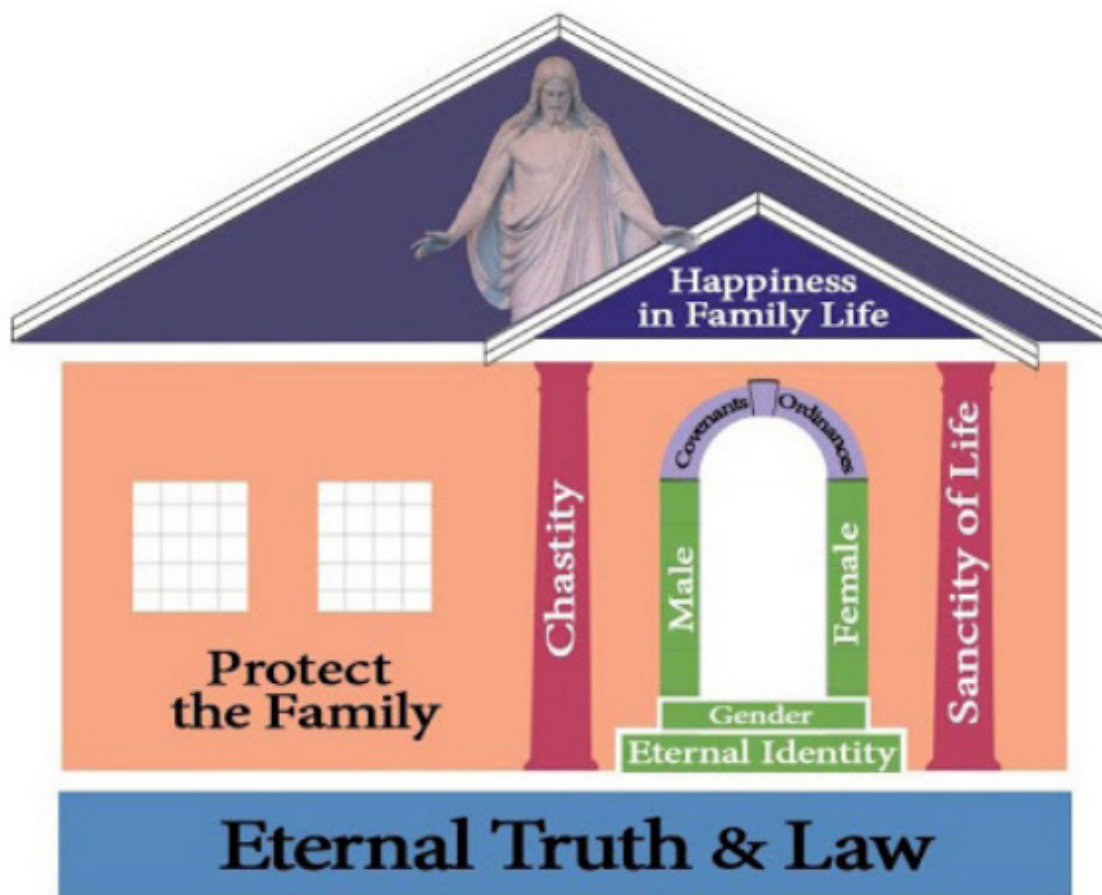




THE ETERNAL FAMILY

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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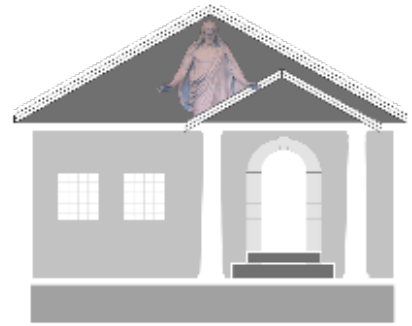


Teaching The Doctrine Of The Family

Sister Julie B. Beck

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Satellite Broadcast •

August 4, 2009 • Conference Center Theater



1. It's a great blessing for me to be with you, my wonderful friends in the seminary and institute program. Thank you for the service that you give throughout the Church in the world. As I have traveled in my Church responsibilities, I've met so many of you. You are ecclesiastical leaders and also the leaders and teachers of the rising generation. Thank you for all you do.
2. A few of your number are here in the studio with me today representing the rest of you. These are seminary and institute teachers from the Ogden, Utah, area. We are so grateful to them for coming with their wives and husbands to share this experience together.
3. It is a blessing for us to have the quality of teachers and leaders that you are helping our rising generation. You have a great responsibility, and you have a position of influence in the kingdom. We know that we couldn't teach the rising generation with such effectiveness without you—those who are full time and those who are volunteers. Thank you, thank you, thank you. My heart swells with gratitude for all that you do.
4. I've served on the Board of Education and on the Executive Committee of the Board of Education for almost two and a half years now, and I've seen that every single teacher who is recommended for employment and every leader in Church education passes through a review process that goes all the way to the First Presidency. How blessed we are to have that process.
5. We are very interested in who is teaching the rising generation. A major financial commitment of the Church's education program is to the seminaries and institutes of religion. I've been studying again your Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook for CES Teachers and Leaders (2001) and hope that you are reviewing this also. This is a marvelous resource for you in all that you do. In the front section it says, "Religious education is education for eternity and requires the influence of the Spirit of the Lord" (p. 1). I pray that we will have that influence with us as we review some things today.
6. I've mentioned how carefully the First Presidency worries about every detail of Church education. I know how much money they spend on the rising generation. I know how many people are employed to take care of the rising generation. Why do they invest so much?
7. As I've met with young single adults around the world, I ask these questions: Why does the First Presidency care so much about the youth of the Church, and why do they invest so much? In their focus groups and their firesides, these are the answers I get, and you should be interested in these answers. You might ask your own students these questions. They say: "Well, we are the future Church leaders." "Education is the key to success." "We need training so we can stay strong." "Our testimonies are strengthened in our classes." "We need to meet other great Latter-day Saint youth." "We are the hope of the future." One said, "We appreciate it." Another one said, "Well, they spend so much money on us because we're worth it."
8. I was very interested in those answers. You have to know that after pushing hard and receiving response after response, I have rarely heard, "So I will someday be a better father, or a better mother, or a better family leader." Family is rarely on their minds. Their responses are generally about self, and of course we know this is the time of life they're in. They're living in a very self-interested time of life, but they aren't thinking about family.

The Objective

9. You have some revised seminary and institute objectives. When you got these objectives, family was mentioned in them. It says that your purpose is "to help the youth and young adults understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ, qualify for the blessings of the temple, and prepare themselves, their families, and others for eternal life with their Father in Heaven." That's your objective. So, you're going to do that through your purpose of living the gospel, of teaching students the gospel, and administering in such a way that you will be strengthening parents in those families. There are a couple of places where references to the family were added.

10. We're here to help with the Lord's purpose, as it says, to help them achieve "eternal life." In Moses 1:39 we learn, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." We know that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ our immortality has been taken care of, but to receive eternal life we have some responsibilities. There are certain things that we have to do.
11. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. said, "Your chief interest, your essential and all but sole duty, is to teach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as that has been revealed in these latter days" ("The Charted Course of the Church in Education" [address to seminary and institute of religion leaders, Aug. 8, 1938], 6, www.ldsces.org; see also Teaching the Gospel, 4). So, what is that gospel, and what is essential to achieve eternal life?
12. We know that we cannot achieve eternal life without the ordinances and covenants of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. We find other teachings about living the commandments, serving, and giving away all we have to the Lord, but all of those things are based on the covenants we make. Without those covenants, we cannot achieve eternal life. That's why we share the gospel and prepare missionaries—because Heavenly Father says, "All my children need to be taught and given an opportunity to make the covenants that will save them." That's why we build temples—because Heavenly Father says, "All my children need an opportunity to make these covenants." So, we do vicarious work for those who have died. Heavenly Father wants every one of His children to have an opportunity. That's why we teach the gospel to our youth—so they will understand and make and keep the covenants that they need to receive eternal life.
13. My purpose today is to talk to you about why the Board of Education wanted an emphasis on family in your objectives. Why would we want you to talk about family or understand family when you're teaching a generation of unmarried people? We will review the theology of the family, threats to the family, and what we hope the rising generation—your students—will understand and do because of what you will teach them about the family.

The Theology of the Family

14. Let's talk, first of all, about the theology of the family and why seminary and institute teachers need to understand and teach this. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have a theology of the family. It's based on the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement. I don't know how well your students understand that. They may be able to recite the facts about the Creation, but do they know that this is a

theology of the family? The Creation of the earth was the creation of an earth where a family could live. It was a creation of a man and a woman who were the two essential halves of a family. It was not about a creation of a man and a woman who happened to have a family. It was intentional all along that Adam and Eve form an eternal family. It was part of the plan that these two be sealed and form an eternal family unit. That was the plan of happiness.

15. The Fall provided a way for the family to grow. Through the leadership of Eve and Adam, they chose to have a mortal experience. The Fall made it possible for Adam and Eve to have a family, to have sons and daughters. They needed to grow in numbers and grow in experience. The Fall provided that for the family.
16. The Atonement allows for the family to be sealed together eternally. It allows for families to have eternal growth and perfection. The plan of happiness and the plan of salvation was a plan created for families. I don't think very many of the rising generation understand that the main pillars of our theology are centered in the family.
17. When we speak of qualifying for the blessings of eternal life, we mean qualifying for the blessings of eternal families. This was Christ's doctrine, and this is some of what was restored that had been lost—understanding and clarity about family. Without these blessings, the earth is wasted. When did we learn that? Let's turn in our scriptures to Doctrine and Covenants 2. Section 2 in the Doctrine and Covenants is the only part that we have in the Doctrine and Covenants that Joseph Smith recorded from his visits with the angel Moroni. This is what section 2 says:
18. "Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.
19. "And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.
20. "If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming" (vv. 1–3).
21. How early did the Prophet Joseph Smith understand that this was going to be a theology about the family? He understood it when he was 17 and he began to be taught. What are the promises made to the fathers? Who were the fathers? The fathers were Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah—those ancient prophets who understood the doctrine of eternal families. The promises of the children made to the fathers was that their hearts would turn to their fathers. Their hearts

would be turned to the blessings of eternal life that they could have. This is talking about temple blessings—temple ordinances and covenants without which “the whole earth [is] utterly wasted.”

22. So, if we teach about what is in every section of the Doctrine and Covenants, if we teach so that our students know all the rivers in the Book of Mormon, if they can name all the prophets of the Old Testament, if they can describe to you the pioneer trek and the history of the Latter-day Saints in the restored times but they don't understand the promises made to the fathers and their part in it, it is “utterly wasted.” I would submit that all of our teaching is utterly wasted if they don't understand the context that all of this is taught within.
23. The proclamation on the family was written to reinforce that. It reinforces the family being central to the Creator's plan. Without the family, there is no plan; there is no reason for it. I'm not certain that everyone of the rising generation understands that with clarity.

Threats to the Family

24. Let's review some of the threats to the family. We have to know what we're fighting against. If our young people don't understand what they're fighting against, then they can't prepare for the battle, and neither can you. We see evidence all around us that the family is not important. It's becoming less important in all societies. We know that because marriage rates are declining, the age of marriage is rising, divorce rates are rising, and more than a fourth of all births are out of wedlock. We see lower birth rates, and they're dropping every year worldwide. Abortion is rising and becoming increasingly legal around the world. We see unequal relationships with men and women, and we see a lot of cultures that still practice abuse of some kind within family relationships. Many times a career is gaining importance over the family.
25. We know, from our studies here at Church headquarters concerning the rising generation, that our youth are increasingly less confident in the institution of families. They are less confident in their ability to form a successful eternal family. Because they are less confident in families, they're placing more and more value on education and less and less importance on forming an eternal family.
26. We know, from visiting with them and conducting studies, that they show a lack of faith in their ability to be successful in families. They don't see forming families as a faith-based work. For them, it's a selection process much like shopping. They don't see it as something that the Lord will bless them and help them to accomplish. They also distrust their own moral strength and the

moral strength of their peers. Because temptations are so fierce, they aren't sure they can be successful in keeping covenants. They also have insufficient and underdeveloped social skills, which are an impediment to them in forming eternal families.

27. They all have cell phones. I haven't been to a country in the world in the last three years where every young person doesn't have a cell phone. They all have a cell phone, and they all have an e-mail address. They're getting increasingly adept at talking to somebody 50 miles away and less and less able to carry on conversations with people in the same room. That makes it difficult for them to socialize with each other.
28. We also have the problem that we read about in Ephesians 6:12: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”
29. This is the world our young people are growing up in. They are in this world where there is “spiritual wickedness in high places.” Public policies are being made every day that are anti family, and the definition of family is changing legally around the world. Concerning spiritual wickedness, we could call attention to pornography, which is rampant. The use of pornography among our youth is growing. The new target audience for those who create pornography is young women. There are media messages everywhere that are anti family, and our young people are very connected with media—Internet, television, the things they receive on their phones, all electronic devices are delivering anti family messages to them every day. Increasingly, our youth are seeing no reason to form a family or get married in spite of all the teaching you give them. They are being desensitized about the need to form eternal families.
30. Let's read about how this is happening. Let's turn to Alma 30. This is Korihor. Let's put the family lens on this to see how this stacks up with what you're hearing today about family messages. Korihor, who in verse 12 was described as an anti-Christ, said in verses 13–14:
31. “O ye that are bound down under a foolish and a vain hope, why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things? Why do ye look for a Christ? For no man can know of anything which is to come.”
32. “Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers.”
33. This is what our rising generation is starting to think about families. Continuing in Alma:

34. “How do ye know of their surety? Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not see; therefore ye cannot know that there shall be a Christ.
35. “Ye look forward and say that ye see a remissions of your sins. But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so.
36. “And many more such things did he say unto them, telling them that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature” (vv. 15–17).
37. Have you heard that in the world’s messages? “You are the one who will get yourself ahead. It’s because of your skills and your intelligence that you will be successful.” That’s the media message young people are getting every day.
38. Another message: “Therefore every man prospered according to his genius” (v. 17). Get your education. Be the best. There are TV shows they are watching that are competitive shows—they are seeing American Idol, So You Think You Can Dance, lots of competition shows. The more of a genius you are, the more famous you will be. These types of shows are popular among our youth.
39. “And that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime” (v. 17). That’s what they’re hearing every day. “Live the life that’s going to make you happy.” That’s the media message that they are getting.
40. I’m finding verse 18 interesting: “Thus he did preach unto them, leading away the hearts of many, causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness, yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms.”
41. A lot of the anti family messages that you are hearing are targeting young women. Satan knows that he will never have a body; he will never have a family. He will target those young women who create the bodies for the future generations and who should teach the families. They don’t even know what they’re being taught in the messages. It’s just seeping in, almost through their pores. Because Satan can’t have it, he’s luring away many women, and also men, and they’re losing confidence in their ability to form eternal families.
42. Korihor was an anti-Christ. Anti-Christ is anti family. Any doctrine or principle our youth hear from the world that is anti family is also anti-Christ. It’s that clear.
- They need to know that if it’s anti family, it’s anti-Christ. An anti- Christ is anti family.
43. We are in danger of getting a generation like we see described in Mosiah 26, where many of the rising generation don’t believe in the traditions of their fathers, and they become a separate people as to their faith and remain so ever after. Despite all the money, all the effort you put in, they could be led away if they don’t understand their part in the plan.

Teaching the Rising Generation

44. Let’s go to the question “What is it we hope this rising generation will understand and do because of what you will teach them?” Teach so they don’t misunderstand that every doctrine, every principle, everything you’re teaching leads them to the fullness of the gospel. And the fullness of the gospel is found in the temples—in temple ordinances and covenants and their eternal role. That is the full gospel.
45. In the Church, a primary concern is to teach the saving principles of the gospel, and the saving principles are those that are the family principles, the principles that will teach them to form a family, to teach that family, and to prepare that family for ordinances and covenants. Then teach it to the next generation, and the next. Your students have that responsibility.
46. Let’s be very clear on key elements of doctrine. I hope every one of your classrooms has a copy of the proclamation on the family in it and that all of your students have a copy of the proclamation with them. Then, when you are teaching them, you can tie back teachings to key statements and phrases that are in the proclamation on the family. The proclamation is not a standalone lesson. If you’re teaching in the Old Testament, the proclamation should be a partner piece that they are circling and underlining and finding where the Old Testament families understood these principles. If you’re teaching in the Doctrine and Covenants, you can tie it back to the proclamation. This also applies to the Book of Mormon. If they have the proclamation with them in their scriptures, they will be learning and tying it together as you work.
47. President Hinckley said in 1995, when he read the proclamation on the family in a general Relief Society meeting and revealed it to the Church, that the proclamation was “a declaration and reaffirmation of standards, doctrines, and practices” that this Church has always had (“Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World,” Ensign, Nov. 1995, 100). This is not new doctrine from 1995. It was a reaffirmation of understanding that was there since Joseph Smith understood it at age 17.

48. One of those doctrines is the understanding of parents, sons, and daughters. President Spencer W. Kimball said this: “From the beginning, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints has emphasized family life. We have always understood that the foundations of the family, as an eternal unit, were laid even before this earth was created! Society without basic family life is without foundation and will disintegrate into nothingness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 3; or Ensign, Nov. 1980, 4).
49. Elder Robert D. Hales said this about marriage:
50. “The family is not an accident of mortality. It existed as an organizational unit in the heavens before the world was formed; historically, it started on earth with Adam and Eve, as recorded in Genesis. Adam and Eve were married and sealed for time and all eternity by the Lord, and as a result their family will exist eternally” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” in Dawn Hall Anderson, ed., *Clothed with Charity* [1997], 134). That’s very clear, isn’t it?
51. President Ezra Taft Benson said this:
52. “This order is ... described in modern revelation as an order of family government where a man and woman enter into a covenant with God—just as did Adam and Eve—to be sealed for eternity, to have posterity, and to do the will and work of God throughout their mortality. ...
53. “... This order of priesthood has been on the earth since the beginning, and it is the only means by which we can one day see the face of God and live. (See D&C 84:22.)” (“What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple,” Ensign, Aug. 1985, 9).
54. Elder David A. Bednar taught us in his wonderful message “Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan.” (I recommend this to you for your study; it is from the Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: Supporting the Family held February 11, 2006. There are other foundational messages there—one from President Thomas S. Monson, one from Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, and another one from Elder L. Tom Perry.)
55. Elder Bednar talked specifically about two important reasons why we have the family, why we have marriage. “Reason 1: The natures of male and female spirits complete and perfect each other, and therefore men and women are intended to progress together toward exaltation” (p. 3). Do your students understand that with clarity? “Reason 2: By divine design, both a man and a woman are needed to bring children into mortality and to provide the best setting for the rearing and nurturing of children” (p. 4). Wonderful principles taught there.
56. Students also need to understand that the command to “multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28) remains in force. It’s okay for them to bear children. Bearing children is a faith-based work. President Kimball said, “It is an act of extreme selfishness for a married couple to refuse to have children when they are able to do so” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1979, 6; or Ensign, May 1979, 6).
57. The media messages that are coming at your youth are antichildren. Motherhood and fatherhood are eternal roles and responsibilities. I don’t know if they understand that. Each carries the responsibility for either the male or the female half of the plan. They are preparing in this life for those eternal roles. They’re not just preparing their testimonies—they are preparing for eternal responsibilities.
58. What we’re really preparing them for is the blessings of Abraham. We can review that in Abraham 1 of the Pearl of Great Price. Let’s read this and ask ourselves some questions. (When I’m talking to young adults, I say, “How do we know Abraham was a young adult male?” It says that Abraham “saw that it was needful for [him] to obtain another place of residence” [v. 1]. So they can think of themselves: “It is needful for me to obtain another place of residence. I don’t need to live with my father forever.”)
59. In verse 2, Abraham said: “Finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers.” We often call Abraham the father, so who were Abraham’s fathers? Adam, Noah, Seth, and the ancient prophets; those were the fathers he knew about, and he knew about the plan and their responsibilities. What were the blessings? He wanted “the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers” (Abraham 1:2).
60. Where do we learn about these things in our day, and where do we receive these blessings? He wanted the blessings of the temple that were available to him so he could become “a rightful heir,” “a father of many nations.” That blessing only comes to those who have a temple sealing and marriage. You cannot be a father of many nations without a wife that you are sealed to. He could not hold the right belonging to the fathers without a wife who had the rights belonging to the mothers.

61. Abraham wanted and sought the temple blessings that we learn about in section 2 of the Doctrine and Covenants, that same priesthood. So, who were the mothers? Do your young women know who the mothers were? Do they know that their ancestral mothers were Eve and Sarah and Rebekah and those other important women? The scriptures call Eve “our glorious Mother Eve” (D&C 138:39). And why was she glorious? Because she understood her responsibility in the formation of an eternal family.
62. I love the story of Abraham and Sarah and of Isaac and Rebekah that is found in Genesis. If Abraham wanted these blessings, his wife was pretty important. Abraham and Sarah had one son—the golden son, Isaac. If Abraham wanted these blessings—to be the “father of many nations”—how important was Isaac’s wife? Isaac’s wife was pivotal in Abraham being able to receive his blessings. She was so important that he sent his servant on a mission to find the right girl—a girl who would keep her covenants, a girl who understood what it meant to form an eternal family and have those same blessings. (It’s a great study to just see what Rebekah’s qualities were. You can start in Genesis 24:15 and read through sometime with your students and learn what some of her qualities were. Ask: What do we learn about Rebekah? What was she like? What was her character that made her the kind of person to qualify to be the wife of the one golden child who was then going to pass on these blessings?)
63. In verse 60 we come to the point where Rebekah was blessed by her brothers. It says, “Be thou the mother of thousands of millions.” Where do you get those kinds of blessings? You get those in the temple. And Rebekah was blessed and wanted these blessings. So Rebekah left all her family and her former life. She wanted those blessings so much that she said, “I don’t need to wait. I will go now” (see Genesis 24:61). And she and Isaac formed an eternal family. They had two boys. One of their boys chose to marry out of the covenant.
64. We learn from Rebekah that she was weary of her life because of the daughters of Heth. Those were the women who were not in the covenant. This is in Genesis 27:46 where she said to Isaac, “I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?” Now, Rebekah gave up everything—she left her family and her homeland to go form an eternal family because she wanted these blessings. And of her two sons, she had one left; and of the daughters of the land, there was not one who could form an eternal marriage with her son. She needed to see that her righteous son got the blessings. Rebekah used her influence to see that the priesthood blessings and keys passed to the righteous son. It’s a perfect example of the man who has the keys and the woman who has the influence working together to ensure their blessings.
65. Now we had Isaac and Rebekah, who knew about the promises to “be ... the mother of thousands of millions” or the “father of many nations.” How important was the wife of Jacob? Very important. Because of Rebekah’s influence and Isaac’s priesthood keys, we have the twelve tribes of Israel, who now people the earth. That story of Isaac and Rebekah is pivotal. Everything depended on a man and a woman who understood their place in the plan and their responsibilities to form an eternal family, to bear children, and to teach them.
66. So, what I submit to you as one of your responsibilities—besides teaching those doctrines so your students don’t misunderstand—is send Isaac and Rebekah forth from every classroom. We need every one of your students to understand his or her role in this great partnership—that they are each an Isaac or a Rebekah. Then they will know with clarity what they have to do.

Live the Hope of Eternal Life

67. Next, I would have you live in your homes, in your families, in your marriages so your students have the hope of eternal life from watching you. Your objective is to live the kind of a home life that your students want to have—have that kind of a family. They won’t get that message from many other places. Live it and teach it with so much clarity that what you teach will cut through all the noise they are hearing and pierce their hearts and touch them. You don’t need to compete in volume; you don’t need to compete in the number of words; you just need to be very clear in your examples. You are the ideal for them.
68. Live in your home so that you’re brilliant in the basics, so that you’re intentional about your roles and responsibilities in the family. You think in terms of precision, not perfection. (Perfection is difficult to obtain in this life, but live your family life with precision.) If you have your goals and you’re precise in how you go about them in your homes, your students will learn from you. They learn that you pray, you study the scriptures together, you have family home evening together, you make a priority of mealtimes and teach your family during those times. You are constantly teaching your families the same things that you’re teaching your students. You speak respectfully of your marriage partners. Then from your example the rising generation will gain great hope and will understand—not just from the words you teach, but from the way you feel and emanate the spirit of family.

Review

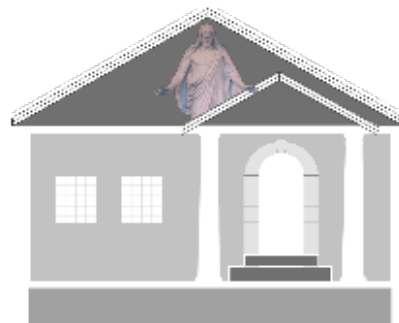
69. The seminary and institute objective is to prepare our youth for the blessings of eternal life. You are preparing your students for the temple; you are preparing them for eternal families, without which the earth is “utterly wasted.” There are many threats that are coming at the rising generation—threats to them forming an eternal family—and they are being hit with those and losing confidence in their ability to form eternal families. In a lot of ways they’re similar to Abraham, living in a land where there’s idolatry and wickedness, and they need to mentally take themselves out of that into the land where the Lord can bless them to receive the covenants.
70. Your role in this is to teach them so they don’t misunderstand, to be very clear on key points of doctrine, which you find in the proclamation on the family. This is prominent in your teaching, prominent in your classrooms, prominent in what they’re learning. You are preparing them for the blessings of Abraham in everything you are teaching. You are preparing them for the temple. You are seeking to send forth from every classroom an Isaac and a Rebekah. You’re living so they have confidence in you, and through your example they know they can form eternal families.
71. Oftentimes with young adults I’ll tell the story about the day my husband and I were married. We had three dollars. Even worldwide, that’s not very much money nowadays. It was a faith-based work when we got married. We didn’t get married because of money, or because our education was complete, or because we even had a place to live. We lived with Grandpa and took care of him for the first season of our marriage. We went to school and worked hard, but we entered that relationship as a faith-based work. We knew that we had made a covenant with the Lord and that He would bless us. It didn’t take money; it took faith. Those are messages they need to have and get confidence in because of you.
72. This generation will be called upon to defend the doctrine of the family as never before in the history of the world. If they don’t know it, they can’t defend it. They need to understand temples and priesthood. If you don’t know that they are meant to be fathers and mothers, then they won’t know that they are meant to be fathers and mothers. Your effort will be wasted.
73. President Kimball said this in 1980, so this is almost 30 years ago, and I find it prophetic and very applicable to us:
74. “Many of the social restraints which in the past have helped to reinforce and to shore up the family are dissolving and disappearing. The time will come when only those who believe deeply and actively in the family will be able to preserve their families in the midst of the gathering evil around us.
75. “... There are those who would define the family in such a nontraditional way that they would define it out of existence. ...
76. “We of all people, brothers and sisters, should not be taken in by the specious arguments that the family unit is somehow tied to a particular phase of development a moral society is going through. We are free to resist those moves which downplay the significance of the family and which play up the significance of selfish individualism. We know the family to be eternal. We know that when things go wrong in the family, things go wrong in every other institution in society” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 3–4; or Ensign, Nov. 1980, 4).
77. My brothers and sisters, my wonderful friends and partners in this work, “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ” and His full doctrine (2 Nephi 25:26), His doctrine which is based on the theology of the family. We are “not ashamed of the gospel of [Jesus] Christ” (Romans 1:16) or His doctrine. We are willing to defend it and teach it with clarity. And we know that as we do so we will have heavenly help. Our covenants make it possible for us to live with Heavenly Father eternally. That is our great blessing.
78. I leave with you my testimony that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true, that it was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. We have the fullness of the gospel this day. I bear you my testimony that we are sons and daughters of heavenly parents, who sent us forth to have this earthly experience to prepare us for the blessing of eternal families. I bear you my testimony of our Savior Jesus Christ, that through His Atonement we can become perfect and equal to our responsibilities in our earthly families, and that through His Atonement we have the promise of eternal life in families. I bear you my testimony of the power of the Holy Ghost to be with us and guide us in all of our teaching. And if we call upon that power, that power will pierce the hearts and souls and minds of this generation, which are hungry to learn the truth. They will recognize it because they did receive their first lessons in the world of spirits. It will ring true to them. We are led today by a living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. I also thank each of you for your dedicated service, your lives of faith and consecration, and your living examples of the truthfulness of this gospel. I pray the Lord’s blessings to be with you in all that you do, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

For QR Code, see page 16



Finding Safety in Counsel

President Henry B. Eyring
General Conference, May 1997



1. The Savior has always been the protector of those who would accept His protection. He has said more than once, “How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not” (3 Ne. 10:5).
2. The Lord expressed the same lament in our own dispensation after describing the many ways in which He calls us to safety:
3. “How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and by the voice of lightnings, and by the voice of tempests, and by the voice of earthquakes, and great hailstorms, and by the voice of famines and pestilences of every kind, and by the great sound of a trump, and by the voice of judgment, and by the voice of mercy all the day long, and by the voice of glory and honor and the riches of eternal life, and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but ye would not!” (D&C 43:25).
4. There seems to be no end to the Savior’s desire to lead us to safety. And there is constancy in the way He shows us the path. He calls by more than one means so that it will reach those willing to accept it. And those means always include sending the message by the mouths of His prophets whenever people have qualified to have the prophets of God among them. Those authorized servants are always charged with warning the people, telling them the way to safety.
5. When tensions ran high in northern Missouri in the fall of 1838, the Prophet Joseph Smith called for all the Saints to gather to Far West for protection. Many were on isolated farms or in scattered settlements. He specifically counseled Jacob Haun, founder of a small settlement called Haun’s Mill. A record of that time includes this: “Brother Joseph had sent word by Haun, who owned the mill, to inform the brethren who were living there to leave and come to Far West, but Mr. Haun did not deliver the message” (Philo Dibble, in “Early Scenes in Church History,” in *Four Faith Promoting Classics* [1968], 90).
6. Later, the Prophet Joseph recorded in his history: “Up to this day God had given me wisdom to save the people who took counsel. None had ever been killed who [had abided] by my counsel” (History of the Church, 5:137). Then the Prophet recorded the sad truth that innocent lives could have been saved at Haun’s Mill had his counsel been received and followed.
7. In our own time, we have been warned with counsel of where to find safety from sin and from sorrow. One of the keys to recognizing those warnings is that they are repeated. For instance, more than once in these general conferences, you have heard our prophet say that he would quote a preceding prophet and would therefore be a second witness and sometimes even a third. Each of us who has listened has heard President Kimball give counsel on the importance of a mother in the home and then heard President Benson quote him, and we have heard President Hinckley quote them both. The Apostle Paul wrote that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Cor. 13:1). One of the ways we may know that the warning is from the Lord is that the law of witnesses, authorized witnesses, has been invoked. When the words of prophets seem repetitive, that should rivet our attention and fill our hearts with gratitude to live in such a blessed time.
8. Looking for the path to safety in the counsel of prophets makes sense to those with strong faith. When a prophet speaks, those with little faith may think that they hear only a wise man giving good advice. Then if his counsel seems comfortable and reasonable, squaring with what they want to do, they take it. If it does not, they consider it either faulty advice or they see their circumstances as justifying their being an exception to the counsel. Those without faith may think that they hear only men seeking to exert influence for some selfish motive. They may mock and deride, as did a man named Korihor, with these words recorded in the Book of Mormon: “And thus ye lead away this people after the foolish traditions of your fathers, and according to your own desires; and ye keep them down, even as it were in bondage, that ye may glut yourselves with the labors of their hands, that they durst not look up with boldness, and that they durst not enjoy their rights and privileges” (Alma 30:27).

9. Korihor was arguing, as men and women have falsely argued from the beginning of time, that to take counsel from the servants of God is to surrender God-given rights of independence. But the argument is false because it misrepresents reality. When we reject the counsel which comes from God, we do not choose to be independent of outside influence. We choose another influence. We reject the protection of a perfectly loving, all-powerful, all-knowing Father in Heaven, whose whole purpose, as that of His Beloved Son, is to give us eternal life, to give us all that He has, and to bring us home again in families to the arms of His love. In rejecting His counsel, we choose the influence of another power, whose purpose is to make us miserable and whose motive is hatred. We have moral agency as a gift of God. Rather than the right to choose to be free of influence, it is the inalienable right to submit ourselves to whichever of those powers we choose.
10. Another fallacy is to believe that the choice to accept or not accept the counsel of prophets is no more than deciding whether to accept good advice and gain its benefits or to stay where we are. But the choice not to take prophetic counsel changes the very ground upon which we stand. It becomes more dangerous. The failure to take prophetic counsel lessens our power to take inspired counsel in the future. The best time to have decided to help Noah build the ark was the first time he asked. Each time he asked after that, each failure to respond would have lessened sensitivity to the Spirit. And so each time his request would have seemed more foolish, until the rain came. And then it was too late.
11. Every time in my life when I have chosen to delay following inspired counsel or decided that I was an exception, I came to know that I had put myself in harm's way. Every time that I have listened to the counsel of prophets, felt it confirmed in prayer, and then followed it, I have found that I moved toward safety. Along the path, I have found that the way had been prepared for me and the rough places made smooth. God led me to safety along a path which was prepared with loving care, sometimes prepared long before.
12. The account at the beginning of the Book of Mormon is of a prophet of God, Lehi. He was also the leader of a family. He was warned by God to take those he loved to safety. Lehi's experience is a type of what happens as God gives counsel through His servants. Of Lehi's family, only those who had faith and who themselves received confirming revelation saw both the danger and the way to safety. For those without faith, the move into the wilderness seemed not only foolish but dangerous. Like all prophets, Lehi, to his dying day, tried to show his family where safety would lie for them.
13. He knew that the Savior holds responsible those to whom He delegates priesthood keys. With those keys comes the power to give counsel that will show us the way to safety. Those with keys are responsible to warn even when their counsel might not be followed. Keys are delegated down a line which passes from the prophet through those responsible for ever smaller groups of members, closer and closer to families and to individuals. That is one of the ways by which the Lord makes a stake a place of safety. For instance, I have sat with my wife in a meeting of parents called by our bishop, our neighbor, so that he could warn us of spiritual dangers faced by our children.
14. I heard more than the voice of my wise friend. I heard a servant of Jesus Christ, with keys, meeting his responsibility to warn and passing to us, the parents, the responsibility to act. When we honor the keys of that priesthood channel by listening and giving heed, we tie ourselves to a lifeline which will not fail us in any storm.
15. Our Heavenly Father loves us. He sent His Only Begotten Son to be our Savior. He knew that in mortality we would be in grave danger, the worst of it from the temptations of a terrible adversary. That is one of the reasons why the Savior has provided priesthood keys so that those with ears to hear and faith to obey could go to places of safety.
16. Having listening ears requires humility. You remember the Lord's warning to Thomas B. Marsh. He was then the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The Lord knew that President Marsh and his brethren of the Twelve would be tested. He gave counsel about taking counsel. The Lord said, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers" (D&C 112:10). The Lord added a warning that is applicable to any who follow a living prophet: "Exalt not yourselves; rebel not against my servant Joseph; for verily I say unto you, I am with him, and my hand shall be over him; and the keys which I have given unto him, and also to youward, shall not be taken from him till I come" (D&C 112:15).
17. God offers us counsel not just for our own safety, but for the safety of His other children, whom we should love. There are few comforts so sweet as to know that we have been an instrument in the hands of God in leading someone else to safety. That blessing generally requires the faith to follow counsel when it is hard to do. An example from Church history is that of Reddick Newton Allred. He was one of the rescue party sent out by Brigham Young to bring in the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies.
18. When a terrible storm hit, Captain Grant, captain of the rescue party, decided to leave some of the wagons by the Sweetwater River as he pressed ahead to find the

handcart companies. With the blizzards howling and the weather becoming life-threatening, two of the men left behind at the Sweetwater decided that it was foolish to stay. They thought that either the handcart companies had wintered over somewhere or had perished. They decided to return to the Salt Lake Valley and tried to persuade everyone else to do the same.

19. Reddick Allred refused to budge. Brigham had sent them out and his priesthood leader had told him to wait there. The others took several wagons, all filled with needed supplies, and started back. Even more tragic, each wagon they met coming out from Salt Lake they turned back as well. They turned back 77 wagons, returning all the way to Little Mountain, where President Young learned what was happening and turned them around again. When the Willie Company was finally found, and had made that heartrending pull up and over Rocky Ridge, it was Reddick Allred and his wagons that waited for them. (See Rebecca Bartholomew and Leonard J. Arrington, *Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies* [1992], 29, 33–34.)
20. In this conference you will hear inspired counsel, for instance, to reach out to the new members of the Church. Those with the faith of Reddick Newton Allred will keep offering friendship even when it seems not to be needed or to have no effect. They will persist. When some new member reaches the point of spiritual exhaustion, they will be there offering kind words and fellowship. They will then feel the same divine approval Brother Allred felt when he saw those handcart pioneers struggling toward him, knowing he could offer them safety because he had followed counsel when it was hard to do.
21. While the record does not prove it, I am confident that Brother Allred prayed while he waited. I am confident that his prayers were answered. He then knew that the counsel to stand fast was from God. We must pray to know that. I promise you answers to such prayers of faith.
22. Sometimes we will receive counsel that we cannot understand or that seems not to apply to us, even after careful prayer and thought. Don't discard the counsel, but hold it close. If someone you trusted handed you what appeared to be nothing more than sand with the promise that it contained gold, you might wisely hold it in your hand awhile, shaking it gently. Every time I have done that with counsel from a prophet, after a time the gold flakes have begun to appear and I have been grateful.
23. We are blessed to live in a time when the priesthood keys are on the earth. We are blessed to know where to look and how to listen for the voice that will fulfill the promise of the Lord that He will gather us to safety. I

pray for you and for me that we will have humble hearts, that we will listen, that we will pray, that we will wait for the deliverance of the Lord which is sure to come as we are faithful. I testify that God, our Heavenly Father, lives and loves us. This is the Church of Jesus Christ. He lives and loves us. He is the head of the Church, and He is our Savior. I testify that Gordon B. Hinckley holds all the keys of the priesthood of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Teaching the Doctrine of the Family

https://video.byui.edu/media/Teaching+the+Doctrine+of+the+Family/0_y4h60767

Finding Safety in Council

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1997/04/finding-safety-in-council?lang=eng>



Follow the Living Prophet

President Ezra Taft Benson

Chapter 11, Teachings of the Presidents of the Church



1. One night when Ezra Taft Benson was 15 years old, he sat at the supper table with the rest of his family and listened to his father read a letter from President Joseph F. Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency. In part, the letter said: "We advise and urge the inauguration of a 'Home Evening' throughout the Church, at which time fathers and mothers may gather their boys and girls about them in the home and teach them the word of the Lord. ... If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them."
2. President Benson later recalled: "When [my father] concluded the letter, he said, 'The Presidency has spoken, and this is the word of the Lord to us!' From that time forward, we diligently held family home evenings in my boyhood home."
3. When President Benson had a family of his own, he and his wife carried on the tradition he had learned from his parents. He said, "I testify out of this experience [in my parents' home] and the experience of family nights in my own home that great spiritual blessings can result."
4. In 1947 the First Presidency directed Church members to renew efforts to hold home evenings. President Benson, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, emphasized that subject in a general conference address. He testified of the family as "a divine institution," and he reminded the Saints of the blessings that would come if they would follow the counsel of the prophet to strengthen their families and hold home evenings. He testified: "Our happiness here and hereafter is tied up with our successful discharge of this great responsibility. It merits, my brethren and sisters, our prayerful planning and attention, and I am confident in my own heart that great dividends will result, that great joy and satisfaction will come if we heed this as all other counsels given to us by the Presidency of the Church."
5. Having experienced blessings that result from heeding the counsel of the Lord's chosen servants, Ezra Taft Ben-

son frequently urged Latter-day Saints to keep their eyes on the living prophet. He boldly testified of the divine calling of each President of the Church with whom he served. When President Spencer W. Kimball, who had been ordained an Apostle on the same day as President Benson, delivered his first address as President of the Church to a group of Church leaders, President Benson "arose and with a voice filled with emotion, echoing the feeling of all present, said, in substance: 'President Kimball, through all the years that these meetings have been held, we have never heard such an address as you have just given. Truly, there is a prophet in Israel.'" And when that divine calling came to President Benson after the death of President Kimball, he accepted it with humility and determination. He said: "My wife, Flora, and I have prayed continually that President Kimball's days would be prolonged on this earth and another miracle performed on his behalf. Now that the Lord has spoken, we will do our best, under his guiding direction, to move the work forward in the earth."

6. Today, Latter-day Saints gather in the Conference Center and throughout the world to listen to the living prophet.

Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson

8. Learn to keep your eye on the prophet. He is the Lord's mouthpiece and the only man who can speak for the Lord today. Let his inspired counsel take precedence. Let his inspired words be a basis for evaluating the counsel of all lesser authorities. Then live close to the Spirit so you may know the truth of all things.
9. The Lord's mouthpiece and prophet on the face of the earth today received his authority through a line of prophets going back to Joseph Smith, who was ordained by Peter, James, and John, who were ordained by Christ, who was and is the head of the Church, the Creator of this earth, and the God before whom all men must stand accountable. This Church is not being directed by the wisdom of men. I know that. The power and influence of Almighty God are directing His Church. God knows all things, the end from the beginning, and no man becomes president of the church of Jesus Christ by ac-

cident, or remains there by chance, or is called home by happenstance.

10. The most important prophet, so far as we are concerned, is the one who is living in our day and age. This is the prophet who has today's instructions from God to us. God's revelation to Adam did not instruct Noah how to build the ark. Every generation has need of the ancient scripture, plus the current scripture from the living prophet. Therefore, the most crucial reading and pondering that you should do is of the latest inspired words from the Lord's mouthpiece. That is why it is essential that you have access to and carefully read his words.
11. Yes, we thank thee, O God, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days [see Hymns, no. 19].
12. Beware of those who would set up the dead prophets against the living prophets, for the living prophets always take precedence.
13. Each President has been uniquely selected for the time and situation which the world and Church needed. All were "men of the hour," as we have witnessed in President Spencer W. Kimball. Contemplate the miracle of that foreordination and preparation! Though called and given keys many years prior to the time that the mantle fell upon him, the President was always the right man in the right place for the times. This miracle alone is one of the marks of the divinity of the Church.
14. Let me ask, do we need a true prophet of the Lord on the earth today? Did the people in Noah's day need a prophet to warn them spiritually and temporally? Had a man refused to follow Noah, would he have been saved from the flood? Yet the Bible tells us that in the last days in which we live, the wickedness of the people will become comparable to the wickedness of the people in Noah's day when God cleansed the earth by flood [see Matthew 24:37–39]. Do you think we need a prophet today to warn us and prepare us for the cleansing that God promised will come, this time by fire?
15. If we want to know how well we stand with the Lord then let us ask ourselves how well we stand with His mortal captain—how close do our lives harmonize with the Lord's anointed—the living Prophet—President of the Church, and with the Quorum of the First Presidency.
16. A revealing characteristic of a true prophet is that he declares a message from God. He makes no apology for the message, nor does he fear for any social repercussions which may lead to derision and persecution.
17. Sometimes there are those who feel their earthly knowledge on a certain subject is superior to the heavenly knowledge which God gives to his prophet on the same subject. They feel the prophet must have the same earthly credentials or training which they have had before they will accept anything the prophet has to say that might contradict their earthly schooling. How much earthly schooling did Joseph Smith have? Yet he gave revelations on all kinds of subjects. ... We encourage earthly knowledge in many areas, but remember if there is ever a conflict between earthly knowledge and the words of the prophet, you stand with the prophet and you'll be blessed and time will show you have done the right thing.
18. The prophet does not have to say "Thus saith the Lord" to give us scripture.
19. Sometimes there are those who argue about words. They might say the prophet gave us counsel but that we are not obliged to follow it unless he says it is a commandment. But the Lord says of the Prophet, "Thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you." (D&C 21:4.)
20. The prophet tells us what we need to know, not always what we want to know.
21. "Thou has declared unto us hard things, more than we are able to bear," complained Nephi's brethren. But Nephi answered by saying, "The guilty taketh the truth to be hard, for it cutteth them to the very center." (1 Ne. 16:1–2.)
22. Said President Harold B. Lee:
23. "You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may conflict with your political views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. ... Your safety and ours depends upon whether or not we follow. ... Let's keep our eye on the President of the Church." (Conference Report, October 1970, p. 152–153.)
24. But it is the living prophet who really upsets the world. "Even in the Church," said President Kimball, "many are prone to garnish the sepulchres of yesterday's prophets and mentally stone the living ones." (Instructor, 95:257.)
25. Why? Because the living prophet gets at what we need to know now, and the world prefers that prophets either be dead or worry about their own affairs.
26. How we respond to the words of a living prophet when he tells us what we need to know, but would rather not hear, is a test of our faithfulness.
27. The learned may feel the prophet is only inspired when he agrees with them, otherwise the prophet is just giving

his opinion—speaking as a man. The rich may feel they have no need to take counsel of a lowly prophet.

28. The prophet will not necessarily be popular with the world or the worldly.
29. As a prophet reveals the truth it divides the people. The honest in heart heed his words but the unrighteous either ignore the prophet or fight him. When the prophet points out the sins of the world, the worldly either want to close the mouth of the prophet, or else act as if the prophet didn't exist, rather than repent of their sins. Popularity is never a test of truth. Many a prophet has been killed or cast out. As we come closer to the Lord's second coming you can expect that as the people of the world become more wicked, the prophet will be less popular with them.
30. To help you pass the crucial tests which lie ahead, I am going to give you...a grand key which, if you will honor, will crown you with God's glory and bring you out victorious in spite of Satan's fury.
31. As a Church we sing the hymn, "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" [Hymns, no. 19]. Here then is the grand key—Follow the prophet.
32. The prophet is the only man who speaks for the Lord in everything.
33. In section 132 verse 7 of the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord speaks of the prophet—the president—and says:
34. "There is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred."
35. Then in section 21 verses 4–6, the Lord states:
36. "Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;
37. "For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.
38. "For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you."
39. The prophet will never lead the Church astray.
40. President Wilford Woodruff stated: "I say to Israel, The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as president of the Church to lead you astray. It is not in the program. It is not in the mind of God" [see Teach-

ings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff (2004), 199].

President Marion G. Romney tells of this incident which happened to him:

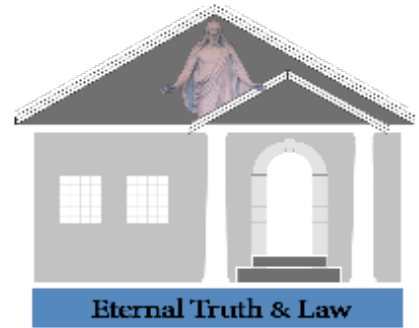
41. "I remember years ago when I was a bishop I had President Heber J. Grant talk to our ward. After the meeting I drove him home. ... Standing by me, he put his arm over my shoulder and said: 'My boy, you always keep your eye on the President of the Church and if he ever tells you to do anything, and it is wrong, and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it.' Then with a twinkle in his eye, he said, 'But you don't need to worry. The Lord will never let his mouthpiece lead the people astray.'" (Conference Report, October 1960, p. 78.)
42. The story is told how Brigham Young, driving through a community, saw a man building a house and simply told him to double the thickness of his walls. Accepting President Young as a prophet, the man changed his plans and doubled the walls. Shortly afterward a flood came through that town, resulting in much destruction, but this man's walls stood. While putting the roof on his house, he was heard singing, "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet!"
43. As members of the Church we have some close quarters to pass through if we are going to get home safely. We will be given a chance to choose between conflicting counsel given by some. That's why we must learn—and the sooner we learn, the better—to keep our eye on the Prophet, the President of the Church.

Follow the Living Prophet

<https://www.lds.org/manual/teachings-of-presidents-of-the-church-ezra-taft-benson/chapter-11-follow-the-living-prophet?lang=eng>

Introduction Additional Readings

Links and QR Codes



Elder Bruce C. Hafen "How We Lost The Plot"

<https://www.lds.org/liahona/2007/10/news-of-the-church/elder-hafen-addresses-family-congress?lang=eng>

“Revelation comes as words we feel more than hear.”
President Boyd K. Packer; “Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise,” October
1994 General Conference

FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY

Unit I Scriptures

We are children of Heavenly Parents

Genesis 1:27

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Romans 8:16-17

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Hebrews 12:9

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

D&C 76:23-24

23 For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

24 That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God.

God's plan of happiness is based on eternal truth and law

D&C 130:18-21

18 Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

19 And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.

20 There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

21 And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.

D&C 88:15-16, 24; 34-39

15 And the spirit and the body are the soul of man.

16 And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul.

21 And they who are not sanctified through the law which I have given unto you, even the law of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom.

22 For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.

23 And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory.

24 And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory; therefore he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore he must abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory. . .

34 And again, verily I say unto you, that which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same.

35 That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willeth to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still.

36 All kingdoms have a law given;

37 And there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or a lesser kingdom.

38 And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions.

39 All beings who abide not in those conditions are not justified.

D&C 93:24-36

24 And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come;

25 And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning.

26 The Spirit of truth is of God. I am the Spirit of truth, and John bore record of me, saying: He received a fulness of truth, yea, even of all truth;

27 And no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments.

28 He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.

29 Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.

30 All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence.

31 Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light.

32 And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation.

33 For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit

and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy;

34 And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy.

35 The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple.

36 The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.

37 Light and truth forsake that evil one.

38 Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.

39 And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the traditions of their fathers.

Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and the family is central to the Creator's plan

Matthew 19:3-6

3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

D&C 49:15-17

15 And again, verily I say unto you, that whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man.

16 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;

17 And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made.



Our Father in Heaven

The Teachings of Presidents of the Church

President Joseph Fielding Smith



1. President Joseph Fielding Smith marveled at the technological advances of his day. “Great progress has been made in mechanics, chemistry, physics, surgery, and other things,” he said. “Men have built great telescopes that have brought the hidden galaxies to view. They have, by the aid of the microscope, discovered vast worlds of microorganisms. They have discovered means to control disease. They have invented machines more sensitive than the human touch, more far-seeing than the human eye. They have controlled elements and made machinery that can move mountains, and many other things have they done too numerous to mention. Yes, this is a wonderful age.” However, he was concerned about another trend he saw in the world. He lamented: “All of these discoveries and inventions have not drawn men nearer to God! Nor created in their hearts humility and the spirit of repentance, but to the contrary, to their condemnation. Faith has not increased in the world, nor has righteousness, nor obedience to God.”
2. In contrast to the world’s growing indifference toward God, President Smith demonstrated a closeness to his Father in Heaven. One of his grandsons recalled: “My mother was an excellent cook, and my grandfather ate frequently at our house. Quite often he would be invited by my father to ask a blessing on the food. His prayers were always very personal—as if talking to a friend.”
3. I am very grateful for the first vision, in which the Father and the Son appeared to the youthful prophet and again restored to man the true knowledge of God.
4. It should be remembered that the entire Christian world in 1820 had lost the true doctrine concerning God. The simple truth which was understood so clearly by the apostles and saints of old had been lost in the mysteries of an apostate world. All the ancient prophets, and the apostles of Jesus Christ had a clear understanding that the Father and the Son were separate personages, as our scriptures so clearly teach. Through apostasy this knowledge was lost. God had become a mystery, and both Father and Son were considered to be one unknowable effusion of spirit, without body, parts, or passions. The coming of the Father and the Son placed on the earth a divine witness who was able by knowledge to restore to the world the true nature of God.
5. The [first] vision of Joseph Smith made it clear that the Father and the Son are separate personages, having bodies as tangible as the body of man. It was further revealed to him that the Holy Ghost is a personage of Spirit, distinct and separate from the personalities of the Father and the Son [see D&C 130:22]. This all-important truth staggered the world; yet, when we consider the clear expressions of holy writ, it is a most astounding and wonderful fact that man could have gone so far astray. The Savior said, “My Father is greater than I;” [John 14:28] and he invited his disciples, after his resurrection, to handle him and see that it was he, for, said he, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” [Luke 24:39.] The apostles clearly understood the distinct entities of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to which they constantly refer in their epistles; and Paul informed the Corinthians of the fact that when all things are subjected to the Father, “then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” [1 Corinthians 15:28.]
6. Joseph Smith beheld the Father and the Son; therefore he could testify with personal knowledge that the scriptures were true wherein we read: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” [Genesis 1:27.] This was to be understood literally, and not in some mystical or figurative sense.
7. One of our revelations tells us that if we are to be glorified in Christ, as he is in the Father, we must understand and know both how to worship and what we worship. (See D&C 93:19–20.)
8. It is my desire to remind you of the nature and kind of being that God is, so that you may worship him in spirit and in truth and thereby gain all of the blessings of his gospel.

9. We know that God is known only by revelation, that he stands revealed or remains forever unknown. We must go to the scriptures—not to the scientists or philosophers—if we are to learn the truth about Deity.
10. Indeed, John's great prophecy about the restoration of the gospel by an angel who should fly in the midst of heaven says that it was to occur so that men could come to a knowledge of the true God and be taught: "Fear God, and give glory to him ... and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Rev. 14:7.) In other words, beginning with the restoration of the gospel in this dispensation, men once again would be called upon to worship and serve their Creator rather than the false concepts of Deity that prevail in the world. In every age the Lord's prophets have been called upon to combat false worship and proclaim the truth about God. In ancient Israel there were those who worshiped images and pagan gods, and Isaiah asked: "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?"
11. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding." (Isa. 40:18, 28.) Much of the world today does not have this knowledge of God, and even in [the Church] there are those who have not perfected their understanding of that glorious being who is our Eternal Father. To those without this knowledge we might well say: "Why dost thou limit the glory of God? Or why should ye suppose that he is less than he is? Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, is infinite and eternal; that he has all power, all might, and all dominion; that he knows all things, and that all things are present before his face?"
12. In section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which directed the Prophet Joseph Smith to organize the Church again in this dispensation, we have a revealed summary of some of the basic doctrines of salvation. As to Deity the revelation says: "... there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them." (D&C 20:17.)
13. God is our Father; he is the being in whose image man is created. He has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's (D&C 130:22), and he is the literal and personal father of the spirits of all men. He is omnipotent and omniscient; he has all power and all wisdom; and his perfections consist in the possession of all knowledge, all faith or power, all justice, all judgment, all mercy, all truth, and the fullness of all godly attributes. If we are to have that perfect faith by which we can lay hold upon eternal life, we must believe in God as the possessor of the fullness of all these characteristics and attributes. I say also that he is an infinite and eternal being, and as an unchangeable being, he possesses these perfected powers and attributes from everlasting to everlasting, which means from eternity to eternity.
14. We know that our Heavenly Father is a glorified, exalted personage who has all power, all might, and all dominion, and that he knows all things. We testify that he, through his Only Begotten Son, is the Creator of this earth and of worlds without number.
15. We are the spirit children of God our Heavenly Father. We are members of his family. We dwelt with him for long ages in our premortal life. He ordained a plan of progression and salvation which would enable us, if faithful and true in all things, to advance and progress until we become like him.
16. We are taught in the Scriptures that God is literally, and not in a figurative sense, our very eternal Father. The words of our Redeemer spoken to Mary near the tomb from which he had risen and gained the victory over death, are most sublime and filled with glorious meaning: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." [John 20:17.] In these words the truth of the Fatherhood of God is emphatically pronounced by his only begotten Son, who declares that he is our Brother and that we have the same eternal Father.
17. I am grateful that the knowledge of God and his laws has been restored in our day and that we who are members of the Church know he is a personal being and not, as some sectarians have said, "a congeries [a disorderly collection] of laws floating like a fog in the universe." I am grateful that we know he is our Father in heaven, the Father of our spirits, and that he ordained the laws whereby we can advance and progress until we become like him. And I am grateful that we know he is an infinite and eternal being who knows all things and has all power and whose progression consists not in gaining more knowledge or power, not in further perfecting his godly attributes, but in the increase and multiplying of his kingdoms.
18. There comes to my mind an expression in the Pearl of Great Price, in the vision of Moses, which was given at a time when Moses was caught up into an exceeding high mountain and saw God face to face and talked with him. The Lord showed unto Moses the "workmanship of his hands," and Moses beheld the world, and all the children of men to the latest generations. [See Moses 1:1–8, 27–29.]

19. And the Lord said to Moses:
20. “For behold there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man, but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them.
21. “And it came to pass that Moses spake unto the Lord, saying: Be merciful unto thy servant, O God, and tell me concerning this earth and the inhabitants thereof, and also the heavens, and then thy servant will be content.
22. “And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying: The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine.” [Moses 1:35–37.]
23. The thought comes to mind that notwithstanding the countless number of worlds and the great magnitude of many of them, they are a means to an end, and not the end itself. The Father is creating worlds for the purpose of peopling them—placing upon them his sons and his daughters. We are informed in section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, that by and through the Son of God, the “worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God.” [D&C 76:24.]
24. We learn from these scriptures from which I have read and from other revelations from the Lord, that man is the most important of all our Father’s creations. In the same vision given to Moses, the Father said: “And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words. For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” [Moses 1:38–39.]
25. From this, and other scripture, I say, we learn that the great work of the Father is to bring to pass the salvation of his children giving unto each that reward which each merits according to his works. I feel most assuredly that our Father in heaven is far more interested in a soul—one of his children—than it is possible for an earthly father to be in one of his children. His love for us is greater than can be the love of an earthly parent for his offspring.
26. Moses, here pictured overlooking the promised land, received a vision in which he learned of God’s work and glory.
27. We are informed that when the Lord spoke to Enoch and showed to him the nations of the earth and explained to him the nature of the punishment that should befall them for their transgressions of his commandments, that the Lord wept and showed his sorrow in tears for their disobedience. Because of this, Enoch marveled and thought it strange that the Lord could weep.
28. Here is the passage:
29. “And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains?
30. “And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy and from all eternity to all eternity?
31. “And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still; and yet thou art there, and thy bosom is there and also thou art merciful and kind forever.” [See Moses 7:28–30.]
32. And the Lord answered: “Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency;
33. “And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should choose me, their Father; but behold they are without affection, and they hate their own blood.” [Moses 7:32–33.] These are reasons why the Lord wept and why the heavens wept.
34. I was asked by a brother one time if a man could be perfectly happy in the celestial kingdom if one of his children was not permitted to enter there. I told him that I supposed that any man who was so unfortunate as to have one of his children barred from the celestial kingdom would, of course, have feelings of sorrow because of that condition; and that is just the position our Father in heaven is in. Not all of his children are worthy of celestial glory, and many are forced to suffer his wrath because of their transgressions, and this causes the Father and the whole heavens to have sorrow and to weep. The Lord works in accordance with natural law. Man must be redeemed according to law and his reward must be based on the law of justice. Because of this the Lord will not give unto men that which they do not merit, but shall reward all men according to their works.
35. I am satisfied that our Father in heaven would, if it were possible, save all men and give unto them celestial glory, even the fullness of exaltation. But, he has given unto man his agency and man is under the necessity of

obeying the truth according to that which is revealed in order to obtain the exaltation of the righteous.

36. When Adam was in the Garden of Eden he was in the presence of God, our Father. After he was driven out of the Garden of Eden the scene changed. Adam was banished because of his transgression from the presence of the Father. The scriptures say he became spiritually dead—that is, he was shut out from the presence of God.
37. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he received from his Father the power to ransom men from the spiritual and temporal death brought into the world by the fall of Adam.
38. There was only one way of redemption, one way in which reparation could be made and the body restored again to the spirit; that was by an infinite atonement, and it had to be made by an infinite being, someone not subject to death and yet someone who had the power to die and who also had power over death. And so, our Father in heaven sent us his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world with life in himself. And because he [Jesus Christ] had a mother who had blood in her veins, he had the power to die. He could yield up his body to death and then take it again. Let me read his own words: “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.
39. “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” (John 10:17–18.)
40. It was never the intention of our Father in heaven to leave men to grope and feel their way in darkness and that without any light to guide them, and expect them under such conditions to find their way back into his kingdom and into his holy presence. That is not the way of the Lord. All down the ages from the beginning our Father in heaven has shown his kindness for his children and has been willing to give them direction. From the earliest times the heavens have been opened, the Lord has sent messengers from his presence to divinely appointed servants, men holding the authority of the priesthood who have been commissioned to teach the principles of the Gospel, to warn the people and teach them righteousness; and these men have received this knowledge, this inspiration and guidance from these messengers from the presence of God. This is true of our own dispensation. There is no need for men to shut their eyes and feel that there is no light only as they may depend upon their reason, for the Lord has always been willing to lead and direct and show the way. He has sent, as I say, messengers from his presence. He has sent revelation. He has commanded that his word be written, that it be published, so that all the people might know it.

Our Father in Heaven

<https://www.lds.org/manual/teachings-of-presidents-of-the-church-joseph-fielding-smith/chapter-1-our-father-in-heaven?lang=eng>



What is Truth

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

CES Devotionals, January 2013



1. My beloved brothers and sisters, my dear young friends, I am grateful for the privilege to be with you today. It always lifts my spirits to be surrounded by the young adults of the Church, and you inspire me to declare, “Let Zion in her beauty rise.” As you are living all around the world, you represent in a beautiful way the future and strength of the Church. Because of your righteous desires and your commitment to follow the Savior, the future of this Church looks bright.
2. I bring you the love and blessing of President Thomas S. Monson. The First Presidency prays for you often. We always ask the Lord to bless, keep, and guide you.

The Blind Men and the Elephant

3. Well over one hundred years ago, an American poet put to rhyme an ancient parable. The first verse of the poem speaks about:
4. Six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.
5. In the poem each of the six travelers takes hold of a different part of the elephant and then describes to the others what he has discovered.
6. One of the men finds the elephant’s leg and describes it as being round and rough like a tree. Another feels the tusk and describes the elephant as a spear. A third grabs the tail and insists that an elephant is like a rope. A fourth discovers the trunk and insists that the elephant is like a large snake. Each is describing truth.
7. And because his truth comes from personal experience, each insists that he knows what he knows. The poem concludes:
8. And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong.
9. We look at this story from a distance and smile. After all, we know what an elephant looks like. We have read about them and watched them on film, and many of us have even seen one with our own eyes. We believe we know the truth of what an elephant is. That someone could make a judgment based on one aspect of truth and apply it to the whole seems absurd or even unbelievable. On the other hand, can’t we recognize ourselves in these six blind men? Have we ever been guilty of the same pattern of thought?
10. I suppose the reason this story has remained so popular in so many cultures and over so many years is because of its universal application. The Apostle Paul said that in this world the light is dim and we see only part of the truth as though we are looking “through a glass, darkly.” And yet it seems to be part of our nature as human beings to make assumptions about people, politics, and piety based on our incomplete and often misleading experience.
11. I am reminded of a story about a couple who had been married for 60 years. They had rarely argued during that time, and their days together passed in happiness and contentment. They shared everything and had no secrets between them—except one. The wife had a box that she kept at the top of a sideboard, and she told her husband when they were married that he should never look inside.
12. As the decades passed, the moment came that her husband took the box down and asked if he could finally know what it contained. The wife consented, and he opened it to discover two doilies and \$25,000. When he asked his wife what this meant, she responded, “When we were married, my mother told me that whenever I was angry with you or whenever you said or did something I didn’t like, I should knit a small doily and then talk things through with you.”
13. The husband was moved to tears by this sweet story. He

marveled that during 60 years of marriage he had only disturbed his wife enough for her to knit two doilies. Feeling extremely good about himself, he took his wife's hand and said, "That explains the doilies, but what about the \$25,000?"

14. His wife smiled sweetly and said, "That's the money I got from selling all the doilies I've knitted over the years."
15. Not only does this story teach an interesting way to deal with disagreements in marriage, but it also illustrates the folly of jumping to conclusions based on limited information.
16. So often the "truths" we tell ourselves are merely fragments of the truth, and sometimes they're not really the truth at all.
17. Today I would like to speak of truth. As I do, I invite you to ponder a few important questions.
18. The first question is "What is truth?"
19. The second, "Is it really possible to know the truth?"
20. And third, "How should we react to things that contradict truths which we have learned previously?"

What is Truth?

21. What is truth? During the closing hours of His life, the Savior was brought before Pontius Pilate. The elders of the Jews had accused Jesus of sedition and treason against Rome and insisted that He be put to death.
22. When Pilate came face to face with the Man of Galilee, he asked, "Are you a king?"
23. Jesus replied, "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."
24. I don't know what kind of man Pilate was, nor do I know what he was thinking. However, I suspect that he was well educated and had seen much of the known world.
25. I sense a certain weary cynicism in Pilate's reply. I hear in his words the voice of a man who may once have been an idealist but now—after a great deal of life experience—seems a little hardened, even tired.
26. I don't believe Pilate was encouraging a dialogue when he responded with three simple words: "What is truth?"
27. To amplify, I wonder if what he really was asking was "How can anyone possibly know the truth?"
28. And that is a question for all time and for all people.

Can Anyone Know the Truth?

29. Now, can anyone know the truth? Some of the greatest minds that have ever lived on this earth have attempted to answer that question. The elusive nature of truth has been a favorite theme of history's great poets and storytellers. Shakespeare seemed especially intrigued with it. The next time you read one of Shakespeare's tragedies, notice how often the plot turns on a misunderstanding of an important truth.
30. Now, never in the history of the world have we had easier access to more information—some of it true, some of it false, and much of it partially true.
31. Consequently, never in the history of the world has it been more important to learn how to correctly discern between truth and error.
32. Part of our problem in the quest for truth is that human wisdom has disappointed us so often. We have so many examples of things that mankind once "knew" were true but have since been proven false.
33. For example, in spite of one-time overwhelming consensus, the earth isn't flat. The stars don't revolve around the earth. Eating a tomato will not cause instant death. And, of course, man actually can fly—even break the sound barrier.
34. The scriptures are filled with stories of men and women who misinterpreted "truth."
35. In the Old Testament, Balaam could not resist the "wages of unrighteousness"⁵ offered him by the Moabites. So he convinced himself to believe a new truth and helped the Moabites get the Israelites to curse themselves through immorality and disobedience.
36. The apostate Korihor, after leading many away from the truth, confessed that the devil had deceived him to the point where he actually believed that what he was saying was the truth.
37. In the Book of Mormon, both the Nephites as well as the Lamanites created their own "truths" about each other. The Nephites' "truth" about the Lamanites was that they "were a wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people,"⁸ never able to accept the gospel. The Lamanites' "truth" about the Nephites was that Nephi had stolen his brother's birthright and that Nephi's descendants were liars who continued to rob the Lamanites of what was rightfully theirs. These "truths" fed their hatred for one another until it finally consumed them all.

38. Needless to say, there are many examples in the Book of Mormon that contradict both of these stereotypes. Nevertheless, the Nephites and Lamanites believed these “truths” that shaped the destiny of this once-mighty and beautiful people.

Human Nature and Truth

39. In some way we are all susceptible to such strange thinking.
40. The “truths” we cling to shape the quality of our societies as well as our individual characters. All too often these “truths” are based on incomplete and inaccurate evidence, and at times they serve very selfish motives.
41. Part of the reason for poor judgment comes from the tendency of mankind to blur the line between belief and truth. We too often confuse belief with truth, thinking that because something makes sense or is convenient, it must be true. Conversely, we sometimes don’t believe truth or reject it—because it would require us to change or admit that we were wrong. Often, truth is rejected because it doesn’t appear to be consistent with previous experiences.
42. When the opinions or “truths” of others contradict our own, instead of considering the possibility that there could be information that might be helpful and augment or complement what we know, we often jump to conclusions or make assumptions that the other person is misinformed, mentally challenged, or even intentionally trying to deceive.
43. Unfortunately, this tendency can spread to all areas of our lives—from sports to family relationships and from religion to politics.

Ignaz Semmelweis

44. A tragic example of this tendency is the story of Ignaz Semmelweis, a Hungarian physician who practiced medicine during the mid-19th century. Early in his career, Dr. Semmelweis learned that 10 percent of the women who came to his clinic died of childbed fever, while the death rate at a nearby clinic was less than 4 percent. He was determined to find out why.
45. After investigating the two clinics, Dr. Semmelweis concluded that the only significant difference was that his was a teaching clinic where corpses were examined. He observed doctors who went directly from performing autopsies to delivering babies. He concluded that somehow the corpses had contaminated their hands and caused the deadly fevers.
46. When he began to recommend that doctors scrub their

hands with a chlorinated lime solution, he was met with indifference and even scorn. His conclusions contradicted the “truths” of other doctors. Some of his colleagues even believed that it was absurd to think that a doctor’s hand could be impure or cause sickness.

47. But Semmelweis insisted, and he made it a policy for doctors in his clinic to wash their hands before delivering babies. As a consequence, the death rate promptly dropped by 90 percent. Semmelweis felt vindicated and was certain that this practice would now be adopted throughout the medical community. But he was wrong. Even his dramatic results were not enough to change the minds of many doctors of the day.

Is it Possible to Know the Truth?

48. The thing about truth is that it exists beyond belief. It is true even if nobody believes it.
49. We can say west is north and north is west all day long and even believe it with all our heart, but if, for example, we want to fly from Quito, Ecuador, to New York City in the United States, there is only one direction that will lead us there, and that is north—west just won’t do.
50. Of course, this is just a simple aviation analogy. However, there is indeed such a thing as absolute truth—unassailable, unchangeable truth.
51. This truth is different from belief. It is different from hope. Absolute truth is not dependent upon public opinion or popularity. Polls cannot sway it. Not even the inexhaustible authority of celebrity endorsement can change it.
52. So how can we find truth?
53. I believe that our Father in Heaven is pleased with His children when they use their talents and mental faculties to earnestly discover truth. Over the centuries many wise men and women—through logic, reason, scientific inquiry, and, yes, through inspiration—have discovered truth. These discoveries have enriched mankind, improved our lives, and inspired joy, wonder, and awe.
54. Even so, the things we once thought we knew are continually being enhanced, modified, or even contradicted by enterprising scholars who seek to understand truth.
55. As we all know, it is difficult enough to sort out the truth from our own experiences. To make matters worse, we have an adversary, “the devil, [who] as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”
56. Satan is the great deceiver, “the accuser of [the] brethren,” the father of all lies, who continually seeks to

deceive that he might overthrow us.

57. The adversary has many cunning strategies for keeping mortals from the truth. He offers the belief that truth is relative; appealing to our sense of tolerance and fairness, he keeps the real truth hidden by claiming that one person's "truth" is as valid as any other.
58. Some he entices to believe that there is an absolute truth out there somewhere but that it is impossible for anyone to know it.
59. For those who already embrace the truth, his primary strategy is to spread the seeds of doubt. For example, he has caused many members of the Church to stumble when they discover information about the Church that seems to contradict what they had learned previously.
60. If you experience such a moment, remember that in this age of information there are many who create doubt about anything and everything, at any time and every place.
61. You will find even those who still claim that they have evidence that the earth is flat, that the moon is a hologram, and that certain movie stars are really aliens from another planet. And it is always good to keep in mind, just because something is printed on paper, appears on the Internet, is frequently repeated, or has a powerful group of followers doesn't make it true.
62. Sometimes untrue claims or information are presented in such a way that they appear quite credible. However, when you are confronted with information that is in conflict with the revealed word of God, remember that the blind men in the parable of the elephant would never be able to accurately describe the full truth.
63. We simply don't know all things—we can't see everything. What may seem contradictory now may be perfectly understandable as we search for and receive more trustworthy information. Because we see through a glass darkly, we have to trust the Lord, who sees all things clearly.
64. Yes, our world is full of confusion. But eventually all of our questions will be answered. All of our doubts will be replaced by certainty. And that is because there is one source of truth that is complete, correct, and incorruptible. That source is our infinitely wise and all-knowing Heavenly Father. He knows truth as it was, as it is, and as it yet will be. "He comprehendeth all things, ... and he is above all things, ... and all things are by him, and of him."
65. Our loving Heavenly Father offers His truth to us, His mortal children.

66. Now, what is this truth?

67. It is His gospel. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life."
68. If we will only have enough courage and faith to walk in His path, it will lead us to peace of heart and mind, to lasting meaning in life, to happiness in this world, and to joy in the world to come. The Savior is "not far from every one of us." We have His promise that if we seek Him diligently, we will find Him.

Our Obligation to Seek for Truth

69. But how can we know that this "truth" is different from any other? How can we trust this "truth"?
70. The invitation to trust the Lord does not relieve us from the responsibility to know for ourselves. This is more than an opportunity; it is an obligation—and it is one of the reasons we were sent to this earth.
71. Latter-day Saints are not asked to blindly accept everything they hear. We are encouraged to think and discover truth for ourselves. We are expected to ponder, to search, to evaluate, and thereby to come to a personal knowledge of the truth.
72. Brigham Young said: "I am ... afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security. ... Let every man and woman know, by the whispering of the Spirit of God to themselves, whether their leaders are walking in the path the Lord dictates."
73. We seek for truth wherever we may find it. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "Mormonism is truth. ... The first and fundamental principle of our holy religion is, that we believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or ... being ... prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men."
74. Yes, we do have the fulness of the everlasting gospel, but that does not mean that we know everything. In fact, one principle of the restored gospel is our belief that God "will yet reveal many great and important things."
75. The Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ came about because of a young man with a humble heart and a keen mind seeking for truth. Joseph studied and then acted accordingly. He discovered that if a man lacks wisdom, he can ask of God and the truth really will be given unto him.
76. The great miracle of the Restoration was not just that it

corrected false ideas and corrupt doctrines—though it certainly did that—but that it flung open the curtains of heaven and initiated a steady downpour of new light and knowledge that has continued to this day.

77. So we continually seek truth from all good books and other wholesome sources. “If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.” In this manner we can resist the deceit of the evil one. In this manner we learn the truth “precept upon precept; line upon line.” And we will learn that intelligence cleaves unto intelligence, and wisdom receives wisdom, and truth embraces truth.
78. My young friends, as you accept the responsibility to seek after truth with an open mind and a humble heart, you will become more tolerant of others, more open to listen, more prepared to understand, more inclined to build up instead of tearing down, and more willing to go where the Lord wants you to go.

The Holy Ghost - Our Guide to All Truth

79. Just think about it. You actually have a powerful companion and trustworthy guide in this ongoing search for truth. Who is it? It is the Holy Ghost. Our Heavenly Father knew how difficult it would be for us to sift through all the competing noise and discover truth during our mortality. He knew we would see only a portion of the truth, and He knew that Satan would try to deceive us. So He gave us the heavenly gift of the Holy Ghost to illuminate our minds, teach us, and testify to us of the truth.
80. The Holy Ghost is a revelator. He is the Comforter, who teaches us “the truth of all things; ... [who] knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment.”
81. The Holy Ghost is a certain and safe guide to assist all mortals who seek God as they navigate the often troubling waters of confusion and contradiction.
82. The Witness of truth from the Holy Ghost is available to all, everywhere, all around the globe. All who seek to know the truth, who study it out in their minds, and who “ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, [will know] the truth ... by the power of the Holy Ghost.”
83. And there is the additional, unspeakable Gift of the Holy Ghost available to all who qualify themselves through baptism and by living worthy of His constant companionship.
84. Yes, your loving Father in Heaven would never leave you alone in this mortality to wander in the dark. You need not be deceived. You can overcome the darkness of this world and discover divine truth.
85. Some, however, do not seek for truth so much as they strive for contention. They do not sincerely seek to learn; rather, they desire to dispute, to show off their supposed learning and thus cause contention. They ignore or reject the counsel of the Apostle Paul to Timothy: “Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do [generate contention].”
86. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we know that such contention is completely inconsistent with the Spirit upon whom we depend in our search for truth. As the Savior warned the Nephites, “For verily ... I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention.”
87. If you follow the Spirit, your personal search for the truth inevitably leads you to the Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, for He is “the way, the truth, and the life.” This may not be the most convenient way; it will probably also be the road less traveled, and it will be the path with mountains to climb, swift rivers to cross, but it will be His way—the Savior’s redeeming way.
88. I add my witness as an Apostle of the Lord, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. I know this with all my heart and mind. I know this by the witness and power of the Holy Ghost.
89. I ask you to spare no efforts in your search to know this truth for yourself—because this truth will make you free.
90. My dear young friends, you are the hope of Israel. We love you. The Lord knows you; He loves you. The Lord has great confidence in you. He knows your successes, and He is mindful of your challenges and questions in life.
91. It is my prayer that you will seek the truth earnestly and unceasingly, that you will yearn to drink from the fount of all truth, whose waters are pure and sweet, “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”
92. I bless you with confidence in the Lord and a deep-rooted desire to rightfully discern truth from error—now and throughout your life. This is my prayer and my blessing, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

What Is truth?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=sgRR9WZPp5c&app=desktop>



Why Marriage, Why Family

Elder D. Todd Christofferson

General Conference, April 2015



1. Above the Great West Door of the renowned Westminster Abbey in London, England, stand the statues of 10 Christian martyrs of the 20th century. Included among them is Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a brilliant German theologian born in 1906.¹ Bonhoeffer became a vocal critic of the Nazi dictatorship and its treatment of Jews and others. He was imprisoned for his active opposition and finally executed in a concentration camp. Bonhoeffer was a prolific writer, and some of his best-known pieces are letters that sympathetic guards helped him smuggle out of prison, later published as *Letters and Papers from Prison*.
2. One of those letters was to his niece before her wedding. It included these significant insights: “Marriage is more than your love for each other. ... In your love you see only your two selves in the world, but in marriage you are a link in the chain of the generations, which God causes to come and to pass away to his glory, and calls into his kingdom. In your love you see only the heaven of your own happiness, but in marriage you are placed at a post of responsibility towards the world and mankind. Your love is your own private possession, but marriage is more than something personal—it is a status, an office. Just as it is the crown, and not merely the will to rule, that makes the king, so it is marriage, and not merely your love for each other, that joins you together in the sight of God and man. ... So love comes from you, but marriage from above, from God.”²
3. In what way does marriage between a man and a woman transcend their love for one another and their own happiness to become “a post of responsibility towards the world and mankind”? In what sense does it come “from above, from God”? To understand, we have to go back to the beginning.
4. Prophets have revealed that we first existed as intelligences and that we were given form, or spirit bodies, by God, thus becoming His spirit children—sons and daughters of heavenly parents.³ There came a time in this premortal existence of spirits when, in furtherance of His desire that we “could have a privilege to advance like himself,”⁴ our Heavenly Father prepared an enabling plan. In the scriptures it is given various names, including “the plan of salvation,”⁵ “the great plan of happiness,”⁶ and “the plan of redemption.”⁷ The two principal purposes of the plan were explained to Abraham in these words:
5. “And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these [spirits] may dwell; “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; “And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; ... and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.”⁸
6. Thanks to our Heavenly Father, we had already become spirit beings. Now He was offering us a path to complete or perfect that being. The addition of the physical element is essential to the fulness of being and glory that God Himself enjoys. If, while with God in the premortal spirit world, we would agree to participate in His plan—or in other words “keep [our] first estate”—we would “be added upon” with a physical body as we came to dwell on the earth that He created for us.
7. If, then in the course of our mortal experience, we chose to “do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God [should] command [us],” we would have kept our “second estate.” This means that by our choices we would demonstrate to God (and to ourselves) our commitment and capacity to live His celestial law while outside His presence and in a physical body with all its powers, appetites, and passions. Could we bridle the flesh so that it became the instrument rather than the master of the spirit? Could we be trusted both in time and eternity with godly powers, including power to create life? Would we individually overcome evil? Those who did would “have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever”—a very significant aspect of that glory being a resurrected, immortal, and glorified physical body.⁹ No wonder we “shouted for joy” at these magnificent possibilities and promises.¹⁰

8. At least four things are needed for the success of this divine plan:
9. First was the Creation of the earth as our dwelling place. Whatever the details of the creation process, we know that it was not accidental but that it was directed by God the Father and implemented by Jesus Christ—"all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."¹¹
10. Second is the condition of mortality. Adam and Eve acted for all who had chosen to participate in the Father's great plan of happiness.¹² Their Fall created the conditions needed for our physical birth and for mortal experience and learning outside the presence of God. With the Fall came an awareness of good and evil and the God-given power to choose.¹³ Finally, the Fall brought about physical death needed to make our time in mortality temporary so that we would not live forever in our sins.¹⁴
11. Third is redemption from the Fall. We see the role of death in our Heavenly Father's plan, but that plan would become void without some way to overcome death in the end, both physical and spiritual. Thus, a Redeemer, the Only Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, suffered and died to atone for Adam and Eve's transgression, thereby providing resurrection and immortality for all. And since none of us will have been perfectly and consistently obedient to the gospel law, His Atonement also redeems us from our own sins on condition of repentance. With the Savior's atoning grace providing forgiveness of sins and sanctification of the soul, we can spiritually be born again and reconciled to God. Our spiritual death—our separation from God—will end.¹⁵
12. Fourth, and finally, is the setting for our physical birth and subsequent spiritual rebirth into the kingdom of God. For His work to succeed to "[exalt us] with himself,"¹⁶ God ordained that men and women should marry and give birth to children, thereby creating, in partnership with God, the physical bodies that are key to the test of mortality and essential to eternal glory with Him. He also ordained that parents should establish families and rear their children in light and truth,¹⁷ leading them to a hope in Christ. The Father commands us:
13. "Teach these things freely unto your children, saying: 'That ... inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the [Holy] Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory.'¹⁸
14. Knowing why we left the presence of our Heavenly Father and what it takes to return and be exalted with Him, it becomes very clear that nothing relative to our time on earth can be more important than physical birth and spiritual rebirth, the two prerequisites of eternal life. This is, to use the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the "office" of marriage, the "post of responsibility towards ... mankind," that this divine institution "from above, from God" occupies. It is the "link in the chain of the generations" both here and hereafter—the order of heaven.
15. A family built on the marriage of a man and woman supplies the best setting for God's plan to thrive—the setting for the birth of children, who come in purity and innocence from God, and the environment for the learning and preparation they will need for a successful mortal life and eternal life in the world to come. A critical mass of families built on such marriages is vital for societies to survive and flourish. That is why communities and nations generally have encouraged and protected marriage and the family as privileged institutions. It has never been just about the love and happiness of adults.
16. The social science case for marriage and for families headed by a married man and woman is compelling.¹⁹ And so "we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets."²⁰ But our claims for the role of marriage and family rest not on social science but on the truth that they are God's creation. It is He who in the beginning created Adam and Eve in His image, male and female, and joined them as husband and wife to become "one flesh" and to multiply and replenish the earth.²¹
17. Each individual carries the divine image, but it is in the matrimonial union of male and female as one that we attain perhaps the most complete meaning of our having been made in the image of God—male and female. Neither we nor any other mortal can alter this divine order of matrimony. It is not a human invention. Such marriage is indeed "from above, from God" and is as much a part of the plan of happiness as the Fall and the Atonement.
18. In the premortal world, Lucifer rebelled against God and His plan, and his opposition only grows in intensity. He fights to discourage marriage and the formation of families, and where marriages and families are formed, he does what he can to disrupt them. He attacks everything that is sacred about human sexuality, tearing it from the context of marriage with a seemingly infinite array of immoral thoughts and acts. He seeks to convince men and women that marriage and family priorities can be ignored or abandoned, or at least

made subservient to careers, other achievements, and the quest for self-fulfillment and individual autonomy. Certainly the adversary is pleased when parents neglect to teach and train their children to have faith in Christ and be spiritually born again.

19. Brothers and sisters, many things are good, many are important, but only a few are essential.
20. To declare the fundamental truths relative to marriage and family is not to overlook or diminish the sacrifices and successes of those for whom the ideal is not a present reality. Some of you are denied the blessing of marriage for reasons including a lack of viable prospects, same-sex attraction, physical or mental impairments, or simply a fear of failure that, for the moment at least, overshadows faith. Or you may have married, but that marriage ended, and you are left to manage alone what two together can barely sustain. Some of you who are married cannot bear children despite overwhelming desires and pleading prayers.
21. Even so, everyone has gifts; everyone has talents; everyone can contribute to the unfolding of the divine plan in each generation. Much that is good, much that is essential—even sometimes all that is necessary for now—can be achieved in less than ideal circumstances. So many of you are doing your very best. And when you who bear the heaviest burdens of mortality stand up in defense of God’s plan to exalt His children, we are all ready to march. With confidence we testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ has anticipated and, in the end, will compensate all deprivation and loss for those who turn to Him. No one is predestined to receive less than all that the Father has for His children.
22. One young mother recently confided to me her anxiety about being inadequate in this highest of callings. I felt that the issues that concerned her were small and she needn’t worry; she was doing fine. But I knew she only wanted to please God and to honor His trust. I offered words of reassurance, and in my heart I pleaded that God, her Heavenly Father, would buoy her up with His love and the witness of His approval as she is about His work.
23. That is my prayer for all of us today. May we each find approval in His sight. May marriages flourish and families prosper, and whether our lot is a fulness of these blessings in mortality or not, may the Lord’s grace bring happiness now and faith in sure promises to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Kevin Rudd, “Faith in Politics,” *The Monthly*, Oct. 2006, themonthly.com.au/monthly-essays-kevin-rudd-faith-politics--300.
2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (1953), 42–43.
3. See, for example, Psalm 82:6; Acts 17:29; Hebrews 12:9; Doctrine and Covenants 93:29, 33; Moses 6:51; Abraham 3:22. The Prophet Joseph Smith provided this detail:

“The first principles of man are self-existent with God. God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits [or intelligences] and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself. . . . He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted with himself” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007], 210).

4. Teachings: Joseph Smith, 210.
5. Alma 24:14.
6. Alma 42:8.
7. Alma 12:25; see also verses 26–33.
8. Abraham 3:24–26.
9. The Prophet Joseph Smith offered this summary statement: “The design of God before the foundation of the world was that we should take tabernacles [bodies], that through faithfulness we should overcome and thereby obtain a resurrection from the dead, in this wise obtaining glory, honor, power, and dominion.” The Prophet also stated: “We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man, and when cast out by the Savior he asked to go into the herd of swine, showing that he would prefer a swine’s body to having none. All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not” (Teachings: Joseph Smith, 211).
10. Job 38:7.
11. John 1:3; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:23–24.
12. See 1 Corinthians 15:21–22; 2 Nephi 2:25.
13. See 2 Nephi 2:15–18; Alma 12:24; Doctrine and Covenants 29:39; Moses 4:3. Joseph Smith said: “All persons are entitled to their agency, for God has so ordained it. He has constituted mankind moral agents, and given them power to choose good or evil; to seek after that which is good, by pursuing the pathway of holiness in this life, which brings peace of mind, and joy in the Holy Ghost here, and a fulness of joy and happiness at His right hand hereafter; or to pursue an evil course, going on in sin and rebellion against God, thereby bringing condemnation to their souls in this world, and an eternal loss in the world to come.” The Prophet also noted: “Satan cannot seduce us by his enticements unless we in our hearts consent and yield. Our organization is such that we can resist the devil; if we were not organized so, we would not be free agents” (Teachings: Joseph Smith, 213).
14. See Genesis 3:22–24; Alma 42:2–6; Moses 4:28–31.
15. Even those who do not repent are redeemed from spiritual death by the Atonement in the sense that they come again into the presence of God for the Final Judgment (see Helaman 14:17; 3 Nephi 27:14–15).
16. Teachings: Joseph Smith, 210.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:36–40.
18. Moses 6:58–59.
19. People may be loyal to one another in nonmarital relationships, and children can be born and raised, sometimes quite successfully, in other than a married two-parent family environment. But on average and in the majority of cases, evidence of the social benefits of marriage and of the comparatively superior outcomes for children in families headed by a married man and woman is extensive. On the other hand, the social and economic costs of what one commentator calls “the global flight from the family,” weigh increasingly on society. Nicholas Eberstadt catalogs the worldwide declines in marriage and childbearing and the trends regarding fatherless homes and divorce and observes: “The deleterious impact on the hardly insequential numbers of children disadvantaged by the flight from the family is already plain enough. So too the damaging role of divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing in exacerbating income disparities and wealth gaps—for society as a whole, but especially for children. Yes, children are resilient and all that. But the flight from family most assuredly comes at the expense of the vulnerable young. That same flight also has unforgiving implications for the vulnerable old.” (See “The Global Flight from the Family,” *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 21, 2015, wsj.com/articles/nicholas-eberstadt-the-global-flight-from-the-family-1424476179.)
20. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
21. See Genesis 1:26–28; 2:7, 18, 21–24; 3:20; Moses 2:26–28; 3:7–8, 18, 20–24; 4:26. Official Web site of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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The Family

President Henry B. Eyring
BYU Address, 5 November 1995.



1. Since the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith until September 23, 1995, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has issued a proclamation only four times. It has been more than fifteen years since the last one, which described the progress the Church had made in 150 years of its history. Thus you can imagine the importance our Heavenly Father places upon the subject of this most recent proclamation.
2. Newspapers and television flood us with words and pictures about issues and events to think about and worry about. One of the great blessings of having faith in living prophets is that we can know what really matters, what is worth our attention in this confusing world and in our crowded lives.
3. Because our Father loves his children, he will not leave us to guess about what matters most in this life concerning where our attention could bring happiness or our indifference bring sadness. Sometimes he will tell us directly, by inspiration. But he will, in addition, tell us through his servants. In the words of a prophet named Amos, recorded long ago, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). He does that so that even those who cannot feel inspiration can know, if they will only listen, that they have been told the truth and been warned.
4. The title of the proclamation reads: “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” (see *Ensign*, November 1995, p. 102).
5. Three things about the title are worth our careful reflection. First, the subject: the family. Second, the audience, which is the whole world. And third, those who proclaimed are those we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators. That means that the family must be as important to us as anything we can consider, that what the proclamation says could help anyone in the world, and that the proclamation fits the Lord’s promise when he said, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).
6. Before we start to listen to the words of the proclamation together, the title tells us something about how to prepare. We can expect that God won’t just tell us a few interesting things about the family; he will tell us what a family ought to be and why. And we know at the outset that we could be easily overwhelmed with such thoughts as “This is so high a standard, and I am so weak that I can never hope for such a family.” That feeling can come because what our Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ want for us is to become like them so that we can dwell with them forever, in families. We know that from this simple statement of their intent: “This is my work and my glory--to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).
7. Eternal life means to become like the Father and to live in families in happiness and joy forever, so of course what he wants for us will require help beyond our powers. That feeling of our inadequacy can make it easier to repent and to be ready to rely on the Lord’s help.
8. The fact that the proclamation goes to all the world--to every person and government in it--gives us assurance that we need not be overwhelmed. Whoever we are, however difficult our circumstances, we can know that what our Father commands we do to qualify for the blessings of eternal life will not be beyond us. What a young boy said long ago when he faced a seemingly impossible assignment is true:
9. *I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them. [1 Nephi 3:7]*
10. We may have to pray with faith to know what we are to do, and we must pray with a determination to obey, but we can know what to do and be sure that the way has been prepared for us by the Lord. As we read of what the proclamation tells us about the family, we can expect, in fact we must expect, impressions to come to our minds as to what we are to do, and we can be confident it is

possible. The proclamation begins this way:

11. 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.
12. Try to imagine yourself as a little child, hearing those words for the first time and believing that they are true. This can be a useful attitude whenever we read or hear the word of God because he has told us, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein" (Luke 18:17).
13. A little child would feel safe hearing the words that marriage between a man and woman is ordained of God. The child would know that the longing to have the love of both a father and a mother, distinct but somehow perfectly complementary, exists because that is the eternal pattern, the pattern of happiness. The child would also feel safer knowing that God would help mother and father resolve differences and love each other, if only they ask for his help and try. Prayers of children across the earth would go up to God, pleading for his help for parents and for families.
14. Read in that same way, as if you were a little child, the next words of the proclamation:
15. 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.
16. In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped 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 his or her divine destiny as an heir 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.
17. Understanding these truths ought to make it easier for us to feel like a little child, not just as we read the proclamation, but throughout our lives, because we are children--but in what a family and of what parents! We can picture ourselves as we were, for longer than we can imagine, sons and daughters associating in our heavenly home with parents who knew and loved us. But now we can see ourselves home again with our heavenly parents in that wonderful place, not only as sons and daughters but as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, grandsons and granddaughters, bound together forever in loving families. And we know that in the premortal world we were men or women, with unique gifts because of our gender, and that the opportunity to be married and to become one was necessary for us to have eternal happiness.
18. With that picture before us, we can never be tempted even to think "Maybe I wouldn't like eternal life. Maybe I would be just as happy in some other place in the life after death. I've heard that even the lowest kingdoms are more beautiful than anything we have ever seen."
19. We must have the goal not just in our minds but in our hearts. What we want is eternal life in families. We don't just want it if that is what works out, nor do we want something approaching eternal life. We want eternal life, whatever its cost in effort, pain, and sacrifice. Whenever we are tempted to make eternal life our hope instead of our determination, we might think of a building I took a look at a few weeks ago.
20. I was in Boston. For a little nostalgia, my wife and I walked up to the front of the boarding house I was living in when I met Kathleen, who is now my wife. That was a long time ago, so I expected to find the house a little more dilapidated than it was, since I seem to be a little more dilapidated. But to our surprise it was freshly painted and much renovated. A university has purchased it from the Sopers, the people who owned it and ran it as a boarding house.
21. The building was locked, so we couldn't get in to see the back room on the top floor, which once was mine. Costs have changed, so this will be hard for you to believe, but this was the deal the Sopers gave me: My own large room and bath, furniture and sheets provided, maid service, six big breakfasts and five wonderful dinners a week--all at the price of twenty-one dollars a week. More than that, the meals were ample and prepared with such skill that we called our landlady with some affection "Ma Soper." Just talking about it with you makes me realize that I didn't thank Mrs. Soper often enough, nor Mr. Soper and their daughter, since it must have been some burden to have twelve single men to dinner every weeknight.
22. Now, you aren't tempted by that description of a boarding house, and neither am I. It could have the most spacious rooms, the best service, and the finest eleven men you could ever know as fellow boarders and we wouldn't want to live there more than a short while.

If it were beautiful beyond our power to imagine, we wouldn't want to live there forever, single, if we have even the dimmest memory or the faintest vision of a family with beloved parents and children like the one from which we came to this earth and the one that is our destiny to form and to live in forever. There is only one place where there will be families--the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. That is where we will want to be.

23. A child hearing and believing those words would begin a lifetime of looking for a holy temple where ordinances and covenants perpetuate family relationships beyond the grave and would begin striving to become worthy, and to find a potential mate who has become worthy, of such ordinances. The words of the proclamation make it clear that to receive those blessings requires some sort of perfecting experiences. A child might not sense at first, but soon would learn, that all the making of resolutions and trying harder can produce only faltering progress toward perfection. With age will come temptations to acts that create feelings of guilt. Every child will someday feel those pangs of conscience, as we all have. And those who feel that priceless sense of guilt and cannot shake it may despair, sensing that eternal life requires a progress toward perfection that seems increasingly to be beyond them. So you and I will resolve to speak to someone who doesn't yet know what we know about how that perfection is produced. We will do that because we know that someday they will want what we want, and will then realize that we were their brother or sister and that we knew the way to eternal life. Tonight and tomorrow it won't be hard to be a member missionary if you think of that future moment when they and we will see things as they really are.
24. Some other words in the proclamation will have special meaning for us, knowing what we know about eternal life. They are in the next two paragraphs:
25. 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.
26. 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.
27. Believing those words, a child could spot easily the mistakes in reasoning made by adults. For instance, apparently wise and powerful people blame poverty and famine on there being too many people in some parts of the earth or in all the earth. With great passion they

argue for limiting births as if that will produce human happiness. A child believing the proclamation will know that cannot be so, even before hearing these words from the Lord through his prophet, Joseph Smith: "For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves" (D&C 104:17).

28. A child could see that Heavenly Father would not command men and women to marry and to multiply and replenish the earth if the children they invited into mortality would deplete the earth. Since there is enough and to spare, the enemy of human happiness as well as the cause of poverty and starvation is not the birth of children. It is the failure of people to do with the earth what God could teach them to do, if only they would ask and then obey, for they are agents unto themselves.
29. We would also see that the commandment to be chaste, to employ the powers of procreation only as husband and wife, is not limiting but rather expanding and exalting. Children are the inheritance of the Lord to us not only in this life, but also in eternity. Eternal life is not only to have forever our descendants from this life. It is also to have eternal increase. This is the description of what awaits those of us married as husband and wife by a servant of God with authority to offer us the sacred sealing ordinances. Here are the words of the Lord:
30. It shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, 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.
31. Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting. [D&C 132:19-20]
32. Now you can see why our Father in Heaven puts such a high standard before us in using procreative powers whose continuation is at the heart of eternal life. He told us what that was worth this way: "And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7).
33. We can understand why our Heavenly Father commands us to reverence life and to cherish the powers that produce it as sacred. If we do not have those feelings in this life, how could our Father give them to us in the eternities? Family life here is the schoolroom in which we prepare for family life there. And to give us the opportunity for family life there was and is the

purpose of creation. That is why the coming of Elijah was described this way:

34. And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming. [JS--H 1:39]
35. For some of us, the test in the schoolroom of mortality will be to want marriage and children in this life with all our hearts, but to have it delayed or denied. Even such a sorrow can be turned to a blessing by a just and loving Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. No one who strives with full faith and heart for the blessings of eternal life will be denied. And how great will be the joy and how much deeper the appreciation then after enduring in patience and faith now.
36. The proclamation describes our schooling here for family life in the presence of our Eternal Father:
37. 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" (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to 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.
38. 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.
39. Those two paragraphs are filled with practical implications. There are things we can start to do now. They have to do with providing for the spiritual and the physical needs of a family. There are things we can do now to prepare, long before the need, so that we can be at peace knowing we have done all we can.
40. To begin with, we can decide to plan for success, not for failure. Statistics are thrown at us every day to persuade us that a family composed of a loving father and mother with children loved, taught, and cared for in the way the proclamation enjoins is going the way of the dinosaurs, toward extinction. You have enough evidence in your own families that righteous people sometimes have their families ripped apart by circumstances beyond their control. It takes courage and faith to plan for what God holds before you as the ideal rather than what might be forced upon you by circumstances.
41. There are important ways in which planning for failure can make failure more likely and the ideal less so. Consider these twin commandments as an example: "Fathers are to . . . provide the necessities of life . . . for their families" and "mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children." Knowing how hard that might be, a young man might choose a career on the basis of how much money he could make, even if it meant he couldn't be home enough to be an equal partner. By doing that, he has already decided he cannot hope to do what would be best. A young woman might prepare for a career incompatible with being primarily responsible for the nurture of her children because of the possibilities of not marrying, of not having children, or of being left alone to provide for them herself. Or she might fail to focus her education on the gospel and knowledge of the world that nurturing a family would require, not realizing that the highest and best use she could make of her talents and her education would be in her home. Because a young man and woman had planned to take care of the worst, they might make the best less likely.
42. They are both wise to worry about the physical needs of that future family. The costs of buying a home, compared to average salaries, seem to be rising, and jobs seem harder to hold. But there are other ways the young man and the young woman could think about preparing to provide for that future family. Income is only one part of it. Have you noticed husbands and wives who feel pinched for lack of money, then choose ways to make their family income keep rising, and then find that the pinch is there whatever the income? There is an old formula you've heard that goes something like this: Income five dollars and expenses six dollars: misery. Income four dollars and expenses three dollars: happiness (see Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, chapter 12).
43. Whether the young man can provide and still be in the home and whether the young woman can be there to

nurture children can depend as much on how they learn to spend as how they learn to earn. Brigham Young said it this way, speaking to us as much as he did to the people in his day:

44. If you wish to get rich, save what you get. A fool can earn money; but it takes a wise man to save and dispose of it to his own advantage. Then go to work, and save everything, and make your own bonnets and clothing. [JD 11:301]
45. In today's world, instead of telling you to make bonnets, he might suggest you think carefully about what you really need in cars and houses and vacations and whatever else you will someday try to provide for your children. And he might point out that the difference in cost between what the world tells you is necessary and what your children really need could allow you the margin in time that a father and a mother might need with their children to bring them home to their Heavenly Father.
46. Even the most frugal spending habits and the most careful planning for employment may not be enough to ensure success, but it could be enough to allow you the peace that comes from knowing you did the best you could to provide and to nurture.
47. There is another way we could plan to succeed, despite the difficulties that might lie before us. The proclamation sets a high hurdle for us to clear when it describes our obligation to teach our children. We are somehow to teach them so that they love one another and serve one another and keep the commandments and are law-abiding citizens. If we think of good families who have not met that test, and few meet it without some degree of failure over a generation or two, we could lose heart.
48. We cannot control what others choose to do, and so we cannot force our children to heaven, but we can determine what we will do. And we can decide that we will do all that we can to bring down the powers of heaven into that family we want so much to have forever.
49. A key for us is in the proclamation in this sentence: "Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ."
50. What could make it more likely that people in a family would love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and obey the law? It is not simply teaching them the gospel. It is in their hearing the word of God and then trying it in faith. If they do, their natures will be changed in a way that produces the

happiness we seek. These words from Moroni describe exactly how that change is the natural fruit of living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

51. And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins;
52. And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God. [Moroni 8:25–26]
53. When we prepare a child for baptism, if we do it well, we prepare them for the process that will bring the effects of the Atonement into their lives and the powers of heaven into our home. Think of the change we need. We need the Holy Ghost to fill us with hope and perfect love so that we can endure by diligence unto prayer. And then we can dwell forever with God in families. How can it come? By the simple promise Mormon described to his son Moroni. Faith in Jesus Christ unto repentance and then baptism by those with authority leads to remission of sins. And that produces meekness and lowliness of heart. And that in turn allows us to have the companionship of the Holy Ghost, which fills us with hope and perfect love.
54. You know that is true; I know that is true from my own experience and from the experiences of those in my family. We found on our bedspread after a twenty-hour flight across the world a sign written in colors in a childish hand: "You must be so tired! Lie down and relax! You're back home where we'll take care of everything!" And in a phone call made at a stopping place on that flight home the older sister said, "Oh, I'm just vacuuming the house."
55. How does an eleven-year-old who has never flown across the sea know the effects of jet lag on her mother and father? How does a fifteen-year-old decide to run a vacuum without being asked? Or how does a husband know the feelings of his wife, or a wife the feelings of her husband, and so understand without being told and then help without being asked? Why does a niece give up her bed to an aunt and a nephew share his house and dinner table? How do a son and a daughter-in-law find it possible to take children into their already busy home and act as if it were a blessing? It takes the powers of heaven brought down by believing these words and acting on them:
56. And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and

lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God. [Moroni 8:26]

57. And may I add the words in families.
58. The proclamation is careful in what it promises: "Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ." My heart aches a little to know that many who read those words will be surrounded by those who do not know or who deny the teachings of Jesus Christ. They can only do their best. But they can know this: Their placement in a family, however challenging, is known by a loving Heavenly Father. They can know that a way is prepared for them to do all that will be required for them to qualify for eternal life. They may not see how God could give them that gift, nor with whom they will share it. Yet the promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ is sure:
59. But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come. I, the Lord, have spoken it, and the Spirit beareth record. Amen. [D&C 59:23-24]
60. That peace will come from the assurance that the Atonement has worked in our lives and from the hope of eternal life that springs from it.
61. The proclamation warns that for those who fail to respond, the result will be more disastrous than simply lack of peace in this life or absence of happiness. Here is the prophetic warning and the call to action with which the proclamation ends:
62. 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.
63. 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.
64. The family unit is not only fundamental to society and to the Church but to our hope for eternal life. We begin to practice in the family, the smaller unit, what will spread to the Church and to the society in which

we live in this world and what then will be what we practice in families bound together forever by covenants and faithfulness. We can start now to "promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family." I pray that we will. I pray that you will ask, "Father, how can I prepare?" Tell him how much you want what it is that he wants so much to give you. You will receive impressions, and if you act on them I promise you the help of the powers of heaven.

65. I testify that our Heavenly Father lives, that we lived with him as spirits, and that we would be lonely living anywhere but with him in the world to come.
66. I testify that Jesus Christ is our Savior, that he made possible the changes in you and me that can give us eternal life by suffering for the sins of all of us, his spirit brothers and sisters, the children of his Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Father.
67. I testify that the Holy Ghost can fill us with hope and with perfect love.
68. And I testify that the sealing power restored to Joseph Smith and now held by President Gordon B. Hinckley can bind us in families and give us eternal life, if we do all that we can do in faith. And I so testify and express my love to you, in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Why Marriage, Why Family

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/04/why-marriage-why-family?lang=eng>

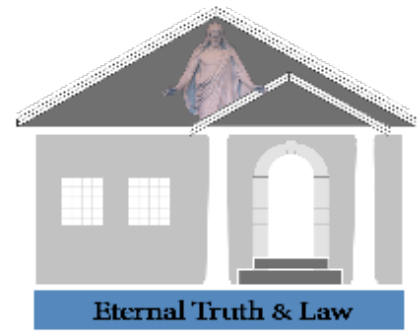
The Family

https://video.byui.edu/media/President+Henry+B.+Eyring%2C+%22The+Family%22/0_h3m46eoo



The Eternal Family

Elder Robert D. Hales
Ensign, Nov 1996, 64.



1. I wish to speak to all those who would like to know about eternal families and about families being forever. One year ago the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a proclamation to the world concerning the family. It summarizes eternal gospel principles that have been taught since the beginning of recorded history and even before the earth was created.
2. The doctrine of the family begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them. The Apostle Paul taught that God is the father of our spirits (see Heb. 12:9). From the proclamation we read, “In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped 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 his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life.” The proclamation also reiterates to the world 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” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102).
3. From the earliest beginnings, God established the family and made it eternal. Adam and Eve were sealed in marriage for time and all eternity:
4. “And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance, and the Gospel preached, and a decree sent forth, that it should be in the world, until the end thereof; and thus it was” (Moses 5:59).
5. “And Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth” (Moses 5:2).
6. The Savior Himself spoke of this sacred marriage covenant and promise when He gave the authority to His disciples to bind in heaven sacred covenants made on earth:
7. “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19).
8. In this latter day the promise of eternal families was restored in 1829 when the powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood were restored to the earth. Seven years later, in the Kirtland Temple, the keys to perform the sealing ordinances were restored, as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants:
9. “Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:
10. “Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi— ...
11. “... The keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands” (D&C 110:13–14, 16).
12. With the restoration of these keys and priesthood authority comes the opportunity for all who are worthy to receive the blessings of eternal families. “Yea the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out, and the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house” (D&C 110:9).
13. What is the promise of these sealings which are performed in the temples? The Lord outlines the promise and requirements in this sacred verse:
14. “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 ... 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” (D&C 132:19).

15. As taught in this scripture, an eternal bond doesn't just happen as a result of sealing covenants we make in the temple. How we conduct ourselves in this life will determine what we will be in all the eternities to come. To receive the blessings of the sealing that our Heavenly Father has given to us, we have to keep the commandments and conduct ourselves in such a way that our families will want to live with us in the eternities. The family relationships we have here on this earth are important, but they are much more important for their effect on our families for generations in mortality and throughout all eternity.
16. By divine commandment, spouses are required to love each other above all others. The Lord clearly declares, “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else” (D&C 42:22). The proclamation states: “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 [see D&C 83:2–4; 1 Tim. 5:8]. [By divine design,] mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children.” By divine design, husband and wife are equal partners in their marriage and parental responsibilities. By direct commandment of God, “parents have a sacred duty ... to teach [their children] to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens [in the countries where they reside]” (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102; emphasis added; see D&C 68:25–28; Mosiah 4:14–15).
17. Because of the importance of the family to the eternal plan of happiness, Satan makes a major effort to destroy the sanctity of the family, demean the importance of the role of men and women, encourage moral uncleanness and violations of the sacred law of chastity, and to discourage parents from placing the bearing and rearing of children as one of their highest priorities.
18. So fundamental is the family unit to the plan of salvation that God has declared a warning that those “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 [their maker]. ... The disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets” (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102).
19. While our individual salvation is based on our individual obedience, it is equally important that we understand that we are each an important and integral part of a family and the highest blessings can be received only within an eternal family. When families are functioning as designed by God, the relationships found therein are the most valued of mortality. The plan of the Father is that family love and companionship will continue into the eternities. Being one in a family carries a great responsibility of caring, loving, lifting, and strengthening each member of the family so that all can righteously endure to the end in mortality and dwell together throughout eternity. It is not enough just to save ourselves. It is equally important that parents, brothers, and sisters are saved in our families. If we return home alone to our Heavenly Father, we will be asked, “Where is the rest of the family?” This is why we teach that families are forever. The eternal nature of an individual becomes the eternal nature of the family.
20. The eternal nature of our body and our spirit is a question often pondered by those who live in mortality. All people who will ever live on earth are members of a human family and are eternal children of God, our loving Heavenly Father. After birth and tasting of death in mortality, all will be resurrected because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God the Father. Depending on our individual obedience to the laws, ordinances, and commandments of God, each mortal can have the blessing of attaining eternal life; that is, returning to live in the presence of their Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, having eternal increase for all the eternities to come. Through making and keeping the sacred covenants found in the temple ordinances, individuals can return to the presence of God and will be reunited with their families eternally.
21. The home is where we are nurtured and where we prepare ourselves for living in mortality. It is also where we prepare ourselves for death and for immortality because of our belief and understanding that there is life after death, not only for the individual but also for the family.
22. Some of the greatest lessons of gospel principles about the eternal nature of the family are learned as we observe how members of the Church, when faced with adversity, apply gospel principles in their lives and in their homes. In the past year I have witnessed the blessings of joy which come to those who honor and revere the gospel teaching of the eternal family during times of adversity in their lives.
23. A few months ago I had the opportunity of visiting a man who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness. As a devoted priesthood holder, he was confronted with the realities of mortality. He found strength, however, in the example of the Savior, who said, in the Lord's Prayer, “After this manner therefore pray ye: ... Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:9–10).

My friend took courage in knowing that as Jesus was required to endure great pain and agony in the Garden of Gethsemane while completing the atoning sacrifice, He uttered the words, “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done” (Matt. 26:42).

24. My friend came to accept the phrase “Thy will be done” as he faced his own poignant trials and tribulations. As a faithful member of the Church, he was now confronted with some sobering concerns. Particularly touching were his questions, “Have I done all that I need to do to faithfully endure to the end?” “What will death be like?” “Will my family be prepared to stand in faith and be self-reliant when I am gone?”
25. We had the opportunity to discuss all three questions. They are clearly answered in the doctrine taught to us by our Savior. We discussed how he had spent his life striving to be faithful, to do what God asked of him, to be honest in his dealings with his fellowmen and all others, to care for and love his family. Isn’t that what is meant by enduring to the end? We talked about what happens immediately after death, about what God has taught us about the world of spirits. It is a place of paradise and happiness for those who have lived righteous lives. It is not something to fear.
26. After our conversation, he called together his wife and the extended family—children and grandchildren—to teach them again the doctrine of the Atonement that all will be resurrected. Everyone came to understand that just as the Lord has said, while there will be mourning at the temporary separation, there is no sorrow for those who die in the Lord (see Rev. 14:13; D&C 42:46). His blessing promised him comfort and reassurance that all would be well, that he would not have pain, that he would have additional time to prepare his family for his departure—even that he would know the time of his departure. The family related to me that on the night before he passed away, he said he would go on the morrow. He passed away the next afternoon at peace, with all his family at his side. This is the solace and comfort that comes to us when we understand the gospel plan and know that families are forever.
27. Contrast these events with an incident which happened to me when I was a young man in my early twenties. While serving in the Air Force, one of the pilots in my squadron crashed on a training mission and was killed. I was assigned to accompany my fallen comrade on his final journey home to be buried in Brooklyn. I had the honor of standing by his family during the viewing and funeral services and of representing our government in presenting the flag to his grieving widow at the graveside. The funeral service was dark and dismal. No mention was made of his goodness or

his accomplishments. His name was never mentioned. At the conclusion of the services, his widow turned to me and asked, “Bob, what is really going to happen to Don?” I was then able to give her the sweet doctrine of the Resurrection and the reality that, if baptized and sealed in the temple for time and all eternity, they could be together eternally. The clergyman standing next to her said, “That is the most beautiful doctrine I have ever heard.”

