

# FAMILY TIMES

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## Quotables:

“Parenting has become a competitive sport, with the trophies going to the busiest”

(W.J. Doherty and B.Z. Carlson, *Putting Family First: Successful Strategies for Reclaiming Family Life in a Hurry Up World*, 10).



## RECLAIMING OUR FAMILIES

Welcome back! I am happy to report that the *Family Times* is back— new and improved. Some of you have asked, “Where have those newsletter’s gone.” The answer is simple: I got very busy.

Sound familiar? I am sure that you can relate. It seems like every year, life becomes busier and busier. Parents want desperately to get off the Merry-go-Round. Every January, we make resolutions to eat better, work out more, lose weight, be nicer, and simplify our schedules. By February, those resolutions usually pass by the way side. After all, resolutions and new goals sound great in late December as we’re lounging around our homes, goofing around with family and friends, and eating to our hearts content. But, what happens when real life begins again? We all know what happens— we go back into “survival mode.”

Perhaps one of the greatest crisis in our Nation is our *time famine*. We have overscheduled our families, or to use the term, hyper scheduled them. Data from the *University of Michigan’s Survey Research Center*, indicate that since the late 1970s, Children have lost 12

hours per week in free time; including a 25 percent drop in playing, and a 50 percent drop in unstructured outdoor activities.

During this same period, time in structured sports has doubled, and passive spectator leisure (watching others play) increased from 30 minutes per week to over 3 hours. According to the same survey, household conversations between parents and children, has dropped off the charts.

There has also been a 28 percent decline in families taking vacations. In fact, *Oxford Health Plans* of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut found that one in six employees in the United States is so over-worked that he or she can’t even take the vacation time earned because of job demands. ‘American’s,’ the pollsters said, ‘are already the most vacation-starved people in the industrialized world, with an average of thirteen vacation days per year, compared with twenty-five or more in Japan, Canada, Britain, Germany, and Italy. The study further revealed that 32 percent of those surveyed said they work and eat lunch at the same time, and another 32 percent said they never

leave the building once they arrive at work.... Nineteen percent say their job makes them feel older than they are, and 17 percent say work causes them to lose sleep at night” (as cited in Dobson, *Bringing Up Boys*, 102).

There has also been a 33% decrease in the number families who say they have dinner regularly. A National poll of teenagers funded by the Whitehouse in the spring of 2000 found that over 20 percent of American teens rated “not having enough time with parents,” as their top concern. Fifty-nine percent of today’s children come home to an empty house (Dobson, *Bringing Up Boys*, 102).

In our busy culture, parents no longer brag about the size of their home or their cars— if your stuck on that, your old school! Contemporary families boast about how busy they are. “Were so busy” is the sign of clout. Indeed, “Parenting has become a competitive sport, with the trophies going to the busiest” (see W.J Doherty and B.Z. Carlson, *Putting Family First: Successful Strategies for Reclaiming Family Life in a Hurry Up World* , 10).

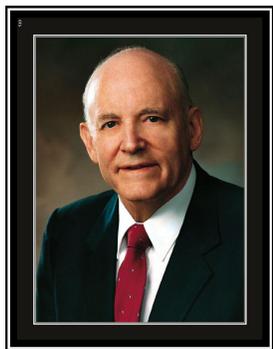
## RECLAIMING OUR FAMILIES



### They Said It:

"I have always been impressed that the Lord deals with us personally, individually. We bless babies one at a time, even if they are twins or triplets. We baptize and confirm children one at a time. We take the sacrament, are ordained to the priesthood,

or move through the ordinances of the temple as individuals - as one person developing a [personal] relationship with our Father in Heaven...Heaven's Emphasis is on each individual, on every single person. (President Howard W. Hunter, "Eternal Investments," *Address to CES Religious Educators*, 10 Feb. 1989, 4.)



Well, enough of the problem! How about some solutions? There are some very specific things we can do to reclaim our families

**First**, we can set our priorities straight. We may say that our family is our number one priority; however, how much time did you spend with your family today? Unfortunately, our actions do not correspond with our beliefs when it comes to family time. Dr. Paul Pearsall has written: "Our society is interfering with the family-first feature. We are in familial bankruptcy and have fallen into the hands of receivers such as schools, businesses, recreational pursuits, and numerous institutional demands. The issue is not one of setting priorities; the issue is one of making difficult choices for the family. There can be only one number one. Is it your family? *I warn you that if your family does not come first, your family will not last*" (Pearsall, *The Power of the Family*, [New York: Doubleday, 1990, p. 18; emphasis added).

**Second**, we cannot say that our family is our first priority without spending time together. And please, don't buy into that 80s bunk about quality time. There can be no such entity of "quality time" unless there is "quantity time." Indeed, Quality time is built on a foundation of quantity time.

I now quote from the *LDS Church News*:

*"Near the end of his life, a father looked back on how he had spent his time on earth. An acclaimed, respected author of numerous scholarly works, he said, 'I wish I had written one less book and taken my children fishing more often.'*

*"Time passes quickly. Many parents say that it seems like yesterday that their children were born. Now those children are grown, perhaps with children of their own. 'Where did the years go?' they ask. We cannot call back time that is past, we cannot stop time that now is, and we cannot experience the future in our present state. Time is a gift, a treasure not to be put aside for the future but to be used wisely in the present.*

*"Merely keeping busy is not necessarily evidence that we are using our time wisely. It is with what we are busy that counts" (Viewpoint, Church News, 10 June 2000, 16).*

"The other night after the ten o' clock news there was an advertisement on television that I have often seen. It shows a little girl approaching her father's desk. He's hassled, has papers scattered all over, and is diligently writing in his planner. She stands by him—unnoticed until she finally says, 'Daddy, what are you doing?'

"Without even looking up, he replies, 'Oh, never mind, honey. I'm just doing some planning and organizing. These pages have the

names of all the people I need to visit and talk with and all the important things I have to do.'

"The little girl hesitates and then asks, 'Am I in that book, Daddy?'

"As Goethe said, 'Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least.' There is no way we can be successful in our families if we don't prioritize 'family' in our lives" (Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families* [New York: Golden Books, 1997], 114).

**Third**, we should spend one on one time with each of our children. For those of us who have large families, this could be a challenge. I have always admired the dedication in the book, *Cheaper by the Dozen*. "The authors, Frank B. Gilbreth Jr. and Ernestine Gilbreth Carey, wrote simply, 'To Dad, who only reared twelve children, and to Mother, who reared twelve only children'" (Scott and Angelle Anderson, "One by One," in *Eternal Families*, Eds. Douglas E. Brinley & Daniel K. Judd [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996], 56). I have admired how a mother could make each child in this special family feel....well...special. The most salient experiences in the lives of our children are the one on one experiences they have with their parents and siblings. Now, let's make it happen.