

2

GOSPEL FOUNDATIONS FOR INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

Our Heavenly Family



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Our Heavenly Family

We Are Children of Our Heavenly Father

God is not only our Ruler and Creator; He is also our Heavenly Father. We were born as spirits in the premortal life before we were born on earth. All men and women are literally the sons and daughters of God. Every person who was ever born on earth is our spirit brother or sister. Because we are the spirit children of God, we have inherited the potential to develop His divine qualities.

Sometimes we can feel distant from God. Even if right now you feel far away from God, He always loves you with a perfect love. He wants you to be happy, and He wants you to return to live with Him after this life. He is a perfect Parent, and He will never give up on you.

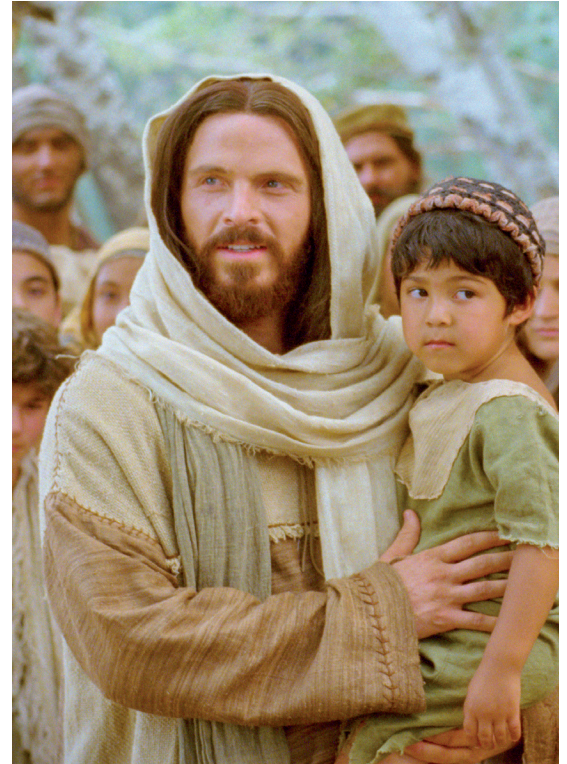
Our Heavenly Father Wants Us to Become Like Him

Our Heavenly Father wanted us to have the chance to develop the godlike qualities that He has. To do this, we needed to leave our premortal home to be tested and to gain experience in mortality. We needed to receive physical bodies.

In the premortal life, Heavenly Father gathered His spirit children together to present His plan. We call this gathering the Grand Council. We were all part of this council, and we learned that our Father would provide an earth for us where we would prove ourselves. A veil, or barrier, would cover our memories, and we would forget our heavenly home. It is necessary for us to forget so that we can exercise our agency to choose good or evil without being influenced by the memory of living with our Heavenly Father.

We also learned the purpose for our progression: to have a fulness of joy. However, we also learned that some would be deceived, choose other paths, and lose their way. We learned that all of us would have trials in our lives: sickness, disappointment, pain, sorrow, and death. At this council we also learned that because of our weakness, all of us except little children would sin.

Heavenly Father knew that you wouldn't be perfect, but He still loves you. He knew you would make some bad choices. That's why He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to help. If you have faith in Jesus Christ, follow His example, and obey the commandments, you can be forgiven. You can become more like Heavenly Father. You can return to live with Him and receive true joy.





Our Personalities and Talents

Heavenly Father has loved you for a long time. Before you were born, you lived with Him and developed your personality and talents. Not all people were alike in heaven. We know, for example, that we were sons and daughters of heavenly parents—males and females. We possessed different talents and abilities, and we were called to do different things on earth.

We can learn more about our responsibilities and talents when we receive our patriarchal blessings. A patriarchal blessing is given to you by the man ordained as the stake patriarch and contains the Lord's counsel for your life. It also includes your heritage and can explain some of the blessings and gifts you have received.

Although you don't remember your premortal life, your Father in Heaven prepared a place and time for you to live so that you can learn the lessons you need and do the most good with your talents.



"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

"I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. . . .

"Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him."

Proverbs 8:22–23, 30, page 819

LOOK
THEM
UP

Additional Scriptures

- **John 3:16, page 1329** (God sent His Son to save us)
- **Romans 8:16–18, page 1426** (children of God)
- **2 Nephi 25:26, page 100** (the role of the Savior)
- **Mosiah 3:5–9, pages 151–52** (how the Savior can help us)
- **D&C 19:15–20, page 32** (how the Savior suffered for us)
- **Moses 3:4–7, page 7** (spiritual and temporal creations)



Personal Experience

When I was first charged with a crime, I did not believe I was guilty. I fought long and hard to prove my innocence in court. When the jury came back with a verdict of guilty on all counts, I felt that God had abandoned me and was not answering any of my prayers. I was mad at Him and threatened to never pray again.

But in prison many wonderful volunteers came to teach us lessons, hold Church meetings, give us good reading material, and befriend us. I decided that I would participate with them and also study on my own. Since my way hadn't worked, I wanted to find out what God wanted me to do with my life.

I began to realize that going to prison wasn't the end of the world. I still believed I was a good person, but I also realized that I could become much better. I had a lot of repenting to do. My mistakes and sins were not isolated incidents but part of a pattern of behavior that I needed to change.

Most importantly, I began to realize that I am God's son and that He indeed is my Heavenly Father. I'm part of an eternal family. I decided to do whatever is necessary to return to Him.

I am no longer in prison and am very active in the Church. I'm in a good place and happier than I've ever been. I know that Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, love me, and I love Them too.

"I began to realize that I am God's son and that He indeed is my Heavenly Father. I'm part of an eternal family."



What strength have you received from knowing that God loves you?

What talents and abilities has God given you that you could use to bless others?

How can it help you to know that you are part of a loving heavenly family?

Is there anything else that you have learned from this lesson that you would like to share?

Name _____ Offender # _____