28. The fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ brings great comfort in stressing times of mortality. It brings light where there is darkness and a calming influence where there is turmoil. It gives eternal hope where there is mortal despair. It is more than just beautiful doctrine. It is a reality in our lives that if we can be obedient and obtain the eternal rewards that God grants us, if we will draw nigh unto Him and embrace the eternal doctrine, we will be blessed.
29. Another incident that has touched my life recently happened when a young man with a terminal illness passed away. He knew that his illness would first take away his manual dexterity and his ability to walk, then its progression would take his ability to speak, and finally his respiratory system would cease to function. But he also had faith that families are forever. With this knowledge, he spoke to each of his children through video recordings for use when he was gone. He produced recordings to be given to his sons and daughters at important, sacred occasions in their lives, such as baptisms, priesthood ordinations, and weddings. He spoke to them with the tender love of a father who knew that while his family was forever, for a time he would not physically be able to be with them, but spiritually he would never leave their side.
30. The examples of faith shown by steadfast widows and widowers, along with that of their children, after the passing of a spouse or parent are an inspiration to all of us. Great lessons can be learned as we observe their faith and obedience as they strive to remain faithful so that they can once again be together as families through eternity.
31. The knowledge and understanding of the doctrine that God lives and Jesus is the Christ and that we have an opportunity to be resurrected and live in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, makes it possible to endure otherwise tragic events. This doctrine brings a brightness of hope into an otherwise dark and dreary world. It answers the simple questions of where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. These are truths that must be taught and practiced in our homes.
32. God lives. Jesus is the Christ. Through His Atonement

we will all have the opportunity of being resurrected. This is not just an individual blessing; it is much more than that. It is a blessing to each one of us and to our families. That we may be eternally grateful, that we can live in the presence of God the Eternal Father and His Son Jesus Christ, that we may be together in the eternities to come, that we might understand the joy, and that we not only teach this doctrine but live true to it in our lives and in our families, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Eternal Family

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1996/10/the-eternal-family?lang=eng>

Becoming Like God

Gospel Topics Essay



1. One of the most common images in Western and Eastern religions alike is of God as a parent and of human beings as God's children. Billions pray to God as their parent, invoke the brotherhood and sisterhood of all people to promote peace, and reach out to the weary and troubled out of deep conviction that each of God's children has great worth.
2. But people of different faiths understand the parent-child relationship between God and humans in significantly different ways. Some understand the phrase "child of God" as an honorary title reserved only for those who believe in God and accept His guidance as they might accept a father's. Many see parent-child descriptions of God's relationship to humanity as metaphors to express His love for His creations and their dependence on His sustenance and protection.
3. Latter-day Saints see all people as children of God in a full and complete sense; they consider every person divine in origin, nature, and potential. Each has an eternal core and is "a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents." Each possesses seeds of divinity and must choose whether to live in harmony or tension with that divinity. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all people may "progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny." Just as a child can develop the attributes of his or her parents over time, the divine nature that humans inherit can be developed to become like their Heavenly Father's.
4. The desire to nurture the divinity in His children is one of God's attributes that most inspires, motivates, and humbles members of the Church. God's loving parentage and guidance can help each willing, obedient child of God receive of His fullness and of His glory. This knowledge transforms the way Latter-day Saints see their fellow human beings. The teaching that men and women have the potential to be exalted to a state of godliness clearly expands beyond what is understood by most contemporary Christian churches and expresses for the Latter-day Saints a yearning rooted in the Bible to live as God lives, to love as He loves, and to prepare for all that our loving Father in Heaven wishes for His children.

What does the Bible say about humans' divine potential?

5. Several biblical passages intimate that humans can become like God. The likeness of humans to God is emphasized in the first chapter of Genesis: "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." After Adam and Eve partook of the fruit of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," God said they had "become as one of us," suggesting that a process of approaching godliness was already underway. Later in the Old Testament, a passage in the book of Psalms declares, "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High."
6. New Testament passages also point to this doctrine. When Jesus was accused of blasphemy on the grounds that "thou, being a man, makest thyself God," He responded, echoing Psalms, "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?" In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commanded His disciples to become "perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." In turn, the Apostle Peter referred to the Savior's "exceeding great and precious promises" that we might become "partakers of the divine nature." The Apostle Paul taught that we are "the offspring of God" and emphasized that as such "we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." The book of Revelation contains a promise from Jesus Christ that "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."
7. These passages can be interpreted in different ways. Yet by viewing them through the clarifying lens of revelations received by Joseph Smith, Latter-day Saints see these scriptures as straightforward expressions of humanity's divine nature and potential. Many other Christians read the same passages far more metaphorically because they experience the Bible through the lens of doctrinal interpretations that developed over time after the period

described in the New Testament. How have ideas about divinity shifted over Christian history?

8. Latter-day Saint beliefs would have sounded more familiar to the earliest generations of Christians than they do to many modern Christians. Many church fathers (influential theologians and teachers in early Christianity) spoke approvingly of the idea that humans can become divine. One modern scholar refers to the “ubiquity of the doctrine of deification”—the teaching that humans could become God—in the first centuries after Christ’s death. The church father Irenaeus, who died about A.D. 202, asserted that Jesus Christ “did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be what He is Himself.” Clement of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 150–215) wrote that “the Word of God became man, that thou mayest learn from man how man may become God.” Basil the Great (A.D. 330–379) also celebrated this prospect—not just “being made like to God,” but “highest of all, the being made God.”
9. What exactly the early church fathers meant when they spoke of becoming God is open to interpretation, but it is clear that references to deification became more contested in the late Roman period and were infrequent by the medieval era. The first known objection by a church father to teaching deification came in the fifth century. By the sixth century, teachings on “becoming God” appear more limited in scope, as in the definition provided by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (ca. A.D. 500): “Deification ... is the attaining of likeness to God and union with him so far as is possible.”
10. Why did these beliefs fade from prominence? Changing perspectives on the creation of the world may have contributed to the gradual shift toward more limited views of human potential. The earliest Jewish and Christian commentaries on the Creation assumed that God had organized the world out of preexisting materials, emphasizing the goodness of God in shaping such a life-sustaining order. But the incursion of new philosophical ideas in the second century led to the development of a doctrine that God created the universe ex nihilo—“out of nothing.” This ultimately became the dominant teaching about the Creation within the Christian world. In order to emphasize God’s power, many theologians reasoned that nothing could have existed for as long as He had. It became important in Christian circles to assert that God had originally been completely alone.
11. Creation ex nihilo widened the perceived gulf between God and humans. It became less common to teach either that human souls had existed before the world or that they could inherit and develop the attributes of God in their entirety in the future. Gradually, as the deprav-

ity of humankind and the immense distance between Creator and creature were increasingly emphasized, the concept of deification faded from Western Christianity, though it remains a central tenet of Eastern Orthodoxy, one of the three major branches of Christianity.

How were ideas about deification introduced to Latter-day Saints?

12. The earliest Latter-day Saints came from a society dominated by English-speaking Protestants, most of whom accepted both ex nihilo creation and the Westminster Confession’s definition of God as a being “without body, parts, or passions.” They likely knew little or nothing about the diversity of Christian beliefs in the first centuries after Jesus Christ’s ministry or about early Christian writings on deification. But revelations received by Joseph Smith diverged from the prevailing ideas of the time and taught doctrine that, for some, reopened debates on the nature of God, creation, and humankind.
13. Early revelations to Joseph Smith taught that humans are created in the image of God and that God cares intimately for His children. In the Book of Mormon, a prophet “saw the finger of the Lord” and was astonished to learn that human physical forms were truly made in the image of God. In another early revelation, Enoch (who “walked with God” in the Bible) witnessed God weeping over His creations. When Enoch asked, “How is it thou canst weep?” he learned that God’s compassion toward human suffering is integral to His love. Joseph Smith also learned that God desires that His children receive the same kind of exalted existence of which He partakes. As God declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” In 1832, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon experienced a vision of the afterlife. In the vision, they learned that the just and unjust alike would receive immortality through a universal resurrection, but only those “who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise” would receive the fullness of God’s glory and be “gods, even the sons of God.” Another revelation soon confirmed that “the saints shall be filled with his glory, and receive their inheritance and be made equal with him.” Latter-day Saints use the term exaltation to describe the glorious reward of receiving one’s full inheritance as a child of Heavenly Father, which is available through the Atonement of Christ, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.
14. This striking view of each human’s potential future was accompanied by revealed teachings on humanity’s past. As Joseph Smith continued to receive revelations, he learned that the light or intelligence at the core of each human soul “was not created or made, neither indeed can be.” God is the Father of each human spirit, and because only “spirit and element, inseparably connected,

receive a fullness of joy.” He presented a plan for human beings to receive physical bodies and progress through their mortal experience toward a fullness of joy. Earthly birth, then, is not the beginning of an individual’s life: “Man was also in the beginning with God.” Likewise, Joseph Smith taught that the material world has eternal roots, fully repudiating the concept of creation *ex nihilo*. “Earth, water &c—all these had their existence in an elementary State from Eternity,” he said in an 1839 sermon. God organized the universe out of existing elements.

15. Joseph Smith continued to receive revelation on the themes of divine nature and exaltation during the last two years of his life. In a revelation recorded in July 1843 that linked exaltation with eternal marriage, the Lord declared that those who keep covenants, including the covenant of eternal marriage, will inherit “all heights and depths.” “Then,” says the revelation, “shall they be gods, because they have no end.” They will receive “a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.”
16. The following April, feeling he was “never in any nearer relationship to God than at the present time,” Joseph Smith spoke about the nature of God and the future of humankind to the Saints, who had gathered for a general Church conference. He used the occasion in part to reflect upon the death of a Church member named King Follett, who had died unexpectedly a month earlier. When he rose to speak, the wind was blowing, so Joseph asked his listeners to give him their “profound attention” and to “pray that the L[ord] may strengthen my lungs” and stay the winds until his message had been delivered.
17. “What kind of a being is God?” he asked. Human beings needed to know, he argued, because “if men do not comprehend the character of God they do not comprehend themselves.” In that phrase, the Prophet collapsed the gulf that centuries of confusion had created between God and humanity. Human nature was at its core divine. God “was once as one of us” and “all the spirits that God ever sent into the world” were likewise “susceptible of enlargement.” Joseph Smith preached that long before the world was formed, God found “himself in the midst” of these beings and “saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself” and be “exalted” with Him.
18. Joseph told the assembled Saints, “You have got to learn how to be a god yourself.” In order to do that, the Saints needed to learn godliness, or to be more like God. The process would be ongoing and would require patience, faith, continuing repentance, obedience to the commandments of the gospel, and reliance on Christ. Like ascending a ladder, individuals needed to learn the “first prin[ciples] of the Gospel” and continue beyond the limits of mortal knowledge until they could “learn the last prin[ciples] of the Gospel” when the time came. “It

is not all to be comprehended in this world,” Joseph said. “It will take a long time after the grave to understand the whole.”

19. That was the last time the Prophet spoke in a general conference. Three months later, a mob stormed Carthage Jail and martyred him and his brother Hyrum.

What has been taught in the Church about divine nature since Joseph Smith?

20. Since that sermon, known as the King Follett discourse, the doctrine that humans can progress to exaltation and godliness has been taught within the Church. Lorenzo Snow, the Church’s fifth President, coined a well-known couplet: “As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be.” Little has been revealed about the first half of this couplet, and consequently little is taught. When asked about this topic, Church President Gordon B. Hinckley told a reporter in 1997, “That gets into some pretty deep theology that we don’t know very much about.” When asked about the belief in humans’ divine potential, President Hinckley responded, “Well, as God is, man may become. We believe in eternal progression. Very strongly.”
21. Eliza R. Snow, a Church leader and poet, rejoiced over the doctrine that we are, in a full and absolute sense, children of God. “I had learned to call thee Father, / Thru thy Spirit from on high,” she wrote, “But, until the key of knowledge / Was restored, I knew not why.” Latter-day Saints have also been moved by the knowledge that their divine parentage includes a Heavenly Mother as well as a Heavenly Father. Expressing that truth, Eliza R. Snow asked, “In the heav’ns are parents single?” and answered with a resounding no: “Truth eternal / Tells me I’ve a mother there.”⁴⁵ That knowledge plays an important role in Latter-day Saint belief. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote, “Our theology begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them.” Humankind’s divine nature and potential for exaltation have been repeatedly taught in general conference addresses, Church magazines, and other Church materials. “Divine nature” is one of eight core values in the Church’s Young Women program. Teaching on human beings’ divine parentage, nature, and potential features prominently in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” Divine nature and exaltation are essential and beloved teachings in the Church.

Does belief in exaltation make Latter-day Saints polytheists?

22. For some observers, the doctrine that humans should strive for godliness may evoke images of ancient panthe-

ons with competing deities. Such images are incompatible with Latter-day Saint doctrine. Latter-day Saints believe that God's children will always worship Him. Our progression will never change His identity as our Father and our God. Indeed, our exalted, eternal relationship with Him will be part of the "fullness of joy" He desires for us.

23. Latter-day Saints also believe strongly in the fundamental unity of the divine. They believe that God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost, though distinct beings, are unified in purpose and doctrine.⁴⁷ It is in this light that Latter-day Saints understand Jesus's prayer for His disciples through the ages: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

24. If humans live out of harmony with God's goodness, they cannot grow into God's glory. Joseph Smith taught that "the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only [except] upon the principles of righteousness." When humans abandon God's selfless purposes and standards, "the heavens withdraw themselves [and] the Spirit of the Lord is grieved." Pride is incompatible with progress; disunity is impossible between exalted beings.

How do Latter-day Saints envision exaltation?

25. Since human conceptions of reality are necessarily limited in mortality, religions struggle to adequately articulate their visions of eternal glory. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." These limitations make it easy for images of salvation to become cartoonish when represented in popular culture. For example, scriptural expressions of the deep peace and overwhelming joy of salvation are often reproduced in the well-known image of humans sitting on their own clouds and playing harps after death. Latter-day Saints' doctrine of exaltation is often similarly reduced in media to a cartoonish image of people receiving their own planets.
26. A cloud and harp are hardly a satisfying image for eternal joy, although most Christians would agree that inspired music can be a tiny foretaste of the joy of eternal salvation. Likewise, while few Latter-day Saints would identify with caricatures of having their own planet, most would agree that the awe inspired by creation hints at our creative potential in the eternities.
27. Latter-day Saints tend to imagine exaltation through the lens of the sacred in mortal experience. They see the seeds of godhood in the joy of bearing and nur-

turing children and the intense love they feel for those children, in the impulse to reach out in compassionate service to others, in the moments they are caught off guard by the beauty and order of the universe, in the grounding feeling of making and keeping divine covenants. Church members imagine exaltation less through images of what they will get and more through the relationships they have now and how those relationships might be purified and elevated. As the scriptures teach, "That same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy."

How important are teachings about exaltation to Latter-day Saint beliefs overall?

28. The teaching that human beings have a divine nature and future shapes the way Latter-day Saints view fundamental doctrine. Perhaps most significantly, belief in divine nature helps us more deeply appreciate the Atonement of Jesus Christ. While many Christian theologians have expressed the magnitude of the Savior's Atonement by emphasizing human depravity, Latter-day Saints understand the magnitude of the Atonement of Christ in terms of the vast human potential it makes possible. Christ's Atonement not only provides forgiveness from sin and victory over death, it also redeems imperfect relationships, heals the spiritual wounds that stifle growth, and strengthens and enables individuals to develop the attributes of Christ. Latter-day Saints believe that it is only through the Atonement of Jesus Christ that we can have a sure hope of eternal glory and that the power of His Atonement is fully accessed only by faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end in following the instruction and example of Christ. Thus, those who become like God and enter into a fullness of His glory are described as people who have been "made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood."
29. An awareness of humans' divine potential also influences Latter-day Saints' understanding of gospel principles such as the importance of divine commandments, the role of temples, and the sanctity of individual moral agency. Belief that human beings are actually God's children also changes Latter-day Saints' behavior and attitudes. For example, even in societies where casual and premarital sex are considered acceptable, Latter-day Saints retain a deep reverence for the God-given procreative and bonding powers of human sexual intimacy and remain committed to a higher standard in the use of those sacred powers. Studies suggest that Latter-day Saints place an exceptionally high priority on marriage and parenthood, a consequence in part of a strong belief in heavenly parents and a commitment to strive for that

divinity.

Conclusion

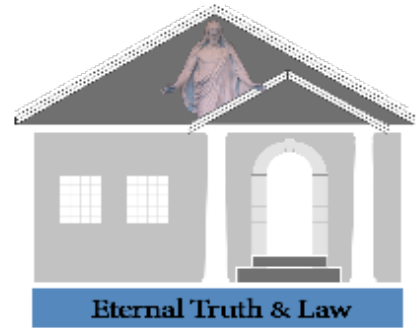
30. All human beings are children of loving heavenly parents and possess seeds of divinity within them. In His infinite love, God invites His children to cultivate their eternal potential by the grace of God, through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. The doctrine of humans' eternal potential to become like their Heavenly Father is central to the gospel of Jesus Christ and inspires love, hope, and gratitude in the hearts of faithful Latter-day Saints.

Becoming Like God

<https://www.lds.org/topics/becoming-like-god?lang=eng>

Unit I Additional Readings

Links and QR Codes



Elder Tad R. Callister, "Our Identity and Destiny"

<https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/tad-r-callister-our-identity-and-our-destiny/>

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, "No Other Gods"

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/no-other-gods?lang=eng>

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, "As He Thinketh"

<https://www.lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/as-he-thinketh-in-his-heart-?lang=eng>

Gender: An Essential Characteristic of Personal Identity and Purpose

FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY

Unit 2 Scriptures

God's plan enables his children to progress towards perfection and obtain eternal life

3 Nephi 12:48

48 Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.

3 Nephi 27:27

27 . . . Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.

Moroni 10:32

32 Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind, and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.

D&C 14:7

7 And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.

Gender is an eternal characteristic of our identity and purpose and men and women are designed to progress towards eternal life together as husband and wife.

Moses 3:18-25

18 And I, the Lord God, said unto mine Only Begotten, that it was not good that the man should be alone; wherefore, I will make an help meet for him.

19 And out of the ground I, the Lord God, formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and commanded that they should come unto Adam, to see what he would call them; and they were also living souls; for I, God, breathed into them the breath of life, and commanded that whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that should be the name thereof.

20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but as for Adam, there was not found an help meet for him.

21 And I, the Lord God, caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; and he slept, and I took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in the stead thereof;

22 And the rib which I, the Lord God, had taken from man, made I a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said: This I know now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Moses 4:17-19, 22-26

17 And I, the Lord God, said unto Adam: Who told thee thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, if so thou shouldst surely die?

18 And the man said: The woman thou gavest me, and commandest that she should remain with me, she gave me of the fruit of the tree and I did eat.

19 And I, the Lord God, said unto the woman: What is this thing which thou hast done? And the woman said: The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. . . .

22 Unto the woman, I, the Lord God, said: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception. In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

23 And unto Adam, I, the Lord God, said: Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the fruit of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying—Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed shall be the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.

24 Thorns also, and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field.

25 By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou shalt return unto the ground—for thou shalt surely die—for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou wast, and unto dust shalt thou return.

26 And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living; for thus have I, the Lord God, called the first of all women, which are many.

Proverbs 31:10-15, 20-31

10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

13 She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

15 She ariseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

22 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her

clothing is silk and purple.

23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

25 Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

27 She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

29 Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

30 Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

31 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

D&C 25:1-5, 10, 13-16

1 Hearken unto the voice of the Lord your God, while I speak unto you, Emma Smith, my daughter; for verily I say unto you, all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom.

2 A revelation I give unto you concerning my will; and if thou art faithful and walk in the paths of virtue before me, I will preserve thy life, and thou shalt receive an inheritance in Zion.

3 Behold, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou art an elect lady, whom I have called.

4 Murmur not because of the things which thou hast not seen, for they are withheld from thee and from the world, which is wisdom in me in a time to come.

5 And the office of thy calling shall be for a comfort unto my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., thy husband, in his afflictions, with consoling words, in the spirit of meekness.

10 And verily I say unto thee that thou shalt lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better.

13 Wherefore, lift up thy heart and rejoice, and cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made.

14 Continue in the spirit of meekness, and beware of pride. Let thy soul delight in thy husband, and the glory which shall come upon him.

15 Keep my commandments continually, and a crown of righteousness thou shalt receive. And except thou do this, where I am you cannot come.

16 And verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my voice unto all. Amen.

D&C 121: 34-44

34 Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

35 Because their hearts are set so much upon the things

of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—

36 That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

37 That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.

38 Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God.

39 We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.

40 Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

41 No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

42 By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

43 Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reprov'd, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

44 That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.

Alma 13:3-6, 9

3 And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.

4 And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren.

5 Or in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was

prepared—

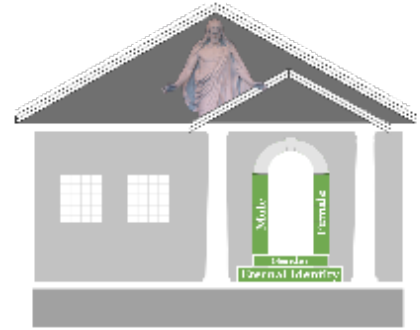
6 And thus being called by this holy calling, and
ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of
God, to teach his commandments unto the children of
men, that they also might enter into his rest—

9 Thus they become high priests forever, after the order
of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is
without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of
grace, equity, and truth. And thus it is. Amen.



Marriage Is Essential To His Eternal Plan

Elder David A. Bednar
Ensign, Jun 2006, 82-87



The Doctrinal Ideal of Marriage

1. We have been counseled strongly by the First Presidency to devote our best efforts to the strengthening of marriage and the home. Such instruction has never been more needed in the world than it is today, as the sanctity of marriage is attacked and the importance of the home is undermined.
2. Even though the Church and its programs support marriage and family and generally are successful at doing so, we should always remember this basic truth: no instrumentality or organization can take the place of the home or perform its essential functions.
¹ Consequently, today I will speak with you primarily as men and women, as husbands and wives, and as mothers and fathers and secondarily as priesthood and auxiliary leaders in the Church. My assignment is to discuss the essential role of eternal marriage in our Heavenly Father's plan of happiness.
3. We will focus on the doctrinal ideal of marriage. My hope is that a review of our eternal possibilities and a reminder about who we are and why we are here in mortality will provide direction, comfort, and sustaining hope for us all, regardless of our marital status or personal present circumstances. The disparity between the doctrinal ideal of marriage and the reality of daily life may seem at times to be quite large, but you gradually are doing and becoming much better than you probably recognize.
4. I invite you to keep in mind the following questions as we discuss principles related to eternal marriage.
 5. Question 1: In my own life, am I striving to become a better husband or a wife, or preparing to be a husband or a wife, by understanding and applying these basic principles?
 6. Question 2: As a priesthood or auxiliary leader, am I helping those I serve to understand and apply these basic principles, thereby strengthening marriage and the home?

7. As we prayerfully ponder these questions and consider our own marriage relationships and our responsibilities in the Church, I testify the Spirit of the Lord will enlighten our minds and teach us the things we need to do and to improve (see John 14:26).

Why Marriage is Essential

8. In "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles 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."
² This keynote sentence of the proclamation teaches us much about the doctrinal significance of marriage and emphasizes the primacy of marriage and family in the Father's plan. Righteous marriage is a commandment and an essential step in the process of creating a loving family relationship that can be perpetuated beyond the grave.
9. Two compelling doctrinal reasons help us to understand why eternal marriage is essential to the Father's plan.
 10. Reason 1: The natures of male and female spirits complete and perfect each other, and therefore men and women are intended to progress together toward exaltation.
 11. The eternal nature and importance of marriage can be fully understood only within the over arching context of the Father's plan for 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 ... has a divine nature and destiny."
³ The great plan of happiness enables the spirit sons and daughters of Heavenly Father to obtain physical bodies, to gain earthly experience, and to progress toward perfection.
 12. "Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose"
⁴ and in large measure defines who we are, why we are here upon the earth, and what we are to do and become. For divine purposes, male and female spirits are different, distinctive, and complementary.

13. After the earth was created, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden. Importantly, however, God said it was “not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18; Moses 3:18), and Eve became Adam’s companion and helpmeet. 14. The unique combination of spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional capacities of both males and females were needed to implement the plan of happiness. Alone, neither the man nor the woman could fulfill the purposes of his or her creation.
 15. By divine design, men and women are intended to progress together toward perfection and a fullness of glory. Because of their distinctive temperaments and capacities, males and females each bring to a marriage relationship unique perspectives and experiences. The man and the woman contribute differently but equally to a oneness and a unity that can be achieved in no other way. The man completes and perfects the woman and the woman completes and perfects the man as they learn from and mutually strengthen and bless each other. “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:11; italics added).
 16. Reason 2: By divine design, both a man and a woman are needed to bring children into mortality and to provide the best setting for the rearing and nurturing of children.
 17. The commandment given anciently to Adam and Eve to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force today. “God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife. ... The means by which mortal life is created [are] divinely appointed.”⁵ Thus, marriage between a man and a woman is the authorized channel through which premortal spirits enter mortality. Complete sexual abstinence before marriage and total fidelity within marriage protect the sanctity of this sacred channel.
 18. A home with a loving and loyal husband and wife is the supreme setting in which children can be reared in love and righteousness and in which the spiritual and physical needs of children can be met. Just as the unique characteristics of both males and females contribute to the completeness of a marriage relationship, so those same characteristics are vital to the rearing, nurturing, and teaching of children. “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.”⁶
- ### Guiding Principles
19. The two doctrinal reasons we have reviewed about the importance of eternal marriage in the Father’s plan of happiness suggest guiding principles for those who are preparing to marry, for those who are married, and for our service in the Church.
 20. Principle 1: The importance of eternal marriage can be understood only within the context of the Father’s plan of happiness.
 21. We frequently speak about and highlight marriage as a fundamental unit of society, as the foundation of a strong nation, and as a vital sociological and cultural institution. But the restored gospel helps us to understand that it is so much more!
 22. Do we perhaps talk about marriage without adequately teaching the importance of marriage in the Father’s plan? Emphasizing marriage without linking it to the simple and fundamental doctrine of the plan of happiness cannot provide sufficient direction, protection, or hope in a world that grows increasingly confused and wicked. We would all do well to remember the teaching of Alma—that “God gave unto [the children of men] commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption” (Alma 12:32; italics added).
 23. Elder Parley P. Pratt expressed beautifully the blessings that come to us as we learn about, understand, and strive to apply in our lives the doctrinal ideal of marriage:
 24. “It was Joseph Smith who taught me how to prize the endearing relationships of father and mother, husband and wife; of brother and sister, son and daughter.
 25. “It was from him that I learned that the wife of my bosom might be secured to me for time and all eternity; and that the refined sympathies and affections which endeared us to each other emanated from the fountain of divine eternal love. ...
 26. “I had loved before, but I knew not why. But now I loved—with a pureness—an intensity of elevated, exalted feeling, which would lift my soul from the transitory things of this grovelling sphere and expand it as the ocean. ... In short, I could now love with the spirit and with the understanding also.
 27. “Yet, at that time, my dearly beloved brother, Joseph Smith, had ... merely lifted a corner of the veil and given me a single glance into eternity.”⁷
 28. As men and women, as husbands and wives, and as Church leaders, can we see how the importance of eternal marriage can be understood only within the context of the Father’s plan of happiness? The

doctrine of the plan leads men and women to hope and prepare for eternal marriage, and it defeats the fears and overcomes the uncertainties that may cause some individuals to delay or avoid marriage. A correct understanding of the plan also strengthens our resolve to steadfastly honor the covenant of eternal marriage. Our individual learning, our teaching, and our testifying in both the home and at church will be magnified as we ponder and more fully understand this truth.

29. Principle 2: Satan desires that all men and women might be miserable like unto himself. 30.
30. Lucifer relentlessly assails and distorts the doctrines that matter most to us individually, to our families, and to the world. Where is the adversary focusing his most direct and diabolical attacks? Satan works unremittingly to confuse understanding about gender, to promote the premature and unrighteous use of procreative power, and to hinder righteous marriage precisely because marriage is ordained of God and the family is central to the plan of happiness. The adversary's attacks upon eternal marriage will continue to increase in intensity, frequency, and sophistication.
31. Because today we are engaged in a war for the welfare of marriage and the home, in my latest reading of the Book of Mormon I paid particular attention to the ways the Nephites prepared for their battles against the Lamanites. I noted that the people of Nephi "were aware of the intent of [their enemy], and therefore they did prepare to meet them" (Alma 2:12; italics added). As I read and studied, I learned that understanding the intent of an enemy is a key prerequisite to effective preparation. We likewise should consider the intent of our enemy in this latter-day war.
32. The Father's plan is designed to provide direction for His children, to help them become happy, and to bring them safely home to Him. Lucifer's attacks on the plan are intended to make the sons and daughters of God confused and unhappy and to halt their eternal progression. The over arching intent of the father of lies is that all of us would become "miserable like unto himself" (2 Ne. 2:27), and he works to warp the elements of the Father's plan he hates the most. Satan does not have a body, he cannot marry, and he will not have a family. And he persistently strives to confuse the divinely appointed purposes of gender, marriage, and family. Throughout the world, we see growing evidence of the effectiveness of Satan's efforts.
33. More recently the devil has attempted to combine and legally validate confusion about gender and marriage. As we look beyond mortality and into eternity, it is easy to discern that the counterfeit alternatives the adversary advocates can never lead to the completeness that is made possible through the sealing together of a man

and a woman, to the happiness of righteous marriage, to the joy of posterity, or to the blessing of eternal progression.

34. Given what we know about our enemy's intent, each of us should be especially vigilant in seeking personal inspiration as to how we can protect and safeguard our own marriages—and how we can learn and teach correct principles in the home and in our Church assignments about the eternal significance of gender and of the role of marriage in the Father's plan.
35. Principle 3: The ultimate blessings of love and happiness are obtained through the covenant relationship of eternal marriage.
36. The Lord Jesus Christ is the focal point in a covenant marriage relationship. Please notice how the Savior is positioned at the apex of this triangle, with a woman at the base of one corner and a man at the base of the other corner. Now consider what happens in the relationship between the man and the woman as they individually and steadily "come unto Christ" and strive to be "perfected in Him" (Moro. 10:32). Because of and through the Redeemer, the man and the woman come closer together.
37. As a husband and wife are each drawn to the Lord (see 3 Ne. 27:14), as they learn to serve and cherish one another, as they share life experiences and grow together and become one, and as they are blessed through the uniting of their distinctive natures, they begin to realize the fulfillment that our Heavenly Father desires for His children. Ultimate happiness, which is the very object of the Father's plan, is received through the making and honoring of eternal marriage covenants.
38. As men and women, as husbands and wives, and as Church leaders, one of our paramount responsibilities is to help young men and women learn about and prepare for righteous marriage through our personal example. As young women and men observe worthiness, loyalty, sacrifice, and the honoring of covenants in our marriages, then those youth will seek to emulate the same principles in their courting and marriage relationships. As young people notice that we have made the comfort and convenience of our eternal companion our highest priority, then they will become less self-centered and more able to give, to serve, and to create an equal and enduring companionship. As young women and men perceive mutual respect, affection, trust, and love between a husband and a wife, then they will strive to cultivate the same characteristics in their lives. Our children and the youth of the Church will learn the most from what we do and what we are—even if they remember relatively little of what we say.

39. Unfortunately many young members of the Church today are fearful of and stumble in their progress toward eternal marriage because they have seen too much of divorce in the world and of broken covenants in their homes and in the Church.
40. Eternal marriage is not merely a temporary legal contract that can be terminated at any time for almost any reason. Rather, it is a sacred covenant with God that can be binding in time and throughout all eternity. Faithfulness and fidelity in marriage must not simply be attractive words spoken in sermons; rather, they should be principles evident in our own covenant marriage relationships.
41. As we consider the importance of our personal example, do you and I discern areas where we need to improve? Is the Holy Ghost inspiring our minds and softening our hearts and encouraging us to do and to become better? As priesthood and auxiliary leaders, are we focusing our efforts on strengthening marriage and the home?
42. Husbands and wives need time together to fortify themselves and their homes against the attacks of the adversary. As we strive to magnify our callings in the Church, are we unintentionally hindering husbands and wives and mothers and fathers from fulfilling their sacred responsibilities in the home? For example, do we sometimes schedule unnecessary meetings and activities in a way that interferes with the essential relationship between a husband and a wife and their relationships with children?
43. As we sincerely ponder these questions, I am confident the Spirit is even now helping and will continue to help each of us learn the things we should do at home and in the Church.

The Spiritual Resources We Need

44. Our responsibilities to learn and understand the doctrine of the plan, to uphold and be examples of righteous marriage, and to teach correct principles in the home and at church may cause us to wonder if we are equal to the task. We are ordinary people who must accomplish a most extraordinary work.
45. Many years ago, Sister Bednar and I were busy trying to meet the countless competing demands of a young and energetic family—and of Church, career, and community responsibilities. One evening after the children were asleep, we talked at length about how effectively we were attending to all of our important priorities. We realized that we would not receive the promised blessings in eternity if we did not honor more fully the covenant we had made in mortality. We resolved together to do and to be better as a husband

and a wife. That lesson learned so many years ago has made a tremendous difference in our marriage.

46. The sweet and simple doctrine of the plan of happiness provides precious eternal perspective and helps us understand the importance of eternal marriage. We have been blessed with all of the spiritual resources we need. We have the fullness of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. We have the Holy Ghost and revelation. We have saving ordinances, covenants, and temples. We have priesthood and prophets. We have the holy scriptures and the power of the word of God. And we have The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
47. I testify that we have been blessed with all of the spiritual resources we need to learn about, to teach, to strengthen, and to defend righteous marriage—and that indeed we can live together in happiness as husbands and wives and families in eternity. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes:

1. See First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999; or Liahona, Dec. 1999, 1; Ensign, June 1999, 80.
2. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Liahona, Oct. 2004, 49; or Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102.
3. Liahona, Oct. 2004, 49; or Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102.
4. Liahona, Oct. 2004, 49; or Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102.
5. Liahona, Oct. 2004, 49; or Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102.
6. Liahona, Oct. 2004, 49; or Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1938), 297–98.

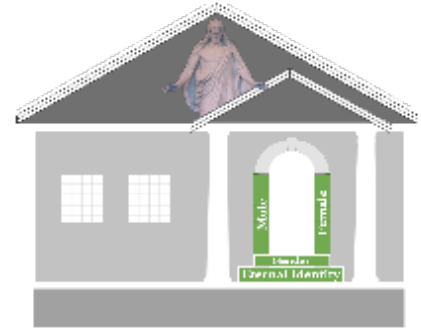
Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan

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It is Not Good for Man or Woman to Be Alone

Sheri L. Dew
Ensign, November 2001



1. For nearly five years, I have had the blessing of serving with Relief Society sisters and priesthood leaders from Africa to the Amazon. These experiences with you have reinforced for me the importance of a fundamental gospel principle. I wish to direct my remarks about this principle especially to the young adult men and women of the Church, who are embarking upon a most demanding phase of their lives.
2. This summer I injured a shoulder and lost the use of an arm for weeks. I hadn't realized how much one arm depends upon the other for balance, or how much less I could lift with one arm than two, or that there were some things I couldn't do at all. This disability not only renewed my respect for those who deal so well with a physical limitation, but helped me realize how much more two arms working together can do.
3. Two are usually better than one, as our Father confirmed when He declared that "it was not good that the man should be alone" and made a help meet for Adam—someone with distinct gifts who would give him balance, help him shoulder the burdens of mortality, and enable him to do things he couldn't do alone. For "neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."
4. Satan understands the power of men and women united in righteousness. He is still stinging from his banishment into eternal exile after Michael led the hosts of heaven, comprised of valiant men and women united in the cause of Christ, against him. In the chilling words of Peter, "The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Lucifer is determined to devour marriages and families, because their demise threatens the salvation of all involved and the vitality of the Lord's kingdom itself. Thus, Satan seeks to confuse us about our stewardships and distinctive natures as men and women. He bombards us with bizarre messages about gender, marriage, family, and all male-female relationships. He would have us believe men and women are so alike that our unique gifts are not necessary, or so different we can never hope to understand each other. Neither is true.
5. Our Father knew exactly what He was doing when He created us. He made us enough alike to love each other, but enough different that we would need to unite our strengths and stewardships to create a whole. Neither man nor woman is perfect or complete without the other. Thus, no marriage or family, no ward or stake is likely to reach its full potential until husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, men and women work together in unity of purpose, respecting and relying upon each other's strengths.
6. These truths about the divinely appointed stewardships of men and women are largely lost on the world today. You will not find them on a TV sitcom or even, sadly, in some homes and wards. But they are not lost to the Lord, who has given us "a pattern in all things, that [we] may not be deceived." The Lord's pattern for couples and in large measure men and women serving together in His kingdom was established by our first parents. Together Adam and Eve labored, mourned, were obedient, had children, taught their posterity the gospel, called upon the name of the Lord, "heard the voice of the Lord," blessed the name of God, and dedicated themselves to God. Repeatedly the scriptures about Adam and Eve refer to the pronoun they.
7. Neither Adam with his priesthood nor Eve with her motherhood could bring about the Fall alone. Their unique roles were interconnected. They counseled with one another, lifted burdens neither could have lifted alone, and then faced the wilderness, with all of its uncertainty, together. This is the Lord's pattern for righteous men and women.
8. Now, some of us encounter life circumstances that are less than ideal. I understand this. I personally deal with this. And yet, my dear young friends, in whose hands rests the future of the Church and its families, I must tell you that your understanding of this divine pattern will affect your marriage, your family, your ability to help build the kingdom, and your eternal life.
9. My young sisters, some will try to persuade you that

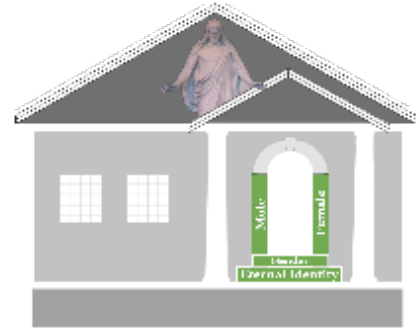
because you are not ordained to the priesthood you have been shortchanged. They are simply wrong, and they do not understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. The blessings of the priesthood are available to every righteous man and woman. We may all receive the Holy Ghost, obtain personal revelation, and be endowed in the temple, from which we emerge “armed” with power. The power of the priesthood heals, protects, and inoculates all of the righteous against the powers of darkness. Most significantly, the fullness of the priesthood contained in the highest ordinances of the house of the Lord can only be received by a man and woman together. Said President Harold B. Lee: “Pure womanhood plus priesthood means exaltation. But womanhood without priesthood, or priesthood without pure womanhood doesn’t spell exaltation.”

10. