



strengthening
our home
and family

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Family Home Evening Materials

Theme: Traditions

Packet #110408

5 tips for successful Family Home Evenings

- 1. Pray.** Pray about the needs of your family as you consider topics for home evenings, and pray as you prepare.
- 2. Prioritize.** Make Family Home Evening a priority; learn to say no to other activities.
- 3. Involvement.** Involve everyone in the family; help little children take part.
- 4. Commitment.** Be committed and be consistent. Set a designated time and stick to it. Holding Family Home Evening on a weekly basis takes dedication and planning on the part of all family members.
- 5. Relax** and enjoy it. The most important thing your children will remember is the spirit they feel in your family home evenings and activities. Be sure the atmosphere is one of love, understanding, and enjoyment.



Traditions

Conference Talk:

For more information on this topic read “Righteous Traditions,” by Cheryl C. Lant, *Ensign*, May 2008, 13–14.

Thought:

I would invite all of us to take a moment to reflect on the traditions in our lives and how they might be affecting our families. Our traditions of Sabbath day observance, family prayer, family scripture study, service and activity in the Church . . . will have a great effect on our children and on their future.

(Cheryl C. Lant, “Righteous Traditions,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 13–14.)

Song:

“Teach Me to Walk in the Light,” *Children’s Songbook*, p. 177.

Scripture:

And it came to pass that he had three sons. . . . And he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord.

(Mosiah 1:2)

Lesson:

Ask each family member to name their favorite family tradition. Ask:

- Is it good or bad to have traditions? Why?
- In what kinds of situations might a tradition be a bad thing?

Invite your family to look for what Jesus said about traditions as you read together Mark 7:1–13. Pause to discuss the questions below that deal with verse 5 and verses 9–13:

- Verse 5. What were Jesus’ disciples accused of not doing? Where did this rule come from? What does the phrase “tradition of the elders” mean? (Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that the traditions of the elders “were added to the Mosaic law by the scribes and teachers over the years. These traditions were actually and formally deemed to be more important and have greater binding force than the law itself. Among them, as supposed guards against ceremonial uncleanness, were the ritualistic washings which Jesus and his disciples had ignored.” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:366.)

- Verses 9–13. Ask your family to identify an unfamiliar word in verse 11. Invite a family member to look up the word Corban in the Bible Dictionary (page 650) and explain to the rest of the family what the word means. Ask, Which of the

Ten Commandments did this tradition cause people to break?

If possible, ask a returned missionary in your family if they ever met a person who had no interest in the gospel message because he/she was born into a particular religion and intended to die in that religion. Ask what this has to do with good or bad traditions.

As a family make a list of the positive traditions your family has and how those traditions help support righteous goals.

(Dennis H. Leavitt and Richard O. Christensen, *Scripture Study for Latter-day Saint Families: The New Testament*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006], p. 65.)

Story:

(D. M. Brown)

The fragrance of gingerbread always makes me think of Suzie and the year I was going to have a perfect Christmas. During past Christmas seasons, I had always been too busy to create the Christmas traditions I felt would build a lifetime of memories for my family. But that Christmas was going to be different. That year my time was my own, and I meant to make every minute of the holiday season count. I would make handpainted ornaments, home-sewn gifts, beautiful decorations, artistically wrapped packages, and baked goods to fill a freezer. I was baking gingerbread men for the tree the day my nine-year-old daughter brought Suzie home from school.

“Mama, this is my new friend, Suzie,” Debbie announced, presenting a rather chubby, cheerful-looking little girl. Suzie reminded me of a California poppy, with her red-gold mop of curly hair and a freckled nose that twitched eagerly as she breathed in the spicy fragrance.

I took two warm gingerbread men from a pan and gave them to Suzie and Debbie. Soon the two girls were helping my seven-year-old son, Mark, hang gingerbread men on the tree. (Of course, the cookies never stayed long on the tree. The children and their friends ate all of them every few days, and we replenished the supply weekly. As a result, our house smelled gingery from Thanksgiving to New Year’s Day.)

Later, Suzie’s mother telephoned, and in a tired-sounding voice, she asked me to send Suzie home.

