



THE ETERNAL FAMILY

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-IDAHO

THE FAMILY

A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

WE, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness,

to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

WE WARN that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

WE CALL UPON responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

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Unit 3: Covenants & Ordinances *(Proclamation Paragraph 3)*

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Unit 3 Scriptures

Abraham 2:8-11

8 My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.

9 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

10 And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

11 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal.

D&C 131:1-4

1 In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

2 And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

3 And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

4 He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase.

D&C 132: 15-17, 19-20

15 Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world.

16 Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

17 For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever.

...

19 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood;

and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, ... in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

20 Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

Mosiah 21:13, 14, 31-32

13 And they did humble themselves even to the dust, subjecting themselves to the yoke of bondage, submitting themselves to be smitten, and to be driven to and fro, and burdened, according to the desires of their enemies.

14 And they did humble themselves even in the depths of humility; and they did cry mightily to God; yea, even all the day long did they cry unto their God that he would deliver them out of their afflictions.

31 Yea, they did mourn for their departure, for they knew not whither they had fled. Now they would have gladly joined with them, for they themselves had entered into a covenant with God to serve him and keep his commandments.

32 And now since the coming of Ammon, king Limhi had also entered into a covenant with God, and also many of his people, to serve him and keep his commandments.

Mosiah 23:21

21 Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith.

Mosiah 24:10-16

10 And it came to pass that so great were their afflictions that they began to cry mightily to God.

11 And Amulon commanded them that they should stop their cries; and he put guards over them to watch them, that whosoever should be found calling upon God should be put to death.

12 And Alma and his people did not raise their voices to the Lord their God, but did pour out their hearts to him; and he did know the thoughts of their hearts.

13 And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came to them in their afflictions, saying: Lift up your heads and be

of good comfort, for I know of the covenant which ye have made unto me; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage.

14 And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions.

15 And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.

16 And it came to pass that so great was their faith and their patience that the voice of the Lord came unto them again, saying: Be of good comfort, for on the morrow I will deliver you out of bondage.

Hebrew 11:13-14

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

See Also:

Abraham 1-2; Gen. 12-17 The Abrahamic Covenant

Moses 5-6 – Covenants and Ordinances

Mosiah 21-24 Compare and Contrast Limhi's & Alma's people

1 Nephi 5 – Covenants help us lean on each other

Gen. 28 – Jacob's Ladder

JSH 1:60 – replace “plates” with “covenants”



Covenant Marriage

Elder Bruce C. Hafen
“Covenant Marriage,”
General Conference, October 1996



1. Three summers ago, I watched a new bride and groom, Tracy and Tom, emerge from a sacred temple. They laughed and held hands as family and friends gathered to take pictures. I saw happiness and promise in their faces as they greeted their reception guests, who celebrated publicly the creation of a new family. I wondered that night how long it would be until these two faced the opposition that tests every marriage. Only then would they discover whether their marriage was based on a contract or a covenant.

2. Another bride sighed blissfully on her wedding day, “Mom, I’m at the end of all my troubles!” “Yes,” replied her mother, “but at which end?” When troubles come, the parties to a contractual marriage seek happiness by walking away. They marry to obtain benefits and will stay only as long as they’re receiving what they bargained for. But when troubles come to a covenant marriage, the husband and wife work them through. They marry to give and to grow, bound by covenants to each other, to the community, and to God. Contract companions each give 50 percent; covenant companions each give 100 percent.¹

3. Marriage is by nature a covenant, not just a private contract one may cancel at will. Jesus taught about contractual attitudes when he described the “hireling,” who performs his conditional promise of care only when he receives something in return. When the hireling “seeth the wolf coming,” he “leaveth the sheep, and fleeth ... because he ... careth not for the sheep.” By contrast, the Savior said, “I am the good shepherd, ... and I lay down my life for the sheep.”² Many people today marry as hirelings. And when the wolf comes, they flee. This idea is wrong. It curses the earth, turning parents’ hearts away from their children and from each other.³

4. Before their marriage, Tom and Tracy received an eternal perspective on covenants and wolves. They learned through the story of Adam and Eve about life’s purpose and how to return to God’s presence through obedience and the Atonement. Christ’s life is the story of giving the Atonement. The life of Adam and Eve is the story of receiving the Atonement, which empowered them to overcome their separation from God and all opposition until they were eternally “at one,” with the Lord, and with each other.

5. Without the Fall, Lehi taught, Adam and Eve would never have known opposition. And “they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery.”⁴ Astute parents will see a little connection here—no children, no misery! But left in the garden, they could never know joy. So the Lord taught them they would live and bear children in sorrow, sweat, and thorns.

6. Still, the ground was cursed for their sake:⁵ their path of affliction also led to the joy of both redemption and comprehension.⁶ That is why the husband and wife in a covenant marriage sustain and lift each other when the wolf comes. If Tom and Tracy had understood all this, perhaps they would have walked more slowly from the gardenlike temple grounds, like Adam and Eve, arm in arm, into a harsh and lonely world.

7. And yet—marrying and raising children can yield the most valuable religious experiences of their lives. Covenant marriage requires a total leap of faith: they must keep their covenants without knowing what risks that may require of them. They must surrender unconditionally, obeying God and sacrificing for each other. Then they will discover what Alma called “incomprehensible joy.”⁷

8. Of course, some have no opportunity to marry. And some divorces are unavoidable. But the Lord will ultimately compensate those faithful ones who are denied mortal fulfillment.

9. Every marriage is tested repeatedly by three kinds of wolves. The first wolf is natural adversity. After asking God for years to give them a first child, David and Fran had a baby with a serious heart defect. Following a three-week struggle, they buried their newborn son. Like Adam and Eve before them, they mourned together, brokenhearted, in faith before the Lord.⁸

10. Second, the wolf of their own imperfections will test them. One woman told me through her tears how her husband’s constant criticism finally destroyed not only their marriage but her entire sense of self-worth. He first complained about her cooking and housecleaning, and then about how she used her time, how she talked, looked, and

reasoned. Eventually she felt utterly inept and dysfunctional. My heart ached for her, and for him.

11. Contrast her with a young woman who had little self-confidence when she first married. Then her husband found so much to praise in her that she gradually began to believe she was a good person and that her opinions mattered. His belief in her rekindled her innate self-worth.

12. The third wolf is the excessive individualism that has spawned today's contractual attitudes. A seven-year-old girl came home from school crying, "Mom, don't I belong to you? Our teacher said today that nobody belongs to anybody—children don't belong to parents, husbands don't belong to wives. I am yours, aren't I, Mom?" Her mother held her close and whispered, "Of course you're mine—and I'm yours, too." Surely marriage partners must respect one another's individual identity, and family members are neither slaves nor inanimate objects. But this teacher's fear, shared today by many, is that the bonds of kinship and marriage are not valuable ties that bind, but are, instead, sheer bondage. Ours is the age of the waning of belonging.

13. The adversary has long cultivated this overemphasis on personal autonomy, and now he feverishly exploits it. Our deepest God-given instinct is to run to the arms of those who need us and sustain us. But he drives us away from each other today with wedges of distrust and suspicion. He exaggerates the need for having space, getting out, and being left alone. Some people believe him—and then they wonder why they feel left alone. And despite admirable exceptions, children in America's growing number of single-parent families are clearly more at risk than children in two-parent families.⁹ Further, the rates of divorce and births outside marriage are now so high that we may be witnessing "the collapse of marriage."¹⁰

14. Many people even wonder these days what marriage is. Should we prohibit same-sex marriage? Should we make divorce more difficult to obtain? Some say these questions are not society's business, because marriage is a private contract. But as the modern prophets recently proclaimed, "marriage ... is ordained of God."¹¹ Even secular marriage was historically a three-party covenant among a man, a woman, and the state. Society has a huge interest in the outcome and the offspring of every marriage. So the public nature of marriage distinguishes it from all other relationships. Guests come to weddings because, as Wendell Berry said, sweethearts "say their vows to the community as much as to one another," giving themselves not only to each other, but also to the common good "as no contract could ever join them."¹²

15. When we observe the covenants we make at the altar of sacrifice, we discover hidden reservoirs of strength. I once said in exasperation to my wife, Marie, "The Lord placed Adam and Eve on the earth as full-grown people. Why

couldn't he have done that with this boy of ours, the one with the freckles and the unruly hair?" She replied, "The Lord gave us that child to make Christians out of us."

16. One night Marie exhausted herself for hours encouraging that child to finish a school assignment to build his own diorama of a Native American village on a cookie sheet. It was a test no hireling would have endured. At first he fought her efforts, but by bedtime, I saw him lay "his" diorama proudly on a counter. He started for his bed, then turned around, raced back across the room, and hugged his mother, grinning with his fourth-grade teeth. Later I asked Marie in complete awe, "How did you do it?" She said, "I just made up my mind that I couldn't leave him, no matter what." Then she added, "I didn't know I had it in me." She discovered deep, internal wellsprings of compassion because the bonds of her covenants gave her strength to lay down her life for her sheep, even an hour at a time.

17. Now I return to Tom and Tracy, who this year discovered wellsprings of their own. Their second baby threatened to come too early to live. They might have made a hireling's convenient choice and gone on with their lives, letting a miscarriage occur. But because they tried to observe their covenants by sacrifice,¹³ active, energetic Tracy lay almost motionless at home for five weeks, then in a hospital bed for another five. Tom was with her virtually every hour when he was not working or sleeping. They prayed their child to earth. Then the baby required 11 more weeks in the hospital. But she is here, and she is theirs.

18. One night as Tracy waited patiently upon the Lord in the hospital, she sensed that perhaps her willingness to sacrifice herself for her baby was in some small way like the Good Shepherd's sacrifice for her. She said, "I had expected that trying to give so much would be really difficult, but somehow this felt more like a privilege." As many other parents in Zion have done, she and Tom gave their hearts to God by giving them to their child. In the process, they learned that theirs is a covenant marriage, one that binds them to each other and to the Lord.

19. May we restore the concept of marriage as a covenant, even the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.¹⁴ And when the wolf comes, may we be as shepherds, not hirelings, willing to lay down our lives, a day at a time, for the sheep of our covenant. Then, like Adam and Eve, we will have joy.¹⁵ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Bruce C. and Marie K. Hafen, *The Belonging Heart* (1994), 255–65; Pitirim Sorokin, *Society, Culture and Personality*, 2nd ed. (1962), 99–107.
2. John 10:12–15
3. See D&C 2
4. 2 Ne. 2:23
5. See Moses 4:23

6. See Moses 5:11
7. Alma 28:8
8. See Moses 5:27
9. See Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle Was Right," *Atlantic Monthly*, Apr. 1993, 47
10. Maggie Gallagher, *The Abolition of Marriage* (1996), 4–5.
11. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
12. See Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community* (1993), 137–39; emphasis added.
13. See D&C 97:8 14. See D&C 131:2 15. See 2 Ne. 2:25

Covenant Marriage
(QR Code)





Honorably Hold A Name And A Standing

Elder David A. Bednar
Ensign, May 2009, 97-100



1. Shortly after I was called to serve as a stake president in 1987, I talked with a good friend who recently had been released as a stake president. During our conversation I asked him what he would teach me about becoming an effective stake president. His answer to my question had a profound impact upon my subsequent service and ministry.

2. My friend indicated he had been called to serve as a temple worker soon after his release. He then said: “I wish I had been a temple worker before I was a stake president. If I had served in the temple before my call to serve as a stake president, I would have been a very different stake president.”

3. I was intrigued by his answer and asked him to explain further. He responded: “I believe I was a good stake president. The programs in our stake ran well, and our statistics were above average. But serving in the temple has expanded my vision. If I were called today to serve as a stake president, my primary focus would be on worthiness to receive and honor temple covenants. I would strive to make temple preparation the center of all that we did. I would do a better job of shepherding the Saints to the house of the Lord.”

4. That brief conversation with my friend helped me as a stake president to teach relentlessly about and testify of the eternal importance of temple ordinances, temple covenants, and temple worship. The deepest desire of our presidency was for every member of the stake to receive the blessings of the temple, to be worthy of and to use frequently a temple recommend.

5. My message today focuses upon the blessings of the temple, and I pray the Holy Ghost will illuminate our minds, penetrate our hearts, and bear witness of truth to each of us.

The Divine Purpose of Gathering

6. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that in all ages the divine purpose of gathering the people of God is to build temples so His children can receive the highest ordinances and thereby gain eternal life (see Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 2007], 415–17). This essential relationship between the principle of gathering and the building of temples is highlighted in the Book of Mormon:

7. “Behold, the field was ripe, and blessed are ye, for ye did thrust in the sickle, and did reap with your might, yea, all the day long did ye labor; and behold the number of your sheaves! And they shall be gathered into the garners, that they are not wasted” (Alma 26:5).

8. The sheaves in this analogy represent newly baptized members of the Church. The garners are the holy temples. Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained: “Clearly, when we baptize, our eyes should gaze beyond the baptismal font to the holy temple. The great garner into which the sheaves should be gathered is the holy temple” (in John L. Hart, “Make Calling Focus of Your Mission,” Church News, Sept. 17, 1994, 4). This instruction clarifies and emphasizes the importance of sacred temple ordinances and covenants—that the sheaves may not be wasted.

9. “Yea, they shall not be beaten down by the storm at the last day; yea, neither shall they be harrowed up by the whirlwinds; but when the storm cometh they shall be gathered together in their place, that the storm cannot penetrate to them; yea, neither shall they be driven with fierce winds whithersoever the enemy listeth to carry them” (Alma 26:6).

10. Elder Dallin H. Oaks has explained that in renewing our baptismal covenants by partaking of the emblems of the sacrament, “we do not witness that we take upon us the name of Jesus Christ. [Rather], we witness that we are willing to do so. (See D&C 20:77.) The fact that we only witness to our willingness suggests that something else must happen before we actually take that sacred name upon us in the [ultimate and] most important sense” (“Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ,” Ensign, May 1985, 81). The baptismal covenant clearly contemplates a future event or events and looks forward to the temple.

11. In modern revelations the Lord refers to temples as houses “built unto my name” (D&C 105:33; see also D&C 109:2–5; 124:39). In the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith petitioned the Father “that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them” (D&C 109:22). He also asked for a blessing “over thy people upon whom

thy name shall be put in this house” (v. 26). And as the Lord appeared in and accepted the Kirtland Temple as His house, He declared, “For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house” (D&C 110:7).

12. These scriptures help us understand that the process of taking upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ that is commenced in the waters of baptism is continued and enlarged in the house of the Lord. As we stand in the waters of baptism, we look to the temple. As we partake of the sacrament, we look to the temple. We pledge to always remember the Savior and to keep His commandments as preparation to participate in the sacred ordinances of the temple and receive the highest blessings available through the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, in the ordinances of the holy temple we more completely and fully take upon us the name of Jesus Christ.

13. “And this greater [or Melchizedek] priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

14. “Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

15. “And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh” (D&C 84:19–21).

No Combination of Wickedness Shall Prevail over Thy People

16. We live in a great day of temple building around the world. And the adversary surely is mindful of the increasing number of temples that now dot the earth. As always, the building and dedicating of these sacred structures are accompanied by opposition from enemies of the Church as well as by ill-advised criticism from some within the Church.

17. Such antagonism is not new. In 1861, while the Salt Lake Temple was under construction, Brigham Young encouraged the Saints: “If you wish this Temple built, go to work and do all you can. . . . Some say, ‘I do not like to do it, for we never began to build a Temple without the bells of hell beginning to ring.’ I want to hear them ring again. All the tribes of hell will be on the move, . . . but what do you think it will amount to? You have all the time seen what it has amounted to” (Deseret News, Apr. 10, 1861, 41).

18. We as faithful Saints have been strengthened by adversity and are the recipients of the Lord’s tender mercies. We have moved forward under the promise of the Lord: “I will not suffer that [mine enemies] shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil” (D&C 10:43).

19. For many years Sister Bednar and I hosted faithful men and women as devotional speakers at Brigham Young University–Idaho. Many of these speakers were emeritus or released members of the Seventy who had served as temple presidents following their service as General Authorities. As we talked with these stalwart leaders, I always asked this question: “What have you learned as a temple president that you wish you had better understood when you were a General Authority?”

20. As I listened to their answers, I discovered a consistent theme that I would summarize as follows: “I have come to understand better the protection available through our temple covenants and what it means to make an acceptable offering of temple worship. There is a difference between church-attending, tithe-paying members who occasionally rush into the temple to go through a session and those members who faithfully and consistently worship in the temple.”

21. The similarity of their answers impressed me greatly. Each response to my question focused upon the protecting power of the ordinances and covenants available in the house of the Lord. Their answers precisely paralleled the promises contained in the dedicatory prayer offered upon the Kirtland Temple in 1836:

22. “We ask thee, Holy Father, to establish the people that shall worship, and honorably hold a name and standing in this thy house, to all generations and for eternity;

23. “That no weapon formed against them shall prosper; that he who diggeth a pit for them shall fall into the same himself;

24. “That no combination of wickedness shall have power to rise up and prevail over thy people upon whom thy name shall be put in this house;

25. “And if any people shall rise against this people, that thine anger be kindled against them;

26. “And if they shall smite this people thou wilt smite them; thou wilt fight for thy people as thou didst in the day of battle, that they may be delivered from the hands of all their enemies” (D&C 109:24–28).

27. Please consider these verses in light of the current raging of the adversary and what we have discussed about our willingness to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and the blessing of protection promised to those who honorably hold a name and standing in the holy temple. Significantly, these covenant blessings are to all generations and for all eternity. I invite you to study repeatedly and ponder prayerfully the implications of these scriptures in your life and for your family.

28. We should not be surprised by Satan's efforts to thwart or discredit temple worship and work. The devil despises the purity in and the power of the Lord's house. And the protection available to each of us in and through temple ordinances and covenants stands as a great obstacle to the evil designs of Lucifer.

The Fire of the Covenant

29. The exodus from Nauvoo in September of 1846 caused unimaginable hardship for the faithful Latter-day Saints. Many sought shelter in camps along the Mississippi River. When word reached Brigham Young at Winter Quarters about the condition of these refugees, he immediately sent a letter across the river to Council Point encouraging the brethren to help—reminding them of the covenant made in the Nauvoo Temple. He counseled: "Now is the time for labor. Let the fire of the covenant which you made in the House of the Lord, burn in your hearts, like flame unquenchable" (in *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Sept. 28, 1846, 5). Within days, wagons were rolling eastward to rescue the struggling Saints.

30. What was it that gave those early Saints such strength? It was the fire of the temple covenant that burned in their hearts. It was their commitment to worship and honorably hold a name and standing in the house of the Lord.

31. We do now and will yet face great challenges to the work of the Lord. But like the pioneers who found the place which God for them prepared, so we will fresh courage take, knowing our God will never us forsake (see "Come, Come, Ye Saints," Hymns, no. 30). Today temples dot the earth as sacred places of ordinances and covenants, of edification, and of refuge from the storm.

Invitations and Commendation

32. The Lord declared, "I must gather together my people, . . . that the wheat may be secured in the garners to possess eternal life, and be crowned with celestial glory" (D&C 101:65).

33. Within the sound of my voice are many young women, young men, and children. I plead with you to be worthy, to be steadfast, and to look forward with great anticipation to the day you will receive the ordinances and blessings of the temple.

34. Within the sound of my voice are individuals who should have but have not yet received the ordinances of the house of the Lord. Whatever the reason, however long the delay, I invite you to begin making the spiritual preparations so you can receive the blessings available only in the holy temple. Please cast away the things in your life that stand in the way. Please seek after the things that are of eternal consequence.

35. Within the sound of my voice are individuals who have received the ordinances of the temple and for various reasons have not returned to the house of the Lord in quite some time. Please repent, prepare, and do whatever needs to be done so you can again worship in the temple and more fully remember and honor your sacred covenants.

36. Within the sound of my voice are many individuals who hold current temple recommends and strive worthily to use them. I commend you for your faithfulness and devotion.

37. I bear solemn witness that the fire of the covenant will burn in the heart of every faithful member of this Church who shall worship and honorably hold a name and standing in the Lord's holy house. Jesus the Christ is our Redeemer and Savior. He lives, and He directs the affairs of His Church through revelation to His anointed servants. Of these things I bear witness in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Honorably Hold a Name and a Standing
(QR Code)





Celestial Marriage

Elder Bruce R. McConkie
New Era, Jun 1978, 12-17



1. So that we may all be united in our thinking and be in a position to build on the same foundation, having in mind the same eternal truths, I shall initially quote three or four brief passages from the revelations. I pray that we will be one in feeling and in attitude, where these great doctrinal principles are concerned, and will have riveted in our souls the determination to do all the things that must be done in this mortal probation to inherit the fullness of the glory of our Father's kingdom.

2. I take for one text these words from section 42, the revelation entitled "The Law of the Church": "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else." (D&C 42:22.) And in the spirit of those words, I take from the Old Testament book of Ruth these expressions which, though not originally uttered with reference to marriage, contain a principle that is wholly applicable.

3. And Ruth said: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

4. "Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also [and now I will change it slightly] if [even] death part thee and me." (Ruth 1:16-17.)

5. Now a passage from section 49 in the Doctrine and Covenants summarizing the basic administrative announcement relative to marriage for our dispensation:

6. "Verily I say unto you, [saith the Lord,] that whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man.

7. "Wherefore, it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation;

8. "And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made." (D&C 49:15-17.)

9. When we as Latter-day Saints talk about marriage, we are talking about a holy, celestial order. We are talking

about a system out of which can grow the greatest love, joy, peace, happiness, and serenity known to humankind. We are talking about creating a family unit that has the potential of being everlasting and eternal, a family unit where a man and a wife can go on in that relationship to all eternity, and where mother and daughter and father and son are bound by eternal ties that will never be severed. We are talking about creating a unit more important than the Church, more important than any organization that exists on earth or in heaven, a unit out of which exaltation and eternal life grow; and when we talk about eternal life, we are talking about the kind of life that God our Heavenly Father lives.

10. In this final, glorious, gospel dispensation we have received the most basic truth of all eternity, and that truth concerns the nature and kind of being that God is. It is eternal life to know the Father and the Son. (See John 17:3.) There is no possible way to go degree by degree, step by step to the high exaltation we seek unless and until we come to a knowledge of the nature and kind of being that God is. Thus, when we talk about eternal life, we are talking about the kind of life that God our Father lives; and when we speak of him, we are speaking of a holy, perfected, exalted, ennobled man—an individual, a personage, a being with "a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's." (D&C 130:22.) We are talking about someone who is a literal parent, who is the Father of the spirits of all men. You and I were born as members of his family. We have seen his face; we have heard his voice; we have received his counsel, personally, as well as through representatives and agents; we knew him in the pre-existence. Now a curtain has been dropped and we do not have the remembrance that we had then, but we are seeking to do the things that will enable us to be like him.

11. After he had begotten us as his spirit children, he gave us our agency, which is the power and ability to choose; he also gave us laws and allowed us to obey or disobey, in consequence of which we can and did develop talents, abilities, aptitudes, and characteristics of diverse sorts. He ordained and established a plan of salvation. It was named the gospel of God, meaning God our Heavenly Father, and it consisted of all of the laws, powers, and rights, all of the experiences, all of the gifts and graces needed to take us, his spirit sons and daughters, from our then-spirit state of low intelligence to the high, exalted state where we would be like him.

12. The Prophet Joseph Smith tells us that God himself, finding that he was in the midst of spirits and glory, ordained laws whereby they might advance and progress and become like him. Those laws included the creation of this earth; they included the receipt of a mortal body where we could be tried and tested in a probationary state and receive experiences impossible to gain in any other way; they included the opportunity to choose between right and wrong, to do good or to do evil, the opportunity to grow and advance in the things of the spirit; and they included the opportunity to enter into a marriage relationship that has the potential of being eternal. We started out on this course in the premortal life. Now we are down here taking the final examination for all the life that we lived back then, which also is the entrance examination for the realms and kingdoms that are ahead.

13. The name of the kind of life that God our Father lives is eternal life, and eternal life consists of two things: the continuation of the family unit in eternity, and an inheritance of what the scriptures denominate the fullness of the Father or the fullness of the glory of the Father (see D&C 76:56), meaning the might, power, dominion, and exaltation that he himself possesses. In our finite circumstances we have no ability or power to comprehend the might and omnipotence of the Father. We can look at the stars in the heavens, we can view the Milky Way, we can see all the worlds and orbs that have been created in their spheres, we can examine all the life on this planet with which we are familiar, and by doing this we can begin to get a concept of the glorious, infinite, unlimited intelligence by which all these things are—and all these things taken together and more dramatize the fullness of the glory of the Father.

14. We are seeking eternal life—that is to say, we have been offered the privilege to go forward in advancement, as the children of God, until we become like our eternal Parent; and if we so attain, it is required, it is requisite, it is mandatory for us to build on the foundation of the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. It is required of us that we keep the commandments and sow the seeds of righteousness in order to reap the harvest of glory and honor. If we do all the things that the gospel requires of us, we can make that kind of advancement. The gospel, which is the plan of salvation, is now named the gospel of Jesus Christ to honor him who worked out the infinite and eternal atoning sacrifice and put into operation all the terms and conditions of the Father's plan.

15. God our Father is the Creator of all things, and we glorify his holy name and sing praises to him because he created us and, in the ultimate sense, the universe, the earth, and all things on all the orbs in all the sidereal heavens. God our Father is the ultimate and perfect Creator. Jesus Christ, his Son, is the Redeemer. He came to ransom us from the temporal and spiritual death brought into the world by the fall of Adam. The ransom from temporal death gives each

of us immortality: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:22.) And every living soul will rise in the resurrection with immortality and, having so arisen, will be judged according to his works and will be assigned a place in the kingdoms that are prepared. Some will be raised in immortality and then unto eternal life, and eternal life is the name of the kind of life that God lives.

16. We cannot shout praises to the name of the Lord Jehovah, who is the Lord Jesus, to the extent that we should in order to honor him properly for all that he has done for us and for the possibilities that lie ahead because he took upon himself our sins on conditions of repentance. The work of God the Father was creation, and the work of Christ the Son was redemption. We are men, and our work—building on the foundation that God our Father laid and that Christ his Son has established—is to do the part assigned to us in order to inherit the glory and honor and dignity of which I speak. In general terms, that means that we are to accept and believe the law. We are to believe in Christ and live his law, be upright and clean, have our sins washed away in the waters of baptism, become new creatures by the power of the Holy Ghost, and walk in paths of truth and righteousness.

17. As long as we speak in this vein, all that we say is said in generalities; it is a foundation for a specific and particular thing toward which we point: eternal marriage. Everything that we do in the Church is connected and associated with and tied into the eternal order of matrimony that God has ordained. Everything that we do from the time that we become accountable, through all our experiences, and all the counsel and direction we receive, up to the time of marriage, is designed and intended to prepare us to enter into a probationary marriage arrangement, one that does in fact become eternal if we abide in the covenant made in connection with that order of matrimony. Then everything that we do for the remainder of our lives, whatsoever it may be, ties back into the celestial order of matrimony into which we have entered and is designed and intended to encourage us to keep the covenant made in holy places. That is the general concept, briefly stated, under which we are operating.

18. Let me now read from the revelation on marriage the general concept governing marriage and everything else. I read from the Doctrine and Covenants.

19. "All who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world." (D&C 132:5.)

20. That is the basic, governing, overriding principle that rules all of the acts of men in all ages. No one ever gets anything for nothing. We have received as a free gift the fact of resurrection, but in a sense, even that is not free in that we lived meritoriously and uprightly in the pre-existence and earned the right to undergo this mortal probation and the resurrection that follows it. In the broadest and most eternal

perspective that there is, no one ever gets anything for nothing; and so we live the law and we get the blessing. And having said that, then the Lord says:

21. “As pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fullness of my glory, and he that receiveth a fullness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.” (D&C 132:6.)

