



# Introduction



## Our Unique Opportunity

Using today's technology – the Internet, exciting, new computer tools, and new, readily available, rapidly-expanding databases of records from all over the world – genealogy and family history work is possible with ease and in record-breaking time. No people in history have ever had the opportunity to connect with their beloved ancestors, learn about their lives and challenges, and grow to appreciate our heritage as easily and readily as we do today.



J. Richard Clarke  
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### The Most Beautiful Family Tree

“Through family history we discover the most beautiful tree in the forest of creation – our family tree. Its numerous roots reach back through history, and its branches extend throughout eternity. Family history is the expansive expression of eternal love. It is born of selflessness. It provides opportunity to secure the family unit

forever.” (J. Richard Clarke, *Ensign*, May 1989, 60)

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## Suggested Activities

1. Begin to feel a “connection” to those who have gone before you.
2. Plant a seed in your heart for loving your ancestors that can sprout, and that you can nourish so it can grow and get root and bring forth fruit for you and your family for many generations.
3. Read, ponder and experiment upon the suggestions in this book; be persistent and patient.
4. Discuss ways your family can honor your ancestors.
5. Plan a special evening with your family to tell stories and enact a skit based upon your ancestors life.

## Turn Your Heart to Your Fathers



In the Bible Old Testament, the prophet Malachi offers a prophecy (or divine prediction) that the prophet Elijah would turn the hearts of the Fathers (our ancestors) to the children, and the hearts of the children (all of us as descendants) to our Fathers:

*“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” (Malachi 4:5-6)*



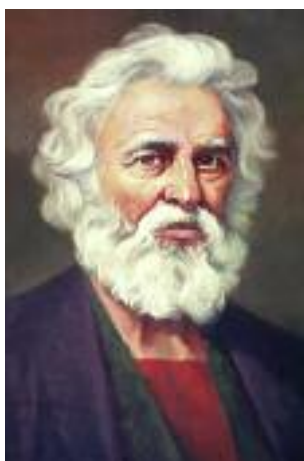
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I believe that Almighty God has a wonderful plan to unite all of His children of all generations of time. His ingenious plan is to *bind the hearts together* of all those who have ever lived upon the earth – but who are yet alive in the after life – with the hearts of all of us who are alive today or will yet live upon the earth. The hearts of all of those who currently abide in the spirit world or afterlife are bound to us, their children, and they are looking for us to connect with them. Therefore they are helping us – even pushing us in the right direction – to find them and turn our hearts to them. As Bruce Hafen said, *“There really can be a bond and a sense of belonging that ties together generations.”* (See the *Insights* page for the full quote.)

People all over the world, of all faiths, creeds and races, are inspired to search for their family roots and turn their heart to their Fathers. This is a quiet but deep-seated driving force that is changing how

some people see life, and helping them gain a sense of identify and purpose in life.

Our ancestors were pilgrims and pioneers who lived in a time when they had to endure tremendous physical hardships, and spend much of their time just trying to survive. We live in a time when God’s hand has helped provide new technology—a new easy, convenient way to trace and connect to our ancestors—and when vast resources of worldwide records and tech tools are available to assist us. With these tools, we are like partners with God in achieving His purposes for all of His children.



Old Testament Prophet  
by Ted Henninger  
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### Who is the Prophet Elijah? and Why is it Important?

The story of Elijah is recorded in the Old Testament (1 Kings. 17-2; Kings. 2; 2 Chronicles 21:12-15), and reference is made to him in the New Testament (Matthew 16:14; 17:3; 27:47-49; Mark 6:14-15; 9:4; 15:35-36; Luke 4:25-26; 9:30; James 5:17).

He was a great prophet who performed mighty miracles. His recorded words are few but forceful, and his deeds are explicit evidences of his strength of will, force of character, and personal courage. He was an example of solid faith in the Lord. With his ministry are associated such colorful events as calling down fire from heaven, sealing the heavens with no rain for 3 1/2 years, and raising a boy from the dead. His life closed dramatically... “there appeared a chariot of fire...and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven,” (2 Kings. 2:11-12).

In the meridian of time, many people mistook Jesus for Elijah returned (Matthew 16:14). Today, the promise of Elijah is still remembered by the

Jewish people every year at Passover. A special place is still reserved for him at the dinner table as an invited guest, with a cup of wine. At a prescribed time during the meal, the door is opened for him to enter.

Elijah's mission then, in part, is to stimulate research for ancestors – to prompt all of us to trace our own family roots, discover our ancestor's stories, connect with their lives – and enable families throughout time to be linked together. He accomplishes this by helping turn our hearts to our Fathers. But God expects us to do this work ourselves in partnership with Him. This, then, is part of God's ingenious plan to unite all of His children. And we play an important part in His overall plan. Our part is simply to be touched by the *'Spirit of Elijah'* and turn our hearts to our Fathers. Our part encompasses tracing our own family roots, and connecting with the lives of our ancestors. And God will help you to accomplish this work.



Jeffrey R. Holland  
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### Without Elijah

Jeffrey R. Holland said that without Elijah's mission to turn our hearts to our Fathers, "no family ties would exist in the eternities, and indeed the family of man would [be] left in eternity with neither root [ancestors] nor branch [descendants]." Jeffrey R.

Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 297-98



### What Should We be Doing?

I believe that our family history opportunities may be threefold:

- **Develop a Desire to Turn Our Heart to Our Fathers.** As we search out our ancestors, we grow to care more about those who have passed on, and feel a personal desire to connect with them. It all begins with a simple desire in our heart to love our ancestors. We should allow a thirst, a hunger, even a yearning for this marvelous blessing to take root in our hearts.

