

The Book

By Elder Allan F. Packer

Of the Seventy



Family history and temple work should be a regular part of our personal worship.

As a young 12-year-old Scout, I received a gift of a much-desired addition to my Scouting equipment. It was a hatchet with a heavy leather cover! On the next overnight hike, we arrived in camp after dark, wet and cold from the heavy snow on the trail. All I could think about was building a big roaring fire. I immediately went to work chopping a fallen tree with my new hatchet. As I chopped, I was frustrated because it didn't seem to be cutting very well. In my frustration, I worked harder. Disappointed, I returned to camp with only a few pieces of wood. By the light of someone else's fire, I discovered the problem. I hadn't taken the cover off the hatchet. I can report, however, the cover was chopped to shreds. The lesson: I became distracted with other things.

As we work toward exaltation, we must work on all of the requirements and not become distracted by focusing on one or two requirements or other unrelated things. Seeking the kingdom of God leads to joy and happiness.¹ If needed, we must be willing to *change*. Frequent small corrections are less painful and disruptive than large course corrections.

Not long ago, Sister Packer and I traveled to several foreign countries. We prepared our passports and other documents. We obtained the shots, medical exams, visas, and stamps. As we arrived, our documents were inspected, and when all the requirements were met, we were allowed to enter.

Qualifying for exaltation is like entering another country. We must each obtain our spiritual passport. We do not *set* the requirements, but, individually, we must meet all of them. The plan of salvation contains all of the doctrines, laws, commandments, and ordinances needed for *all* to qualify for exaltation.² Then, "through the Atonement of [Jesus] Christ, all mankind may be saved."³ The Church helps but cannot do it for us. Qualifying for exaltation becomes a quest of a lifetime.

Christ organized His Church to help us. He has called 15 men we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators to guide the Church and to teach the people. The First Presidency⁴ and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles⁵ are of equal power and authority,⁶ with the senior Apostle designated as the President of the Church. The Seventy are called to assist.⁷ The leaders did not set the requirements for exaltation. God did! These leaders are called to teach, expound, exhort, and even *warn* so that we stay on course.⁸

As explained in the Church handbook: "In fulfilling its purpose to help individuals and families qualify for exaltation, the Church focuses on divinely appointed responsibilities. These include helping members live the gospel of Jesus Christ, gathering Israel through missionary work, caring for the poor and needy, and enabling the salvation of the dead by building temples and performing vicarious ordinances."⁹ These four focuses and all other laws,

commandments, and ordinances are required and not optional. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and by doing each of these, we are adding required stamps to our spiritual passports.

During this conference we are being taught about changes that will help us all be better prepared.

The family is the center of the plan of salvation and perhaps why it is also called the “great plan of happiness.”¹⁰ President Boyd K. Packer has said, “The ultimate end of all activity in the Church is that a man and his wife and their children can be happy at home.”¹¹

President Spencer W. Kimball said, “Our success, individually and as a Church, will largely be determined by how faithfully we focus on living the gospel in the home.”¹² Temple and family history work is part of living the gospel at home. It should be a family activity far more than a Church activity.

There has been a renewed emphasis on family history and temple work from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve.¹³ Your response to this emphasis will increase your individual and family joy and happiness.

From the Doctrine and Covenants we read: “The great day of the Lord is at hand. ... Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, ... a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance.”¹⁴

This “book” will be prepared using the records of names and ordinances in the Church’s FamilyTree database.

I am checking and adding records to this database because I want the names of all those I love to be in the book. Don’t you?

Doctrine and Covenants section 128 says, “For we without [our ancestors] cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect.”¹⁵

Family history is more than genealogy, rules, names, dates, and places. It is more than a focus on the past. Family history also includes the present as we create our own history. It includes the future as we shape future history through our descendants. A young mother, for example, sharing her family stories and pictures with her children is doing family history work.

Like partaking of the sacrament, attending meetings, reading the scriptures, and saying personal prayers, doing family history and temple work should be a regular part of our personal worship. The response of our youth and others to prophetic invitations has been inspiring and proves this work *can and should* be done by *all* members at *any* age.

