

Guardians of the Hearth

"You are the guardians of the hearth," said President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910-2008) as he introduced "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" in the general Relief Society meeting in 1995. "You are the bearers of the children. You are they who nurture them and establish within them the habits of their lives. No other work reaches so close to divinity as does the nurturing of the sons and daughters of God."

For almost 17 years now this proclamation has reinforced that our most significant responsibilities are centered in strengthening families and homes—no matter our current circumstances. Barbara Thompson, now second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, was in the Salt Lake Tabernacle when President Hinckley first read the proclamation. "That was a great occasion," she remembers. "I felt the significance of the message. I also found myself thinking, 'This is a great guide for parents. It is also a big responsibility for parents.' I thought for a moment that it really didn't pertain too much to me since I wasn't married and didn't have any children. But almost as quickly I thought, 'But it does pertain to me. I am a member of a family. I am a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a cousin, a niece, and a granddaughter. I do have responsibilities—and blessings—because I am a member of a family. Even if I were the only living member of my family, I am still a member of God's family, and I have a responsibility to help strengthen other families.'"

Fortunately, we are not left alone in our efforts. "The greatest help," says Sister Thompson, "we will have in strengthening families is to know and follow the doctrines of Christ and rely on Him to help us."

From the Scriptures
Proverbs 22:6; 1 Nephi 1:1; 2
Nephi 25:26; Alma 56:46-48;
Doctrine and Covenants 93:40

From Our History

"When Sister Bathsheba W. Smith served as the fourth Relief Society general president [from 1901 to 1910], she saw a need to strengthen families, and so she established mother education lessons for Relief Society sisters. The lessons included counsel on marriage, prenatal care, and child rearing. These lessons supported President Joseph F. Smith's teachings about the Relief Society helping women in their roles at home:

"Wherever there is ignorance or at least a lack of understanding in regard to the family, duties of the family, with regard to obligations that should exist and that do rightfully exist between husband and wife and between parents and children, there this organization exists or is near at hand, and by the natural endowments and inspiration that belongs to the organization they are prepared and ready to impart instruction with reference to those important duties."

