, and Faith,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 54).
23. Two other resources worth mentioning: The digital version of this year’s *Come, Follow Me* resource includes a new section titled “Preparing Your Children for a Lifetime on God’s Covenant Path.” It suggests simple, home-centered ideas for helping children prepare for baptism and other covenants and ordinances. And the newly revised *Teaching in the Savior’s Way* has a section titled “Home and Family” that describes how the principles of Christlike teaching apply to the home (see pages 30–31).