As Elder Quentin L. Cook explained, “We [now] have the doctrine, the temples, and the technology.”¹⁶ Doing the work now is much easier and limited only by the number of members who make this a priority. The work still takes time and sacrifice, but *all* can do it, and with relative ease compared to just a few years ago.

To assist members, the Church has gathered records and provided tools so that much of the work can be done in our own homes or in the ward buildings and the temple. Most obstacles have been removed. *Whatever* your past perception, it is different now!

However, there is one obstacle the Church cannot remove. It is an individual’s hesitation to do the work. All it requires is a decision and a little effort. It does not require a large block of time. Just a little time on a consistent basis

will yield the joy of the work. Make the decision to take a step, to learn and ask others to help you. They will! The names you find and take to the temple will become the records for “the book.”¹⁷

Even with the dramatic increase in member participation, we find that relatively few members of the Church are regularly involved in finding and doing temple ordinances for their family.¹⁸*This calls for a change in our priorities.* Don't fight the change, embrace it! Change is part of the great plan of happiness.

This work needs to be done, not for the benefit of the Church but for our dead and for ourselves. We and our deceased ancestors need the stamps in our spiritual passports.

The “welding together”¹⁹ of our families across generations can occur only in the temples through the sealing ordinances. The steps are simple: *just find a name and take it to the temple.* Over time you will be able to help others do it also.

With few exceptions, everyone—*everyone*—can do this!

There are tangible blessings which attend this work. Many parents and leaders are concerned about current world conditions and the impact on families and youth.

Elder David A. Bednar has promised: “I invite the young people of the Church to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah. ... I promise [that] you will be protected against the intensifying influence of the adversary. As you participate in and love this holy work, you will be safeguarded in your youth and throughout your lives.”²⁰

Brothers and sisters, it's time to take the cover off our hatchets and go to work. We must not sacrifice our exaltation or that of our families for less important interests.

This is the work of God, to be done by members and nonmembers alike, young and old, male and female.

I close quoting the first verse of hymn 324, changing one word:

Rise up, O [Saints] of God!
Have done with lesser things.
Give heart and soul and mind and strength
To serve the King of Kings.²¹

Jesus Christ is the King! I testify of Him in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See 2 Nephi 2:22–25; 9:18; Mosiah 2:41.

2. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Plan of Redemption”; scriptures.lds.org.

3. Articles of Faith 1:3.

4. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:22.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:23.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:24.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:25–26.
8. See Guide to the Scriptures, “First Presidency,” “Apostle,” “Seventy”; scriptures.lds.org.
9. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.2.
10. Alma 42:8.
11. Boyd K. Packer, “The Witness,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 95.
12. Spencer W. Kimball, “Living the Gospel in the Home,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 101.
13. See Thomas S. Monson, “Hastening the Work,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, June 2014, 4–5; Henry B. Eyring, “The Promise of Hearts Turning,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, July 2014, 4–5; Russell M. Nelson, “It All Starts with Love” (video), [lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/it-all-starts-with-love](https://www.lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/it-all-starts-with-love); Russell M. Nelson, “Adding ‘Family’ to Family History Work” (video), [lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/adding-family-to-family-history-work](https://www.lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/adding-family-to-family-history-work); Russell M. Nelson, “Generations Linked in Love,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 91–94; Richard G. Scott, “The Joy of Redeeming the Dead,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 93–95; Quentin L. Cook, “Roots and Branches,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 44–48; David A. Bednar, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 24–27; Neil L. Andersen, “A Classroom of Faith, Hope, and Charity” (address to Church Educational System religious educators), [lds.org/broadcasts](https://www.lds.org/broadcasts); Neil L. Andersen, “Find Our Cousins!” (address at RootsTech Family History Conference, Feb. 8, 2014), [lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/find-our-cousins](https://www.lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/find-our-cousins).

14. Doctrine and Covenants 128:24.

15. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.

16. Quentin L. Cook, *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 47.

17. Doctrine and Covenants 128:24.

18. See Quentin L. Cook, *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 47.

19. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.

20. David A. Bednar, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 26, 27.

21. “Rise Up, O Men of God,” *Hymns*, no. 324.