- **Determine What to Do.** All of us can do something to search for our roots. It's not wise or necessary to attempt to do everything at once, but each of us can do something. Just what and how much we do depends on our own personal circumstances and abilities, and what our family may have already accomplished. We can, among other things:

- Complete family records as far as we can go
- Computerize our family history information and share with others
- Keep a personal journal and prepare personal and family histories, and
- Participate in family organizations.

- **Continue to Be Involved.** We can be involved in some aspects of family history work throughout our lives. These are not necessarily activities we pursue for a brief time or put off until retirement.

Begin with a desire in your heart to love your ancestors. Plant a seed in your heart that can



sprout and grow and bring forth good fruit for you for many generations. Learning and writing about your ancestors can help you better understand them and yourself. Family history work not only helps unite family members for eternity, it also strengthens bonds between living family members.

## Loving Your Ancestors

No previous experience is required to begin planting your family tree today. You don't have to become an expert, but you can and need to be an expert in loving your ancestors. Connecting with your ancestors, learning more about their lives, and honoring them is an expression of your love for them.



### A Family Activity

Because family history is done *for* families, it is best done most efficiently *by* families. The blessings of tracing your family roots increase when families work together to identify your ancestors. Family members usually have information to share, or they may be willing to help you look for information. If you do not have

immediate family members who are able and willing to assist you, then perhaps friends and extended family members can help.

## The Importance of the Internet

One of my objectives for writing this book is to help portray the new, easy process and the sophisticated tools to help us. The Internet is one of these vital tools to help you connect with your ancestors.

The Internet has become the best and easiest way to publish and access vast resources of information available today for family history. The Internet is an excellent tool to get started searching for your family roots. One of the most amazing things about using the Internet is the ability to network with others. For example, *RootsWeb.com* hosts over 161,000 family history message boards devoted to surnames and other genealogy-related topics.

If you can't find what you're looking for, head to *Cyndi's List.com* which offers more than 265,000 links in over 180 categories. See *Chapters 6 and 7 for a directory of the Best of the Internet Family History Web Sites*.

People also talk about the vast amount of information on the *Web*. The *Web* is a bunch of searchable "pages" of information containing text, pictures, audio and video clips, animations, and *links* to other *Web* pages connected to each other around the world. And it's big! In 1998 there were about 26 million pages, and by 2000 it had reached the one billion mark. Today the *Web* has recently hit a new milestone: 1 trillion (as in 1,000,000,000,000) unique URLs (*Web* addresses), which can be compared to a map made up of one trillion intersections.

Essentially all of the *Web* sites described herein are free to access, however, I've added a \$\$\$ symbol to each *Web* site listing or software that you need to pay a fee or a subscription to access a substantial part of the content.

### Sharing Family History

The Internet also provides a simple and inexpensive way for you to publish your family history, thus adding to a rapidly expanding pool of shared family history information. The best way to share your family history information with others is by using the Internet. (See *Chapter 10 for details on Sharing Your Family History*.) By sharing your information, you can help others in their research, and reduce the duplication of effort.

The whole work of finding your family roots has grown exceedingly.



We are blessed with computers and the Internet to help us communicate easily with people around the world. E-mail makes the sharing of family data almost instantaneous. By sending out your information, you will reap a rich harvest. As you trace your own family roots and connect with the lives of your ancestors, you help weld eternal family links, and draw yourself and your family closer together.

## Family History is Booming

In the early 1800s there were no organizations dedicated to gathering records of the dead. Beginning in 1837, England and Wales began mandatory recording of births, deaths, and marriages for everyone in their countries. Many countries around the world thereafter started recording more information in their census records. For example, Great Britain's censuses began recording names and ages of individuals in 1841, and the United States added names of family members in 1850 (previously only heads of household were named). In 1844 the New England Historic Genealogical Society was organized in Boston. Today, there are thousands of family history societies around the world.

In addition, many people were prompted to publish their family histories. The results have been dramatic. Between 1450 and 1836, fewer than 200 family histories were published. Between 1837 and 1935, almost 2,000 more were published. Today more than 2,000 family histories are published each week. Genealogy and family history has become immensely popular worldwide. If you search for the term *genealogy* on the Web, you get over 81 million hits on Google.com, 160 million on Yahoo.com, and 40 million on Live.com.

## Popularity in America

A recent survey showed that 73% of the U.S. population was interested in or actively researching their family history.\* This means that approximately 162 million adults in the U.S. are interested in or tracing their roots. Compare that to the voter turnout for the 2008 American presidential election was 131.2 million, the highest in at least 40 years. (\* This survey was done in 2005 by Market Strategies, Inc. for Ancestry.com.)



Alex Haley

### Digging for Your Roots

"My fondest hope is that "Roots" may start black, white, brown, red, yellow people digging back for their own roots. Man, that would make me feel 90 feet tall."  
Alex Haley

**Alex Haley**, American biographer, scriptwriter, author (1921-1992). In 1965 Alex Haley stumbled upon the names of his maternal great-grandparents, when he was going through post-Civil War records in National Archives in Washington, D.C. He spent years tracing his own family back to a single African man, Kunta Kinte, who was captured in Gambia and taken to America as a slave around 1767. That discovery led to Haley's epic book *Roots*, published in 1976 to wide acclaim. The next year the television miniseries *Roots* ran for a week on network TV and became a national phenomenon. *Roots* won a Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, and Haley is often credited with inspiring interest in family history. [www.kintehaley.org](http://www.kintehaley.org)