22. “The new and everlasting covenant” is the fullness of the gospel, and the gospel is the covenant of salvation that the Lord makes with men. It is new because it has been revealed anew in our day; it is everlasting because it has always been had by faithful people, not only on this earth but on all the earths inhabited by the children of our Father. This next verse, number 7, is a one-sentence summary of the whole law of the whole gospel. Of necessity it is written in legal language because it outlines the terms and conditions that are involved; and of course it is the Lord speaking:

23. “And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these [this recites the conditions of the law that govern in the whole field of revealed religion, but we will make specific application of it to our central responsibility, which is marriage]: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred), are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.” (D&C 132:7.)

24. Now what is involved? We have power, as mortals, to make between ourselves any arrangements that we choose to make and that are legal in the society where we live, and they will bind us as long as we agree to be bound, even until death takes us. But we do not have power, as mortals, to bind ourselves after death. Neither you nor I can enter a contract to buy or sell or go or come or paint or perform or do any act in the sphere that is ahead. God has given us our agency here and now as pertaining to mortality.

25. We are mortal; this is a temporal sphere, a time-bound sphere. And if we are going to do anything here and now that bridges the gulf of death, anything that endures in the spirit world, anything that remains with us in the resurrection, we have to do it by a power that is beyond the power of man—it has to be the power of God. Man is mortal and his acts are limited to mortality; God is eternal, and his acts have no end.

26. The Lord conferred upon Peter the keys of the kingdom of God so that he had power to bind on earth and seal everlastingly in the heavens, and then he spread that out to James and John and then to all of the Twelve anciently so that they all had the same power, and then in our day he has restored again what was had anciently. He has called apostles and prophets and given them the keys of the kingdom of God, and they have power once again to bind on earth and have it sealed everlastingly in the heavens. He sent Elijah to bring the sealing power; he sent Elias to confer upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the gospel of Abraham and to give the promise that in them and in their seed all generations after should be blessed.

27. Elijah came and Elias came, acting in the power and authority of the Almighty, and gave once again their keys, powers, prerogatives, and rights to mortal men on earth—praise God for this glorious thing! Once again on earth there are people who can bind on earth and have it sealed everlastingly in the heavens. We have the power to perform a marriage, and we can do it so that the man and the woman become husband and wife here and now and—if they keep the covenant there and then made—they will remain husband and wife in the spirit world and will come up in glory and dominion, with kingdoms and exaltation in the resurrection, being husband and wife and having eternal life. And it operates thus because in this church, and in this church only, the Lord Almighty has given the sealing power. That is our potential; that is within our possible realm of achievement.

28. In this one-sentence summary, as I express it, of the whole law of the whole gospel, we read three requisites. If, for instance, a person is going to have a baptism that lasts eternally, he must first find the right baptism; second, find a legal administrator to perform the ordinance for him; and third, have that ordinance sealed by the power of the Holy Spirit, in which event the baptism will admit the repentant person to a celestial heaven in the realms ahead. This matter of being sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise applies to every ordinance and every covenant and all things that there are in the Church. Do not talk about marriage and the Holy Spirit of promise unless and until you understand first the concept and the principle and its universal application.

29. One of our revelations speaks of “the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true” (D&C 76:53), meaning that every person who walks uprightly, does the best that he can, overcomes the world, rises above carnality, and walks in paths of righteousness will have his acts and his deeds sealed and approved by the Holy Spirit. He will be, as Paul would have expressed it, “justified . . . by the Spirit.” (See 1 Cor. 6:11.) Therefore, if a man is going to be married and wants a marriage that lasts for a week, or three weeks, or three months, or as long as Hollywood prescribes, or even “until death us do part,” he can be married by the power of man within the parameters

and the limits that are set; he has that prerogative by the agency that the Lord has given him. But if he wants a wife to be his in the realms ahead, he had better find someone who has power to bind on earth and seal in heaven.

30. In order to get a proper marriage one must do this: first, search for and seek out celestial marriage—find the right ordinance; second, look for a legal administrator, someone who holds the sealing power—and that power is exercised only in the temples that the Lord has had built by the tithing and sacrifice of his people in our day; and third, so live in righteousness, uprightness, integrity, virtue, and morality that he is entitled to have the Holy Spirit of God ratify and seal and justify and approve, and in that event his marriage is sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise and is binding in time and in eternity.

31. So we Latter-day Saints struggle and labor and work to be worthy to get a recommend to go to the temple, for the Spirit will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle. We struggle and labor to get our tabernacles clean, to be pure and refined and cultured, to have the Spirit as our companion; and when we get in that state, our bishop and our stake president give us a “recommend” to go to the temple. We go there and make solemn and sober covenants, and having so done we then labor and struggle and work with all our power to continue in the light of the Spirit so that the agreement we have made will not be broken. If we do that, we have the assurance of eternal life. We do not need to tremble and fear; we do not need to have anxiety or worry if we are laboring and working and struggling to the best of our abilities. Though we do not become perfect, though we do not overcome all things, if our hearts are right and we are charting a course to eternal life in the manner I indicate, our marriages will continue in the realms that are ahead. We shall get into the paradise of God, and we shall be husband and wife. We shall come up in the resurrection, and we shall be husband and wife.

32. Anyone who comes up in the resurrection in the marriage state has the absolute guarantee of eternal life, but he will not then be a possessor and inheritor of all things—there is a great deal of progress and advancement to be made after the grave and after the resurrection. But he will be in the course where he will go on in the schooling and preparing processes until eventually he knows all things and becomes like God our Heavenly Father, meaning that he becomes an inheritor of eternal life.

33. In a manner of speaking we have, here and now, probationary families, even though we have been married in the temple, because our marriage in the temple is conditional. It is conditioned upon our subsequent compliance with the laws, the terms, the conditions of the covenant that we then make. And so when I get married in the temple, I am put in a position where I can strive and labor and learn to love my wife with the perfection that must exist if I am going to have a fullness of the glory that attends this covenant in eternity,

and it puts her in a position to learn to love me in the same way. It puts both of us in a position to bring up our children in light and truth and to school and prepare them to be members of an eternal family unit, and it puts us as children of our parents in a position where we honor our parents and do what is necessary to have these eternal ties go from one generation to the next and the next. Eventually there will be a great patriarchal chain of exalted beings from Adam to the last man, with any links left out being individuals who are not qualified and worthy to inherit, possess, and receive along the indicated line.

34. I am talking now to people who have opportunity to live the law. Anyone who has the opportunity is required to do so; it is mandatory. I am perfectly well aware that there are people who did not have the opportunity but who would have lived the law had the opportunity been afforded, and those individuals will be judged in the providences and mercy of a gracious God according to the intents and desires of their hearts. That is the principle of salvation and exaltation for the dead.

35. I have talked only in general terms; I have deliberately not been specific. I have designed to set forth true principles, as the Prophet indicated in his statement, “I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves.” I have desired and designed to set forth the general concept that is involved with the hope that, having the concept before us, each of us will then determine for ourselves the courses that we have to pursue as individuals to obtain the indicated rewards.

36. I think that the noblest concept that can enter the heart of man is the fact that the family unit continues in eternity. I do not think that one can conceive of a more glorious concept than that—building, of course, on the foundation of the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. Celestial marriage is the thing that opens the door to eternal life in our Father’s kingdom. If we can pass the probationary experiences that prevail and exist in the family unit, then the Lord will say to us at some future day, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” (Matt. 25:21.)

37. The things we are talking about here are true. That is the glory and the wonder and the beauty of everything connected with this system of revealed religion that we have—it is true. There is no more glorious fact connected with our whole system of revealed religion than the simple fact that it is true, and because it is true, the doctrines that we teach are true; and because these doctrines are true, they will give us peace and joy and happiness in this life. They will enable us to cast off the drudgery, sludge, evil, and iniquities of the world; they will empower us to put on Christ and the glory and beauty of pure religion and to become new creatures of the Holy Ghost. It is a wondrous thing beyond belief to belong to a system that is true, that is founded on the rock foundation of eternal truth.

38. I hope, as I bear testimony to you of the truth and divinity of this work, that my words simply echo the thoughts that are in your hearts. I know just as well as I know anything in this world that God has spoken in our day, that Jesus is the Lord, that he has worked out the infinite and eternal atoning sacrifice, that the Lord has set up his kingdom for the last time among men, that Spencer W. Kimball at this moment is the prophet and revelator and mouthpiece of the Almighty on earth, and that this Church, weak and struggling and humble as it is now, is going to advance and grow and progress until the knowledge of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea. Our destiny is to fill the earth because we are founded on the rock foundation of eternal truth.

Covenants
(QR Code)



Celestial Marriage
(QR Code)





The Power of Covenants

Elder D. Todd Christofferson
Ensign, May 2009, 19-32



1. May I extend a warm and sincere welcome to Elder Neil L. Andersen to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He is a worthy and welcome addition.

2. On August 15, 2007, Peru suffered a massive earthquake that all but destroyed the coastal cities of Pisco and Chincha. Like many other Church leaders and members, Wenceslao Conde, the president of the Balconcito Branch of the Church in Chincha, immediately set about helping others whose homes were damaged.

3. Four days after the earthquake, Elder Marcus B. Nash of the Seventy was in Chincha helping to coordinate the Church's relief efforts there and met President Conde. As they talked about the destruction that had occurred and what was being done to help the victims, President Conde's wife, Pamela, approached carrying one of her small children. Elder Nash asked Sister Conde how her children were. With a smile, she replied that through the goodness of God they were all safe and well. He asked about the Condes' home.

"It's gone," she said simply.

"What about your belongings?" he inquired.

"Everything was buried in the rubble of our home," Sister Conde replied.

"And yet," Elder Nash noted, "you are smiling as we talk."

