

Small and Simple Things

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Often the best family history stories are shared within the walls of our own homes—when we take the time to ask questions about our past or to share our own stories about ourselves and other ancestors. The work of family history can occur in ordinary times, like while riding in a car or during a meal. As I speak will you think of some of the things that you do in your daily routines that could introduce family history conversations or opportunities to add a new page to your own family histories.

How many of you enjoy working puzzles? I don't know about you but we lay the pieces out on the table and start sorting them by color and pattern. We often find the corners and the straight edges first and then build the puzzle by working from the outside in. We find a piece that looks like it might match with another and we turn it several different times, trying to find a way to do the right fit. Sometimes we try and force a piece and when it won't fit we get a little frustrated and toss it aside. Then there's the moment when we discover just the right piece maybe out of the corner of our eye and when it fits, especially after a lot of trial and error, we're excited. That's what keeps us going, fitting the pieces together.

Now some of you know where I'm going with this, I can tell by the looks on your faces.

Imagine a puzzle created from an old family photo. As you assemble and match the pieces, a smile appears here or a mustache appears there, but you kind of want to see the big picture and when you feel... you kind of feel a little sad when even one piece comes up missing. Family history is a lot like that isn't it?

Now we all live busy lives. We take care of children or aging parents or work full-time jobs. We faithfully fulfill Church callings or serve neighbors and in the community. Did you ever think that while you're raising your children or caring for a parent that you're actually creating family history? What you are doing is good. You are putting an eternal puzzle together piece by piece, receiving an inspired thought here and acting on it, and then receiving a gentle nudge there and acting on it.

I wanted to know what you are doing already to keep your family histories. So I posted a question on my facebook page. Your responses were incredible. They were a reminder to me that everybody's family history puzzle is different and there is a number of ways you can put that puzzle together. It's customized to you and your varying circumstances.

Now today I would like to share with you some of the stories that you share with me and I'm not sharing them to make you feel overwhelmed to make you feel like you have to do more things or to make you feel like any one idea is better than another. I wish I could share them all, but lets just share a sampling to have you see how the spirit is touching your lives. As you listen, ask yourself, "What's the spirit teaching me right now?" Maybe you can find your own way. Maybe a little tweak of a puzzle piece here that the spirit brings to you mind of what you can do to bring the spirit of Elijah into your own home.

Now many of you here today are young mothers, you might be struggling to raise a family. You might be worried about the well-being of your husband and your children. Are they getting enough to eat? How are they doing in school? Are they happy? You might be weighed down by all the things you need to do or want to do. The checklist of mothers never seems to end. Let me assure you first that you are doing great. Just hang in there, keep doing the simple things that you do each day that make all the difference. You are doing family history as you create memories with your children.

For example, when Lisa Lewis' children were small she combined creating memories with family history by focusing on an ancestor one Sunday each month. As an activity, probably family home evening I would guess, the children did something that the ancestor liked or did. One great grandmother liked a game that Lisa had her children play. Sometimes they made food from the country or sports they played or maybe their occupations. Now if teaching your children how to do family history work is beyond your capacity right now at this stage in your life, maybe there is a grandmother, an aunt, or someone else in your family who would love to spend time helping your children. Because I'm a grandmother of 24 grandchildren, believe me I look for reasons to be with my grandchildren. Doing family history together does more than link us to those members of our family on the other side of the veil. Can you see how you can connect living family members together too?

Now many of you might be single, you might be divorced or widowed or may not be married just yet. You may question what you are doing with your life. You may be losing hope for the future. It's hard to go through the daily trials of life by yourself, but you are not alone. You belong to a larger family. You have many ancestors that have gone before who may have gone through similar trials. Get to know them, learn their stories, and share their stories with others. You'll start to understand deep in your heart that you really are not alone and you belong to a family.

Well posting on Facebook was a reminder to me that the kitchen is the heart of the home. How many of you use recipes that have been handed down to you from your mothers or your grandmothers, or even generations before them. Recipes connect families with the past and present. We know of a single woman who has a family recipe book. It was created by her mother just before she passed away. She did a little tweak on it though, with each family recipe comes a family history memory connected to that recipe and a write up of a family member associated with that memory. And a favorite scripture of that ancestor which adds a little spiritual nourishment.

Alicia Baldebenito, from Zapala, Argentina, is using family history and temple work to connect the generations of her family together. Listen to her story that she shared on Facebook.

"Family history is a special experience. I have been a member of the Church since 1977. The first thing that caught my attention was to know that someday I could see once again my grandmother who died a year earlier and for whom I felt much sorrow. When I learned of the gospel, my sadness turned into joy. To carry out the saving ordinances for her and every one of my ancestries brings my heart happiness.... and overtime I find an ancestor I cannot stop saying, "Thank you for this work." I love the work of indexing to help others. It has opened doors in a way to share these things with my family who are still not members. I have invited my niece to work together doing family history, and I have noted her enthusiasm. The experience is wonderful. The Spirit of Elijah is present in my life and in this work that I share with others.

“When I was young, I dreamed about my deceased grandmother, who I love very much. Although she wasn’t a member, she testified to me about the truth of the Book of Mormon. My grandmother did not know how to read and had never heard about the Church, nevertheless this testimony helped me listen to the missionaries and accept the gospel. For this and much more, each and every one of us must endeavor to find our ancestors and to encourage the importance of the work for everyone. Find every name you can, and prepare to attend the temple of your ancestors. With my heart, I know we will be more united.”

Thanks Alicia. Wasn’t that a great story? I loved the dream. I thought that was so wonderful.

As I mentioned before each family history puzzle is different. Your listening to those still small promptings of the spirit, which sometimes we may not even recognize are from the spirit. The spirit is the one that will tell you what you need to do.

(Melissa McNeely presentation: family history nights which were recorded to share with other family members. Asked parents to present their life story with photos, maps and treasures. Evening about father, then an evening about mother. After 3rd family history night less than a week later Melissa’s mother was killed in a car accident at 59 years old. Video of her mother telling her life story is now treasure.)

Thanks Melissa. Thanks for sharing that tender story. Melissa was telling me yesterday that her mother has not even passed a year yet, it was just this last year that that happened. But Melissa followed a prompting and created wonderful experiences for her children. She turned a regular activity, family home evening, into family history night. A small and simple thing, a small change became an unforgettable moment for the whole family.

Once again I don’t share these stories to add to your list of things to do or make you feel overwhelmed. Instead I hope that that spirit whispered to you something that you can include in your daily life that makes family history part of your family. What’s one small thing you can do to create a memorable family history experience for your family.

Let’s go to the scripture that we find in Alma again, Alma told his son, “Behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass.” (Alma 37:6) Think of the things that you are already doing and just make a small tweak. Turn a family night into a family history night, turn story time into family history story time, turn lullabies into family history lullabies. Even if you live in a sunny place you can create a white Christmas by going to the temple of ancestors as a family.

Piece by piece the puzzle will come together. If you don’t know how to fit in family history ask the Lord to help you. He’ll show you small and simple things that will draw your family closer together on both sides of the veil. I testify that this is true. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen