

Chapter 1
Why I Wrote This Book

Mothering is hard, but that doesn't mean you can't love it.

-Marjorie Pay Hinckley

Mothering is hard work, and I do love it. Not the hard work for its own sake, but the sweet fruit that it brings. Let me introduce myself. I am Celestia Sudweeks Shumway. I consider Highland, Utah my childhood home. My parents, Richard and Jo Sudweeks still live there, as well as one of my brothers and his family. I got married to Daniel Glen Shumway in August of 1991 in the Manti LDS temple and have six children, age 15 and younger. I graduated from BYU in April 1992 with a degree in zoology, pre-med emphasis. I wanted to be a medical doctor, but after I applied to medical school and really started thinking about how I would balance the needs of a baby and my desire to put my heart in my studies, I knew I wouldn't want to do the juggling act.

I had been a serious student, a scholar, in my high school and BYU years, often missing out on family and friend parties so I could study. I knew I wouldn't want to do that when I had my babies, and I

didn't want to put off having babies any longer now that I was married and nearing graduation from BYU. Ever since I could remember I have loved baby dolls and loved playing mom and dreaming about being a mom. I didn't pursue my medical school goals and decided to be a stay-at-home mom. In September 1993 I became a mom and discovered that mothering is a lot harder than I had ever dreamed. Fifteen years later with five more children, I am hoping to have more babies and am moved to either laughter, anger, or tears daily by my children. My hands are full and I need all the help I can get.

I have discovered that the greatest help for my mothering comes from the Lord's grace and the guidance He gives in the scriptures and the personal revelation I get as I read them and pray. In particular, I discovered a huge revelation from what I consider to be the biggest mystery in the scriptures for mothers (more on this mystery later). In the process of discovering the answer to this mystery I have developed a concept, which I call Tree of Life Mothering, that serves as a guide. I offer it to you as well for a guide, if you are interested in natural mothering through breastfeeding and being green, from an LDS perspective. I know it is not for every mom, because not every mom, and even every LDS mom, is interested in being natural, and that's okay. As Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the LDS Church said in General Conference once, "There is *no* one perfect way to be a good mother. Each situation is unique. Each mother has different challenges, different skills and abilities, and certainly different children. The choice is different and unique for each mother and each family."ⁱ

I have also found tremendous help from La Leche League International (LLLI). This is a not-for-profit organization that supports

breastfeeding mothers. The help has come from meetings, friends I have met at the meetings and online, and its bimonthly magazine, *New Beginnings*. This help has been practical in the form of how to breastfeed my babies, how to soothe fussy babies, when to start solids, how to balance housework, and how to nurture myself, among many other things. Help has also come from other books and *Mothering* magazine, which promotes Natural Family Living. This is mothering naturally with breastfeeding, eating organic foods, and just generally living in a mother-friendly, baby-friendly, and earth-friendly way. I also enjoyed reading *Natural Family Living*, a book by the editor of *Mothering* magazine, Peggy O'Mara.

I have long wished that I could find a source that had the natural mothering elements that *Mothering* magazine has, infused with a restored gospel of Jesus Christ perspective—a “Christ-centered Natural Family Living” or “Spiritual Family Living” book. In the spirit of leadership education which teaches the maxim of Gandhi, “Be the change you wish to see in the world,” I have written the book I have long wished that I had. This book is chock full of all the secrets of mothering from a natural, LDS perspective that I have gleaned after over fifteen years in the trenches. I have gone to many La Leche League conferences to hear experts on breastfeeding and natural mothering. I have also gone to homeschooling conferences and gardening and cooking classes. I have read almost anything I could get my hands on that has to do with breastfeeding; natural, green living; natural healing; natural family planning; and homeschooling. I've done a lot of research on Christ-centered natural family living and this book you hold in your hands is the result.

This book is what I wish I could just pour into a pregnant LDS

mom's head if she asked me about how to do natural mothering. In addition to getting inspiration from *Mothering* magazines, I got inspiration from Vicki Iovine's survival guides for mothers. I love her books because they are so funny and real. They are a treat to read, but they aren't LDS-based or naturally oriented. I suggest that we can do more than just *survive* pregnancy, baby's first year, and toddlerhood. We can *thrive*! Let's have fun being a mom! It can be a yummy time, to be home with your baby and little ones and enjoy the goodness of a home-centered life and childhood classics. It can also be a frustrating, exhausting, and overwhelming time. I wrote this book to help you minimize the stress and maximize the joy. So here you go. . . this book is intended for an audience of LDS mothers who are interested in Christ-centered natural family living. I hope you enjoy it!

Endnotes for Chapter 1

1 Ballard, Elder M. Russell,
“Daughters of God,” *Ensign*, May 2008, pp. 108–10