"Yes," she said, "I have prayed and I am at peace. We have all we need. We have each other, we have our children, we are sealed in the temple, we have this marvelous Church, and we have the Lord. We can build again with the Lord's help."

4. This tender demonstration of faith and spiritual strength is repeated in the lives of Saints across the world in many different settings. It is a simple illustration of a profound power that is much needed in our day and that will become increasingly crucial in days ahead. We need strong Christians who can persevere against hardship, who can sustain hope through tragedy, who can lift others by their example and their compassion, and who can consistently overcome temptations. We need strong Christians who can make important things happen by their faith and who can defend the truth of Jesus Christ against moral relativism and militant atheism.

5. What is the source of such moral and spiritual power,

and how do we obtain it? The source is God. Our access to that power is through our covenants with Him. A covenant is an agreement between God and man, an accord whose terms are set by God (see Bible Dictionary, "Covenant," 651). In these divine agreements, God binds Himself to sustain, sanctify, and exalt us in return for our commitment to serve Him and keep His commandments.

6. We enter into covenants by priesthood ordinances, sacred rituals that God has ordained for us to manifest our commitment. Our foundational covenant, for example, the one in which we first pledge our willingness to take upon us the name of Christ, is confirmed by the ordinance of baptism. It is done individually, by name. By this ordinance, we become part of the covenant people of the Lord and heirs of the celestial kingdom of God.

7. Other sacred ordinances are performed in temples built for that very purpose. If we are faithful to the covenants made there, we become inheritors not only of the celestial kingdom but of exaltation, the highest glory within the heavenly kingdom, and we obtain all the divine possibilities God can give (see D&C 132:20).

8. The scriptures speak of the new and everlasting covenant. The new and everlasting covenant is the gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, the doctrines and commandments of the gospel constitute the substance of an everlasting covenant between God and man that is newly restored in each dispensation. If we were to state the new and everlasting covenant in one sentence it would be this: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

9. Jesus explained what it means to believe in Him: "Now this is the commandment [or in other words, this is the covenant]: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day" (3 Nephi 27:20).

10. What is it about making and keeping covenants with God that gives us the power to smile through hardships, to convert tribulation into triumph, to "be anxiously engaged

in a good cause, ... and bring to pass much righteousness” (D&C 58:27)?

Strengthened by Gifts and Blessings

11. First, as we walk in obedience to the principles and commandments of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we enjoy a continual flow of blessings promised by God in His covenant with us. Those blessings provide the resources we need to act rather than simply be acted upon as we go through life.¹ For example, the Lord’s commandments in the Word of Wisdom regarding the care of our physical bodies bless us first and foremost with “wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” (D&C 89:19). Furthermore, they lead to a generally more healthy life and freedom from destructive addictions. Obedience gives us greater control over our lives, greater capacity to come and go, to work and create. Of course, age, accident, and illnesses inevitably take their toll, but even so, our obedience to this gospel law enhances our capacity to deal with these challenges.

12. In the covenant path we find a steady supply of gifts and help. “Charity never faileth” (1 Corinthians 13:8; Moroni 7:46), love begets love, compassion begets compassion, virtue begets virtue, commitment begets loyalty, and service begets joy. We are part of a covenant people, a community of Saints who encourage, sustain, and minister to one another. As Nephi explained, “And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them” (1 Nephi 17:3).²

Strengthened with Increased Faith

13. All this is not to say that life in the covenant is free of challenge or that the obedient soul should be surprised if disappointments or even disasters interrupt his peace. If you feel that personal righteousness should preclude all loss and suffering, you might want to have a chat with Job.

14. This brings us to a second way in which our covenants supply strength—they produce the faith necessary to persevere and to do all things that are expedient in the Lord. Our willingness to take upon us the name of Christ and keep His commandments requires a degree of faith, but as we honor our covenants, that faith expands. In the first place, the promised fruits of obedience become evident, which confirms our faith. Secondly, the Spirit communicates God’s pleasure, and we feel secure in His continued blessing and help. Thirdly, come what may, we can face life with hope and equanimity, knowing that we will succeed in the end because we have God’s promise to us individually, by name, and we know He cannot lie (see Enos 1:6; Ether 3:12).

15. Early Church leaders in this dispensation confirmed that adhering to the covenant path provides the reassurance we need in times of trial:

16. “It was [the knowledge that their course in life conformed to the will of God] that enabled the ancient saints to endure all their afflictions and persecutions, and to take ... not only the spoiling of their goods, and the wasting of their substance, joyfully, but also to suffer death in its most horrid forms; knowing (not merely believing) that when this earthly house of their tabernacle was dissolved, they had a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2 Cor. 5:1.)” (Lectures on Faith [1985], 67).

17. They further pointed out that in offering whatever sacrifice God may require of us, we obtain the witness of the Spirit that our course is right and pleasing to God (see Lectures on Faith, 69–71). With that knowledge, our faith becomes unbounded, having the assurance that God will in due time turn every affliction to our gain. Some of you have been sustained by that faith as you have endured those who point fingers of scorn from the “great and spacious building” and cry, “Shame!” (see 1 Nephi 8:26–27), and you have stood firm with Peter and the Apostles of old, “rejoicing that [you] were counted worthy to suffer shame for [Christ’s] name” (Acts 5:41).

18. The Lord said of the Church: “Verily I say unto you, all among them who ... are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.

19. “For I, the Lord, will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit” (D&C 97:8–9).

20. The Apostle Paul understood that one who has entered into a covenant with God is both given the faith to face trials and gains even greater faith through those trials. Of his personal “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7), he observed:

21. “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

22. “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

23. “Therefore I take pleasure in [my] infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:8–10).³

Strengthened through the “Power of Godliness”

24. We have considered, first, the empowering blessings and, second, the endowment of faith that God grants to

those who keep their covenants with Him. A final aspect of strength through covenants that I will mention is the bestowal of divine power. Our covenant commitment to Him permits our Heavenly Father to let His divine influence, “the power of godliness” (D&C 84:20), flow into our lives. He can do that because by our participation in priesthood ordinances we exercise our agency and elect to receive it. Our participation in those ordinances also demonstrates that we are prepared to accept the additional responsibility that comes with added light and spiritual power.

25. In all the ordinances, especially those of the temple, we are endowed with power from on high.⁴ This “power of godliness” comes in the person and by the influence of the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Holy Ghost is part of the new and everlasting covenant. It is an essential part of our baptism, the baptism of the Spirit. It is the messenger of grace by which the blood of Christ is applied to take away our sins and sanctify us (see 2 Nephi 31:17). It is the gift by which Adam was “quicken in the inner man” (Moses 6:65). It was by the Holy Ghost that the ancient Apostles endured all that they endured and by their priesthood keys carried the gospel to the known world of their day.

26. When we have entered into divine covenants, the Holy Ghost is our comforter, our guide, and our companion. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are “the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment” (Moses 6:61). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are testimony, faith, knowledge, wisdom, revelations, miracles, healing, and charity, to name but a few (see D&C 46:13–26).

27. It is the Holy Ghost that bears witness of your words when you teach and testify. It is the Holy Ghost that, as you speak in hostile venues, puts into your heart what you should say and fulfills the Lord’s promise that “you shall not be confounded before men” (D&C 100:5). It is the Holy Ghost that reveals how you may clear the next seemingly insurmountable hurdle. It is by the Holy Ghost in you that others may feel the pure love of Christ and receive strength to press forward. It is also the Holy Ghost, in His character as the Holy Spirit of Promise, that confirms the validity and efficacy of your covenants and seals God’s promises upon you.⁵

28. Divine covenants make strong Christians. I urge each one to qualify for and receive all the priesthood ordinances you can and then faithfully keep the promises you have made by covenant. In times of distress, let your covenants be paramount and let your obedience be exact. Then you can ask in faith, nothing wavering, according to your need, and God will answer. He will sustain you as you work and watch. In His own time and way He will stretch forth his hand to you, saying, “Here am I.”

29. I testify that in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is found the priesthood authority to administer the ordinances by which we can enter into binding covenants with our Heavenly Father in the name of His Holy Son. I testify that God will keep His promises to you as you honor your covenants with Him. He will bless you in “good measure, pressed down, . . . shaken together, and running over” (Luke 6:38). He will strengthen and finish your faith. He will, by His Holy Spirit, fill you with godly power. I pray that you will always have His Spirit to be with you to guide you and deliver you from want, anxiety, and distress. I pray that through your covenants, you may become a powerful instrument for good in the hands of Him who is our Lord and Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

30. The Prophet Joseph Smith observed, “As God has designed our happiness—and the happiness of all His creatures, He never has—He never will institute an ordinance or give a commandment to His people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which He has designed, and which will not end in the greatest amount of good and glory to those who become the recipients of His law and ordinances” (History of the Church, 5:135).

31. Some see only sacrifice and limitations in obedience to the commandments of the new and everlasting covenant, but those who live the experience—who give themselves freely and unreservedly to the covenant life—find greater liberty and fulfillment. When we truly understand, we seek more commandments, not fewer. Each new law or commandment we learn and live is like one more rung or step on a ladder that enables us to climb higher and higher. Truly, the gospel life is the good life.

The Apostle James taught the same lesson:

32. As the Prophet Joseph petitioned in the prayer dedicating the Kirtland Temple, which prayer was revealed to him by the Lord, “We ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them” (D&C 109:22).

33. In the Kirtland Temple dedicatory prayer referenced earlier, the Prophet petitioned, “And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house . . . may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost” (D&C 109:14–15). The “fulness of the Holy Ghost” includes what Jesus described as “the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom; which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son” (D&C 88:4–5).

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The Power of Covenants
(QR Code)





Covenants & Ordinances (Excerpts)

President Boyd K. Packer,
“Covenants” General Conference April 1987
“Ordinances” BYU Speeches, 3 February 1980



Covenants

1.Several years ago I installed a stake president in England. In another calling, he is here in the audience today. He had an unusual sense of direction. He was like a mariner with a sextant who took his bearings from the stars. I met with him each time he came to conference and was impressed that he kept himself and his stake on course.
2.This president understood the word covenant.
3. While he was neither a scriptionist nor a gospel scholar, he somehow had learned that exaltation is achieved by keeping covenants, not by holding high position.
4. The mariner gets his bearing from light coming from celestial bodies—the sun by day, the stars by night. That stake president did not need a mariner’s sextant to set his course. In his mind there was a sextant infinitely more refined and precise than any mariner’s instrument.
5. The spiritual sextant, which each of us has, also functions on the principle of light from celestial sources. Set that sextant in your mind to the word covenant or the word ordinance. The light will come through. Then you can fix your position and set a true course in life.
6. No matter what citizenship or race, whether male or female, no matter what occupation, no matter your education, regardless of the generation in which one lives, life is a homeward journey for all of us, back to the presence of God in his celestial kingdom.
7. Ordinances and covenants become our credentials for admission into His presence. To worthily receive them is the quest of a lifetime; to keep them thereafter is the challenge of mortality.

Ordinances

8. I want to talk to you about ordinances. Nothing I say will be new. It may be arranged—and that is my hope—in such a way that you will see something in the subject beyond what you have seen before.
9. I begin with the third Article of Faith: “We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved,

by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.” (Italics added.)

10. The Oxford Dictionary gives as the first definition of the word ordinance, “Arrangement in ranks or rows,” and as the second definition, “Arrangement in sequence or proper relative position.” That may not strike you at the moment as having much religious significance, but indeed it has. The word ordinance also means “a religious or ceremonial observance, an established rite.”
11. Among the ordinances we perform in the Church are baptism, administering the sacrament, naming and blessing of infants, administering to the sick, setting apart to callings in the Church, and ordaining to offices in the priesthood. And then there are the higher ordinances, performed in the temples. These include the endowment and the sealing ordinance, spoken of generally as temple marriage.
12. The word ordinance comes from the word order, which means, again, “a rank, a row, a series.”
13. The word order appears very frequently in the scriptures. I’ll just give a few examples: “. . . established the order of the Church” (Alma 8:1). “. . . all things should be restored to their proper order” (Alma 41:2). Moroni even defined depravity as being “without order” (Moroni 9:18). “. . . all things may be done in order” (D&C 20:68). “Mine house is a house of order” (D&C 132:8).
14. We talk often in the Church about the order of the priesthood.
15. The third word, ordain, is a close relative to the other two words. It has as its first definition from the Oxford Dictionary, “To put in order, arrange, make ready, prepare”; and as its second definition, “To appoint or admit to the ministry of the Christian Church . . . by the laying on of hands or other symbolic action.”
16. From all of this dictionary work there comes the impression that an ordinance, to be valid, must be done in proper order.
17. Order, Ordain, Ordinance!

Order--To put in ranks or rows, in proper sequence or relationship.

18. Ordain--The process of putting things in rows or proper relationship.

19. Ordinance--The ceremony by which things are put in proper order.

20. Now, about the ordinances of the gospel. How important are they to you as young members of the Church? Can you be happy, can you be redeemed, can you be exalted without them?

21. The answer: They are more than advisable or desirable, or even necessary. More, even, than essential or vital, they are crucial to each of us.

22. We learn from the revelations that:

23. This greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

24. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

25. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh. (D&C 84:19-21; italics added)

26. It is my purpose to fix in your minds so serious an interest in the ordinances of the gospel that you will seek to qualify for each ordinance in proper sequence, to make and keep the covenants that are connected with them, and to make sure that everything in this regard, for you, is in proper order.

27. Consider this illustration: Suppose an agent came to you with a real bargain in insurance. He claims that his policy offers complete protection. He talks of generous coverage, very low premiums, no penalties for making a claim--even a heavy claim. Other features make the policy look better than any you have considered before. He tells you of the company he claims to represent. You know it to be very reputable. You study the policy and find more offered to you, with less required of you, than any policy you have looked at before. You check carefully on the company and come away satisfied that they are indeed reputable. They do stand behind their policies. Some of your friends have dealt with them for years and have always been satisfied. You, it appears, have found a real bargain.

28. But in this imaginary account there is one thing that you did not discover, one hitch. This agent was never hired by that company. They have not authorized him to represent them. The company is not even aware that he is using their name. He obtained copies of the policy and adjusted

it to give it a little wider appeal. He had some forms and letterheads printed and set himself up in business. When he writes a policy and collects the premiums, they do not go to the head office. The policy goes into a drawer somewhere, and the premium money into his pocket. Chances are, he figures, there will be no claim against the policy anyway, at least not while he is around. And since it is life insurance, certainly there will be no claim while the policyholder is around.

29. You have, as the expression goes, been sold a bill of goods. For all you know, you are well insured. You feel content and suppose that when the day comes, as it surely will, your claim will be paid.

30. Too bad for you! No doubt the company will reject your claim. They cannot be compelled to honor policies except those written by authorized agents whom they have hired and certified, no matter how convinced you were that this man was a bona fide agent.

31. Will you get sympathy? Oh yes. Full value of the policy? Not a chance! Would you not receive anything? Well, for as long as you didn't know the difference you felt secure, for whatever that is worth.

32. My wife has an aged aunt in Brigham City. She is the last of fourteen children. Perhaps seventy-five years ago, Millicent took her little brothers and sisters to town to see the Peach Days Parade. With excitement they walked the long way to town. They hadn't been there long when a horse-drawn water wagon came along, sprinkling the streets to settle the dust. They watched it in awe and were greatly impressed. When it had passed they went home. They thought the parade was over. They were quite satisfied, until they learned the difference.

If you had been sold the insurance policy we talked about, you might be quite complacent, thinking you were well insured. But oh my, how that gets reversed. Somewhere in later conversations would come the sermon, "You ought to have been more careful about where you put your trust. You should have checked more carefully."

33. Now let me apply this illustration to the ordinances of the gospel.

34. There are no discounts. No credit buying. Nothing is ever put on sale at special, reduced prices. There is never something for nothing. There is no such thing as a "bargain." You pay full value. Requirements and covenants are involved. And you will get, in due time, full value. But you must, positively must, deal with an authorized agent, or your claims will not be honored.

35. Let me quote this very meaningful scripture from section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

36. And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred), are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.

37. Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion.

38. Will I accept of an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name?

39. Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed?

40. And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I and my Father ordained unto you, before the world was?

41. I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment--that no man shall come unto the Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord.

42. And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God.

43. For whatsoever things remain are by me; and whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed. (D&C 132:7-14; italics added)

44. That scripture is very clear. He will not receive at our hands that which He has not appointed. And things that are "ordained of men . . . shall not remain . . . in nor after the resurrection."

45. Now, I counsel you to take inventory of your spiritual progress. Is your life in order? Have you received the ordinances of the gospel that you should possess by this time in your life? Are they valid? If they come under the influence of the sealing power and authority, they will remain intact eternally; and your life, to this point, is in proper order.

46. in the Church we hold sufficient authority to

perform all of the ordinances necessary to redeem and to exalt the whole human family. And because we have the keys to the sealing power, what we bind in proper order here will be bound in heaven. Those keys--the keys to seal and bind on earth and have it bound in heaven--represent the consummate gift from our God. With that authority we can baptize and bless and endow and seal, and the Lord will honor the commitments.

47. When you receive an ordinance, whether it be baptism, the sacrament, an ordination or setting apart, an endowment or a sealing, you receive an obligation. Thereafter, you are under covenant not to steal, nor to lie, nor to profane, nor take the name of the Lord in vain. You are obligated to maintain the moral standard. This standard--by commandment of the Lord--requires that the only authorized use of the sacred power of procreation is with one to whom we are legally and lawfully wed. You have responsibility to support every principle of the gospel and the servants the Lord has ordained to administer them.

48. President Joseph Fielding Smith said this: "Each ordinance and requirement given to man for the purpose of bringing to pass his salvation and exaltation is a covenant" (Doctrines of Salvation, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56], 1:152).

49. Be careful, our youth, not to take the ordinances and covenants of the gospel lightly, nor to maintain them carelessly. It will take increased courage to keep your covenants.

50. Keep your spiritual premiums paid up. Do not let your spiritual policy lapse. Do not cause it to be cancelled in some moment of rebellion. Extend your policy by adding endorsements as you receive the higher ordinances. Work to qualify for each of them.

51. I was always impressed when President Joseph Fielding Smith was asked to pray. Invariably, he would make reference to the principles and ordinances of the gospel and would always include this expression: "May we remain faithful to our covenants and obligations."

52. And that is my message, simply this: Be faithful to the covenants and ordinances of the gospel. Qualify for those sacred ordinances step by step. Honor the covenants connected with them, and you will be happy. Then your lives will be in order.

53. This is a great time to live. When times are unsettled, when the dangers persist, the Lord pours out his blessings upon His Church and kingdom. Look forward, young people, with an attitude of faith and hope. Look forward to being married and then, in due time, to giving in marriage.



Divorce

Elder Dallin H. Oaks
Ensign, May 2007, 70–73



1. I have felt impressed to speak about divorce. This is a sensitive subject because it evokes such strong emotions from persons it has touched in different ways. Some see themselves or their loved ones as the victims of divorce. Others see themselves as its beneficiaries. Some see divorce as evidence of failure. Others consider it an essential escape hatch from marriage. In one way or another, divorce touches most families in the Church.

2. Whatever your perspective, please listen as I try to speak plainly about the effects of divorce on the eternal family relationships we seek under the gospel plan. I speak out of concern, but with hope.

I.

3. We live in a world in which the whole concept of marriage is in peril and where divorce is commonplace.

4. The concept that society has a strong interest in preserving marriages for the common good as well as the good of the couple and their children has been replaced for many by the idea that marriage is only a private relationship between consenting adults, terminable at the will of either.¹

5. Nations that had no divorce law have adopted one, and most nations permitting divorces have made them easier to obtain. Unfortunately, under current no-fault divorce laws, it can be easier to sever a marriage relationship with an unwanted spouse than an employment relationship with an unwanted employee. Some even refer to a first marriage as a “starter marriage,” like a small home one uses for a while before moving on.

6. The weakening of the concept that marriages are permanent and precious has far-reaching consequences. Influenced by their own parents’ divorce or by popular notions that marriage is a ball and chain that prevents personal fulfillment, some young people shun marriage. Many who marry withhold full commitment, poised to flee at the first serious challenge.

7. In contrast, modern prophets have warned that looking upon marriage “as a mere contract that may be entered into at pleasure ... and severed at the first difficulty ... is an evil meriting severe condemnation,” especially where children

are made to suffer.²

8. In ancient times and even under tribal laws in some countries where we now have members, men have power to divorce their wives for any trivial thing. Such unrighteous oppression of women was rejected by the Savior, who declared:

9. “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

10. “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matthew 19:8–9).

11. The kind of marriage required for exaltation—eternal in duration and godlike in quality—does not contemplate divorce. In the temples of the Lord, couples are married for all eternity. But some marriages do not progress toward that ideal. Because “of the hardness of [our] hearts,” the Lord does not currently enforce the consequences of the celestial standard. He permits divorced persons to marry again without the stain of immorality specified in the higher law. Unless a divorced member has committed serious transgressions, he or she can become eligible for a temple recommend under the same worthiness standards that apply to other members.

II.

12. There are many good Church members who have been divorced. I speak first to them. We know that many of you are innocent victims—members whose former spouses persistently betrayed sacred covenants or abandoned or refused to perform marriage responsibilities for an extended period. Members who have experienced such abuse have firsthand knowledge of circumstances worse than divorce.

13. When a marriage is dead and beyond hope of resuscitation, it is needful to have a means to end it. I saw examples of this in the Philippines. Two days after their temple marriage, a husband deserted his young wife and has not been heard from for over 10 years. A married woman fled and obtained a divorce in another country, but her

husband, who remained behind, is still married in the eyes of the Philippine law. Since there is no provision for divorce in that country, these innocent victims of desertion have no way to end their married status and go forward with their lives.

14. We know that some look back on their divorces with regret at their own partial or predominant fault in the breakup. All who have been through divorce know the pain and need the healing power and hope that come from the Atonement. That healing power and that hope are there for them and also for their children.

III.

15. Now I speak to married members, especially to any who may be considering divorce.

16. I strongly urge you and those who advise you to face up to the reality that for most marriage problems, the remedy is not divorce but repentance. Often the cause is not incompatibility but selfishness. The first step is not separation but reformation. Divorce is not an all-purpose solution, and it often creates long-term heartache. A broad-based international study of the levels of happiness before and after “major life events” found that, on average, persons are far more successful in recovering their level of happiness after the death of a spouse than after a divorce.³ Spouses who hope that divorce will resolve conflicts often find that it aggravates them, since the complexities that follow divorce—especially where there are children—generate new conflicts.

17. Think first of the children. Because divorce separates the interests of children from the interests of their parents, children are its first victims. Scholars of family life tell us that the most important cause of the current decline in the well-being of children is the current weakening of marriage, because family instability decreases parental investment in children.⁴ We know that children raised in a single-parent home after divorce have a much higher risk for drug and alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, poor school performance, and various kinds of victimization.

18. A couple with serious marriage problems should see their bishop. As the Lord’s judge, he will give counsel and perhaps even discipline that will lead toward healing.

19. Bishops do not counsel members to divorce, but they can help members with the consequences of their decisions. Under the law of the Lord, a marriage, like a human life, is a precious, living thing. If our bodies are sick, we seek to heal them. We do not give up. While there is any prospect of life, we seek healing again and again. The same should be true of our marriages, and if we seek Him, the Lord will help us and heal us.

20. Latter-day Saint spouses should do all within their power to preserve their marriages. They should follow the marriage enrichment counsel in the First Presidency’s

message in the April 2007 Ensign and Liahona.⁵ To avoid so-called “incompatibility,” they should be best friends, kind and considerate, sensitive to each other’s needs, always seeking to make each other happy. They should be partners in family finances, working together to regulate their desires for temporal things.

21. Of course, there can be times when one spouse falls short and the other is wounded and feels pain. When that happens, the one who is wronged should balance current disappointments against the good of the past and the brighter prospects of the future.

22. Don’t treasure up past wrongs, reprocessing them again and again. In a marriage relationship, festering is destructive; forgiving is divine (see D&C 64:9–10). Plead for the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord to forgive wrongs (as President Faust has just taught us so beautifully), to overcome faults, and to strengthen relationships.

23. If you are already descending into the low state of marriage-in-name-only, please join hands, kneel together, and prayerfully plead for help and the healing power of the Atonement. Your humble and united pleadings will bring you closer to the Lord and to each other and will help you in the hard climb back to marital harmony.

24. Consider these observations of a wise bishop with extensive experience in counseling members with marriage problems. Speaking of those who eventually divorced, he said:

25. “Universally, every couple or individual said they recognized that divorce was not a good thing, but they all insisted that their situation was different.

26. “Universally, they focused on the fault of the spouse and attributed little responsibility to their own behavior. Communication had withered.

27. “Universally, they were looking back, not willing to leave the baggage of past behavior on the roadside and move on. ‘Part of the time, serious sin was involved, but more often they had just ‘fallen out of love,’ saying, ‘He doesn’t satisfy my needs anymore,’ or, ‘She has changed.’

28. “All were worried about the effect on the children, but always the conclusion was ‘it’s worse for them to have us together and fighting.’ ”

29. In contrast, the couples who followed this bishop’s counsel and stayed together emerged with their marriages even stronger. That prospect began with their mutual commitment to keep the commandments, stay active in their Church attendance, scripture reading, and prayer, and to work on their own shortcomings. They “recognized the importance and power of the Atonement for their spouse

and for themselves,” and “they were patient and would try again and again.” When the couples he counseled did these things, repenting and working to save their marriages, this bishop reported that “healing was achieved 100 percent of the time.”

30. Even those who think their spouse is entirely to blame should not act hastily. One study found “no evidence that divorce or separation typically made adults happier than staying in an unhappy marriage. Two out of three unhappily married adults who avoided divorce reported being happily married five years later.”⁶ A woman who persisted in an intolerable marriage for many years until the children were raised explained: “There were three parties to our marriage—my husband and I and the Lord. I told myself that if two of us could hang in there, we could hold it together.”

31. The power of hope expressed in these examples is sometimes rewarded with repentance and reformation, but sometimes it is not. Personal circumstances vary greatly. We cannot control and we are not responsible for the choices of others, even when they impact us so painfully. I am sure the Lord loves and blesses husbands and wives who lovingly try to help spouses struggling with such deep problems as pornography or other addictive behavior or with the long-term consequences of childhood abuse.

32. Whatever the outcome and no matter how difficult your experiences, you have the promise that you will not be denied the blessings of eternal family relationships if you love the Lord, keep His commandments, and just do the best you can. When young Jacob “suffered afflictions and much sorrow” from the actions of other family members, Father Lehi assured him, “Thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain” (2 Nephi 2:1–2). Similarly, the Apostle Paul assured us that “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28).

IV.

33. In conclusion, I speak briefly to those contemplating marriage. The best way to avoid divorce from an unfaithful, abusive, or unsupportive spouse is to avoid marriage to such a person. If you wish to marry well, inquire well. Associations through “hanging out” or exchanging information on the Internet are not a sufficient basis for marriage. There should be dating, followed by careful and thoughtful and thorough courtship. There should be ample opportunities to experience the prospective spouse’s behavior in a variety of circumstances. Fiancés should learn everything they can about the families with whom they will soon be joined in marriage. In all of this, we should realize that a good marriage does not require a perfect man or a perfect woman. It only requires a man and a woman committed to strive together toward perfection.

34. President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “Two individuals

approaching the marriage altar must realize that to attain the happy marriage which they hope for they must know that marriage ... means sacrifice, sharing, and even a reduction of some personal liberties. It means long, hard economizing. It means children who bring with them financial burdens, service burdens, care and worry burdens; but also it means the deepest and sweetest emotions of all.”⁷

35. From personal experience, I testify to the sweetness of the marriage and family life that the family proclamation describes as founded upon a husband and wife’s “solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children” and “upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁸ I testify of Him as our Savior and pray in His name for all who strive for the supreme blessings of an eternal family, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Bruce C. Hafen, *Covenant Hearts* (2005), 37–39; Allan Carlson, *Fractured Generations* (2005), 1–13; Bryce Christensen, *Divided We Fall* (2006), 44–45.
2. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 8–9; or “Structure of the Home Threatened by Irresponsibility and Divorce,” *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 5.
3. Richard E. Lucas, “Adaptation and the Set-Point Model of Subjective Well-Being: Does Happiness Change after Major Life Events?” *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Apr. 2007, available at www.psychologicalscience.org.
4. See Jean Bethke Elstain and David Popenoe, *Marriage in America* (1995), quoted in Bruce C. Hafen, “Marriage and the State’s Legal Posture toward the Family,” *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Oct. 15, 1995, 18; see also *Marriage and the Public Good: Ten Principles* (2006), 24.
5. James E. Faust, “Enriching Your Marriage,” *Liahona*, Apr. 2007, 2–6; *Ensign*, Apr. 2007, 4–8.
6. Linda J. Waite and others, *Does Divorce Make People Happy? Findings from a Study of Unhappy Marriages* (Institute for American Values, 2002), 6; see also scholarly studies cited in *Marriage and the Law: A Statement of Principles* (Institute for American Values, 2006), 21.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 194.
8. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

Divorce
(QR Code)





Receive the Temple Blessings

Elder Richard G. Scott
Ensign, May 1999, 25



1. One of the most beautiful, comforting doctrines of the Lord—one that brings immense peace, happiness, and unbounded joy—is that principle called eternal marriage. This doctrine means that a man and woman who love each other deeply, who have grown together through the trials, joys, sorrows, and happiness of a shared lifetime, can live beyond the veil together forever with their family who earn that blessing. That is not just an immensely satisfying dream; it is a reality. Any husband and wife who have shared the joys of marriage here on earth would want that blessing. But only those who meet the requirements established by the Lord will receive that supernal gift. I bear witness that all those things that have and will bring me the greatest happiness in life have roots in the temple ordinances. Decide now to receive the ordinances of the temple at the appropriate time. Don't let anything overcome that resolve.

2. If you are now ready to receive the ordinances of the temple, prepare carefully for that crowning event. Before entering the temple, you will be interviewed by your bishop and stake president for your temple recommend. Be honest and candid with them. That interview is not a test to be passed but an important step to confirm that you have the maturity and spirituality to receive the supernal ordinances and make and keep the edifying covenants offered in the house of the Lord. Personal worthiness is an essential requirement to enjoy the blessings of the temple. Anyone foolish enough to enter the temple unworthily will receive condemnation.

3. Worthy character is best forged from a life of consistent, correct choices centered in the teachings of the Master. For a moment, I speak to you who are preparing for that sweet period of discovery known as courtship leading to eternal marriage. It can be a wondrously beautiful time of growth and sharing, a time when you should focus your thoughts, actions, and plans on two individuals: the parents of your own future children. Prepare to be a successful parent by being completely worthy in every thought and act during courtship.

4. There is more to a foundation of eternal marriage than a pretty face or an attractive figure. There is more to consider than popularity or charisma. As you seek an eternal companion, look for someone who is developing the

essential attributes that bring happiness: a deep love of the Lord and of His commandments, a determination to live them, one that is kindly understanding, forgiving of others, and willing to give of self, with the desire to have a family crowned with beautiful children and a commitment to teach them the principles of truth in the home. An essential priority of a prospective wife is the desire to be a wife and mother. She should be developing the sacred qualities that God has given His daughters to excel as a wife and mother: patience, kindliness, a love of children, and a desire to care for them rather than seeking professional pursuits. She should be acquiring a good education to prepare for the demands of motherhood. A prospective husband should also honor his priesthood and use it in service to others. Seek a man who accepts his role as provider of the necessities of life, has the capacity to do it, and is making concerted efforts to prepare himself to fulfill those responsibilities.

5. I suggest that you not ignore many possible candidates who are still developing these attributes, seeking the one who is perfected in them. You will likely not find that perfect person, and if you did, there would certainly be no interest in you. These attributes are best polished together as husband and wife.

6. Since many aspects of the temple experience are significantly different than regular worship services, get the counsel of your bishop to help prepare you. He can arrange for a specially trained individual to discuss important aspects of the temple to help you understand and appreciate more fully that sacred experience. The endowment and sealing ordinances of the temple are so gloriously rich in meaning that you will want to allow significant time to receive those ordinances and to ponder their meaning. You may want to divide them into two temple visits. On your first visit, if possible, take an endowed member of your family or a close friend of your own gender to escort you. Because of the sacred nature of the temple experience, you would want to limit those who accompany you to a few family or close friends. Do not let receptions, wedding breakfasts, farewells, or other activities overshadow the sacred temple experience. Above all, do not be overly concerned. You will be helped in every step by caring temple workers. They will be intent on making your visit the glorious experience you anticipate.

7. Outside of the temple, we do not speak of the specific,

sacred matters that unfold there. However, while within the temple, there will be authorized individuals to help answer your questions. On your first visit you will receive carefully prepared, specific instructions by authorized individuals regarding those matters which are not discussed outside of the temple walls. May your first experience in the temple be as moving and inspiring as was mine. It will be, as you carefully prepare.

8. Be worthy. To commit in courtship intimate acts, intended to unfold only within the bonds of marriage, is transgression. Such activity offends the Holy Ghost, lays the foundation for heartache and disappointment, and could mask traits or characteristics that could prove conflictive or incompatible within the covenant of marriage. Seeds of distrust that mature into divorce and loss of temple blessings are often sown through violation of the laws of personal purity. Don't make that mistake.

9. When you are sealed forever in the house of the Lord, a new family unit is created. Parents, who have had direct responsibility for you since your birth, now move into an advisory role. Their counsel is precious now, but you and your eternal companion now make the decisions together. As a husband and worthy priesthood bearer, you will want to emulate the example of the Savior, whose priesthood you hold. You will make giving of self to wife and children a primary focus of your life. Occasionally a man attempts to control the destiny of each family member. He makes all the decisions. His wife is subjected to his personal whims. Whether that is the custom or not is immaterial. It is not the way of the Lord. It is not the way a Latter-day Saint husband treats his wife and family.

10. How grateful I am that President Hinckley has been inspired by the Lord to construct new temples at an unprecedented rate so that the ordinances are more accessible to members throughout the world. If you have received temple ordinances but do not now visit the temple, even when there is one nearby, with all the tenderness of my heart I invite you to come back to the temple. There are many reasons. It is a place of peace, solitude, and inspiration. Regular attendance will enrich your life with greater purpose. It will permit you to provide deceased ancestors the exalting ordinances you have received. Go to the temple. You know it is the right thing to do. Do it now.

11. The temple ordinances are so imbued with symbolic meaning as to provide a lifetime of productive contemplation and learning. Ponder each word and activity in the temple. Study how they interrelate. As you ponder the significance of those matters, think of them in light of your relationship to the Savior and His to our Father in Heaven. Contemplate how the understanding you receive enhances your earth life by giving proper emphasis on things which are critically important. Arrange to participate for deceased ancestors in the sealing and other ordinances as well as the endowment.

I find it helpful when receiving ordinances for another, to try and relate to that person specifically. I think of him and pray that he will accept the ordinance and benefit from it. Do these things with a prayer in your heart that the Holy Spirit will enhance your understanding and enrich your life. Those worthy prayers will be answered.

12. May I share a personal experience to help any who feel anguish when eternal marriage is mentioned since you believe your spouse will not prepare for that sacred experience because of deeply rooted characteristics or habits. About five years into our marriage, we had a growing experience. Our precious two-year-old son Richard died while undergoing surgery to correct a congenital heart defect. Within six weeks, our daughter Andrea passed away at birth. My father, then not a member of the Church, loved little Richard very much. He said to my inactive mother, "I cannot understand how Richard and Jeanene seem to be able to accept the loss of these children."

13. Mother, responding to a prompting, said, "Kenneth, they have been sealed in the temple. They know that their children will be with them in the eternities if they live righteously. But you and I will not have our five sons because we have not made those covenants."

14. My father pondered those words. He began to meet with the stake missionaries and was soon baptized. In just over a year Mother, Dad, and the children were sealed in the temple. Later, President Kimball put his hands on my father's head, promised him the vigor and strength of youth, and gave him the sealing power. He worked as a sealer for 11 years in the Washington D.C. Temple with Mother at his side. You do your part. Don't abandon hope for a temple marriage.

15. If you are single and haven't identified a solid prospect for celestial marriage, live for it. Pray for it. Expect it in the timetable of the Lord. Do not compromise your standards in any way that would rule out that blessing on this or the other side of the veil. The Lord knows the intent of your heart. His prophets have stated that you will have that blessing as you consistently live to qualify for it. We do not know whether it will be on this or the other side of the veil. But live for it. Pray for it.

16. I know the exquisite joy that comes from an eternal marriage sealed at a temple altar through the holy sealing power. When there is righteousness, a commitment to give of self, obedience to the commandments of God, and the resolve to seek His will in all things together, that joy is unspeakable. I do not have words to express the fulfillment and peace that flow from such a supernal experience, even when there is a temporary interruption of the glory of life together on earth. It is that joy and happiness I want so much for each of you. More importantly, that is what your Father in Heaven wants for you.

17. Come to the temple now. It will greatly bless your life and provide essential ordinances for those beyond the veil that they cannot obtain by themselves. I testify that with unimaginable suffering and agony at an incalculable price, the Savior earned His right to be our Intermediary, our Redeemer, our Final Judge. Through faith in Him and receipt of the requisite ordinances and covenants, you will earn your right to the blessings of eternal marriage made possible through His infinite Atonement. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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