

The Father as Patriarch in the Home

by Bruce T. Forbes, 2009

I have spent many years as a teacher and worker bee in the Primary Organization – the children's auxiliary in my church. It is a joy to come to church every Sunday and work with the children. One Sunday, our bishop was asked to come and talk to the children about the father's role in the home. Being a 'young kid', he sometimes said things we grandfathers would feel the need to kindly point out to him this letter I wrote to him was my attempt to support and strengthen my bishop by helping him see a topic through the eyes of a grandfather.

Dear Bishop “Smith” -

You know how much I love and appreciate all you do for me and for the ward, and in that spirit, I very occasionally need to express something in the guise of supporting you in your calling. Please take this letter in exactly that spirit. Believe me, if I was trying to lecture you I'd be blunt and say so - but you already know that.

Last Sunday in Primary, when you were teaching the children from the Proclamation on the Family, I really got my dander up when you told the Primary children - "let's face it - it's really the mother who is in charge". I calmed down, however, with the thought that you probably didn't realize how the children might be understanding that phrase. I think the majority of the children in Primary might have taken what you said to mean that the Bishop was teaching them that "Mom's the boss and not Dad." I knew this is not what you meant, so I calmed myself down. I'm grateful you called upon me to define the word 'preside' when you got to the part of the Proclamation about fathers as it gave me the chance to insert the thought that Dad's also 'in charge'. But because you said that didn't know exactly what the word 'preside' means, I'm following up on that conversation and trying to be the helpful soul I mostly try to be and support you in your calling by helping to define some of these rarely-defined words. Here goes:

"HUSBAND" - According to Mister Webster, 'to husband' is to be a manager or a steward; it comes from Olde English meaning "in charge of the care of the household". "HUSBANDRY" is to manage, cultivate, and be in charge of production.

Again from Mister Webster, "PRESIDE" is from the latin Latin *praesidre* 'to guard' and from *prae-* + *sedre* to sit (as in a university chair holder) . . . in other words, "a chairman who guards". Mister Webster goes on to define 'preside' as: 1: to exercise guidance, direction, or control; 2: to occupy the place of authority: act as president, chairman, or moderator; 3: to occupy a position of featured instrumental performer ("*presided* at the organ")

"Fathers preside over, provide for, and protect the family" (Proclamation of the Family, paragraph 7). Fathers are appointed by Heavenly Father to be the family's chairman, steward, manager, guard, and provider - whose calling it is to report back to Him on the family.

So Bishop - yes, the Dad's in charge, too! They are both 'in charge' of different aspects of the

Family. But let's throw out the phrase 'in charge' along with the word 'boss' and go with the Gospel concept of 'Steward'. Although all human beings have individual stewardships for which they will answer to Heavenly Father, when it comes to the organization called 'The Family', there is a Chief Steward to whom all the other stewards in the family report to and take advice and guidance and council from - and that Chief Steward then reports to Heavenly Father. (You can see this in the temple presentation of the Endowment.)

The Chief Steward, also known as the Dad/Husband/Patriarch, has the stewardship of being the 'chairman' who guides, directs, protects, and provides for the family.

In her role as Chief Nurturer, the Steward known as Wife/Mother/Matriarch stands by the Chief Steward as an equal partner - but who nevertheless reports (accounts) to him on her stewardship so he can report to the Lord as the representative of the Family. According to the temple, the wife "hearkens" to the righteous husband, a word defined by Mister Webster and by the prophet in General Conference as "listen and follow". And notice it is a *righteous* husband she harkens to.

A good wife supports and sustains her righteous husband as the chairman, protector, and provider by cooperating and giving him the lead in these things, and she will answer to Heavenly Father if she doesn't. (She also realizes that nurturing him is the most important nurturing she does and that she will answer to Heavenly Father if she doesn't!)

A good husband supports and sustains his wife as the Nurturer of the family by cooperating and giving her lead in matters pertaining to nurturing, and I'm reasonably sure he too will answer to Heavenly Father if he doesn't.

They council together in all matters and (hopefully) come to a consensus of what is to be done and then fulfill it within their respective spheres.

Patriarchs and Matriarchs both understand that Doctrine & Covenants 121:39-46 applies to *both of them*, because Patriarch and Matriarch are their truest, most important priesthood roles and functions.

The children in the family are all Stewards-in-Training who hearken to both their father and mother and learn to become like them in all righteous ways.

I hope this hasn't sounded like a lecture because it wasn't meant as one. If I may say with a kind smile, you're the one who said you weren't sure of a good definition of the word 'preside', so to support and sustain you - and to make sure you're teaching correct doctrine to my Primary children - I offer this long-winded letter.

Love you and Support you as always,

Brother Forbes