The Sunday after Thanksgiving, I was still working on my perfect Christmas. I had decided to mail my Christmas cards early, and so I had spread the dining-room table with Christmas cards, address books, stamps, and green- and red-ink pens with which to address the envelopes. I was all set to start when Mark came in.

“Mama, we talked in Primary today about helping other people,” he told me. “Our Primary teacher said a lonely lady in our ward needs help.”

“Oh? What’s the lady’s name?” I asked, wondering if I had met her.

“I can’t remember . . . something long and hard to say,” Mark said, “but Sister Jones wrote it on the blackboard, and I’d remember it if I saw it.”

He went to the desk drawer and pulled out the ward list. After a moment he gave a shout of triumph. “Here it is!” he cried. He thrust the page under my nose, and I glanced at the name by his finger before turning back to address my Christmas cards. The name was difficult to pronounce.

Mark borrowed my pen and drew a green circle around the name in the ward list before putting it back in the drawer.

“I want to go visit that lonely lady and take something to her. Can we make something for her now?” Mark wanted to know.

“Not today, Mark. It’s Sunday, and I don’t bake on Sundays. Besides, this lady doesn’t even know us. Surely she wouldn’t want a visit from strangers,” I explained. “Today we are going to start addressing our Christmas cards. For once I’m going to get our cards mailed before December twenty-third. If you want to help someone, you can help me.”

In the days that followed, Mark persisted in reminding me about the lonely lady. Twice he asked to

make something for the woman, but both times I was involved in other projects.

One Tuesday afternoon Suzie again came home with Debbie. That day I was putting together my specialty: a gingerbread train. Each car carried tempting cargo such as breadsticks, candy canes, and cinnamon bears. Suzie's eyes sparkled when I gave her a few chocolate-chip cookie wheels to "glue" into place with frosting. She ate one of them.

"I wish my Mom made gingerbread trains," she said. "Last year she made a neat gingerbread house, but this year she said it was too much work."

"It is a lot of work," I agreed, remembering the year I had been too busy with church and community duties to make my gingerbread train. The children had been very disappointed that year, but not this year. This year everything would be perfect.

A week later Debbie came home from school just as I was taking a fresh batch of gingerbread men from the oven.

"Too bad Suzie isn't here," she said, biting off one cookie foot. "Suzie loves our gingerbread men. She wasn't in school today, though."

Debbie set down her cookie, suddenly serious. "They said Suzie's mama took too many pills, and she's in the hospital. She might die."

"Oh, Debbie, are you sure?" I asked in dismay.

Debbie nodded. "Sally Miller told me Sister Miller was at the hospital with Suzie's mama all night," she said. Sister Miller was our Relief Society president.

"I didn't know Suzie was a member of the Church," I said, surprised. "I've never seen her at meetings."

"Suzie said they used to come all the time before her dad died," Debbie said. "He got killed in a car accident this summer."

"Poor Suzie!" I said. "Her poor mother! And I don't even know her name."

I called Sister Miller to see if I could be of any help in caring for Suzie during the crisis. I also asked for Suzie's mother's name. When she told me, it sounded vaguely familiar. I hung up the phone repeating the name when a devastating thought struck me. With a sinking feeling, I took the ward list from the desk drawer and turned some pages. Yes, there it was, circled in green ink—the name of Suzie's mother, the name of Mark's lonely lady whom I had never found time to help.

Suzie was with us that night when we received word that her mother had died.

I asked myself over and over: What if we had gone to visit her when Mark first wanted to? Would it have mattered that we were strangers? Would she have been a little less lonely, a little less desperate? I thought of the tired voice on the telephone, asking me to send Suzie home that first day we made gingerbread.

When Suzie went away a week later to live with her grandparents, we gave her our gingerbread train. The bright eyes that had sparkled as she helped make the train had lost some of their glow, but Suzie managed a little smile and a thank-you.

A gingerbread train. A very small gift. Too little. Too late. As Suzie took a halfhearted nibble from a breadstick, I saw more than a saddened little girl holding a cookie train. I saw myself with painful clarity: a woman so involved with the things of Christmas that I had lost touch with the very spirit of Christmas, without which there can never be a "perfect Christmas." I would never again forget.

Every holiday season since then, the fragrance of gingerbread reminds me of Suzie . . . and I cry.

(Linda Rire Gundry, Jay A. Parry, Jack M. Lyon, *Best-Loved Christmas Stories of the LDS People*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003], p. 413-16.)

Activity:

Discuss the meaning and origin of your family's surname. Discuss any meaningful reasons for choosing the first and middle names of each family member. How can we live up to the hopes, aspirations, and directions that these names provide us?

(adapted from Eric G. Stephan and Judith Stephan Smith, *What Happy Families Are Doing*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981], p. 111.)

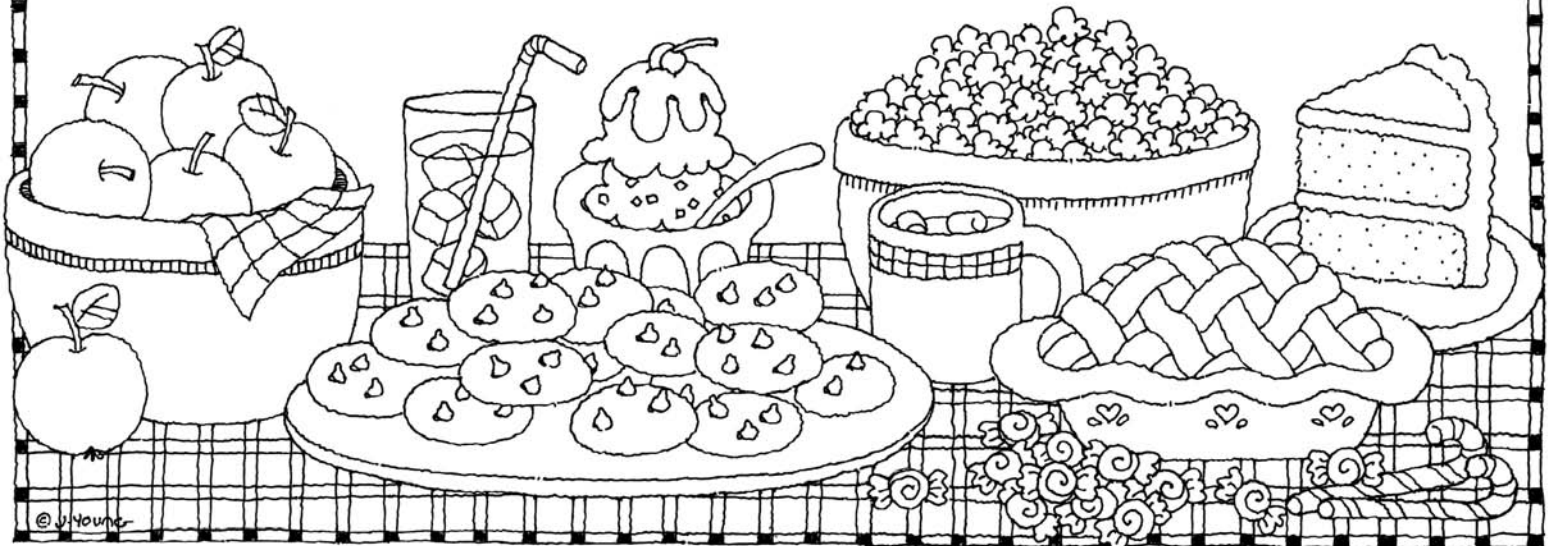
Refreshment

Ginger Cookies

- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 3/4 cup shortening
- 1/4 cup molasses
- 1 egg
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ginger

Preheat oven to 350° F. In a large mixing bowl, combine sugars and shortening until mixture is light and fluffy. Add molasses and egg; beat well. Add flour, soda, salt, cinnamon, and ginger and beat well. Scrape down the sides of bowl, then mix again. Drop dough by rounded tablespoonfuls onto a lightly greased cookie sheet. Press down each cookie with the bottom of a glass dipped in sugar. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, being careful not to overbake.

(*Lion House Desserts*, [Salt Lake City: Eagle Gate, 2000] p. 114.)



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