

Gathering, Healing, and Sealing Families

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Family Discovery Day 2015

Together we're going to talk about families, specifically how family history work leads to gathering, healing, and sealing our families. This session is focused on you as families and I am so happy to see so many families here.

The story of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints really is a story about families, and when I say families, I don't mean our modern concept of Mom and Dad, and children. I use the term the way the Lord uses it, as a synonym for kindred or multigenerational families, because everyone has a family.

Our Heavenly Father's plan for his children centers around this kind of a family, with children who draw strength from ancestors many generations back and parents who seek to bless their posterity for generations to come.

In this sense the Book of Mormon also tells stories of families. As we read these stories, we find that families haven't changed that much over the centuries. Even though they lived in another time and place they are a lot like us—and God's desire for His children to live in happy, eternal families hasn't changed.

Why did the Lord preserve the record of these stories of families in the Book of Mormon? What did He want us to learn? There are lessons that could help us in our efforts to gather, heal, and seal our families.

I believe that the first family in the Book of Mormon—Lehi's family—has such a powerful lesson for us, one that we might not have noticed before. Lehi's family can teach us a great deal about family records—why they're important to the Lord and why they should be important to us.

When the story begins, Lehi and Sariah are raising their daughters and four sons in Jerusalem, leading a relatively comfortable life in that great city. Their lives changed forever when the Lord commanded Lehi to take his family into the wilderness.

Lehi was obedient, and he and his family left their material possessions behind and ventured into the wilderness. However after traveling a while, Lehi said to his son Nephi:

“Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem.

“For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass” (1 Nephi 3:2–3; emphasis added).

Because of this commandment, our families are blessed with this great declaration of faith and obedience from Nephi, when he was commanded to go back to Jerusalem. “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7).

Now the brass plates were a record. They contained the scriptures, but they also contained Lehi's genealogy and his family history. The Lord knew how important it would be to preserve that record for millennial generations to come.

Have you ever wondered why the Lord didn't command Lehi, rather than his sons to go back for the record? He was the patriarch of the family. The Lord gave him the vision and wouldn't Lehi have had more influence on Laban than his young sons? Yet the Lord commanded Lehi's sons to go back to Jerusalem for the records, not Lehi.

We don't know exactly why, there may be many reasons. We do know that Lehi's sons struggled to accomplish what the Lord had ask them to do. It was difficult. It tested their faith. They learned a valuable lesson that would serve them well throughout their journey in the wilderness. They learned the importance of the records. From this point forward they would be commanded to keep and protect those records. Perhaps most important, they learned that when the Lord commands He really does provide a way.

We might ask ourselves, what does the Lord want our sons and daughters to learn by going back, to retrieve our family records? Are there experiences he wants them to have? How is He providing a way for them? Parents, are we inviting them to have these experiences? The scriptures say that when Lehi's sons returned, Lehi took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass and he did search them from the beginning. There he found the "genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph; yea, even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt....and when Lehi saw these things he was filled with the spirit" (1 Nephi 5:10, 14). Lehi then taught his family. You might say that the tent of Lehi became a family history center, just as our homes should be today.

It's easy to see why the Lord wanted Lehi's family to have these records. They gave his decedents a sense of identity, linking them to faithful patriarchs of the past and planting in their hearts the promises made to the fathers. These records were so important to the faith of the unborn generations that the Spirit warned Nephi that without them an entire nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief (1Nephi 4:13).

The experience of another people in The Book of Mormon shows how true that is. That when records are lost, truth is lost and result for future generations can be disastrous. The Mulekites left Jerusalem about the same time Lehi's family did and settled in the promised land. But unlike Lehi's family the scriptures say they had brought no records with them. (Omni 1:17) By the time the Mulekites were discovered by Mosiah almost 400 years later, their language had become corrupted, they had denied the being of their creator. They lost their identity as a covenant people. Mosiah helped the Mulekites by teaching them his language so they could learn from what the record possessed. As a result the Mulekites underwent a transformation from a troubled, Godless society that did not understand God, to a society that looked after God's happiness for them and their families.

Brothers and sisters, when we know who we are in relationship to God and to each other, it changes the way we think, the way we act, and the way we treat other people. Records are a vital piece of our identity and and perspective. Looking back prepares us to go forward.

Parents have you invited your family to go back? Have your family been separated from the records or from each other in one way or another. Think about these questions are you watch this brief video...

Video

family history matters. searching for connections... picking up the threads that tie us to the past. All these illuminate the importance of individuals, bringing generations together, and help weave the fabric of human kind.

“Has your family ties between the past been severed? What occurred in your family’s history to cause this separation? Was it immigration? Was it a family conflict? Was it conversion to the Gospel? Was it simply the passage of time? The house of Israel has been scattered and in many ways that includes a scattering of our own families and their records. Our responsibility is to gather them and where necessary to heal the wounds of separation. As we seek diligently to turn the hearts of our children to the fathers, our hearts will turn to our children and we will discover together the peace and healing that comes of this work.

Just as Lehi sent his sons back to Jerusalem for those sacred records, let us send our children back for our family’s records. Your string may be still floating on the water, it’s time to seek the end of the string starting with the stories and information your family members already know. Just as the Lord provided a way for Nephi, He has provided the Internet and other technologies that will enable your children to find that string, gather, and heal your family. And He has provided temples where we can take the names we find and make our gatherings permanent through sealing ordinances.”

Family Presentation:

“We decided to have 4 sons, just like Lehi. The Lord had a better plan, He gave us four daughters.... We’ve traveled with our daughters through the wilderness. Now they are married with their own children traveling through their own wilderness.... has everything been easy along the way? No. There’s been our share of murmurings, there’s been plenty of struggles....”

“Life’s wilderness can be tough on families. As a matter of fact when people ask how you and your family are doing? I simply say we’re between crisis right now, but thanks for asking. But there are also moments of true joy along the way. As patriarchs and matriarchs we spend a lot of time fortifying our family for the wilderness. Prophets in our day have promised us this that family history provides a protection from the influence of the adversary and a deep and abiding conversion to the Savior. What a powerful way to gather, heal and seal our families.”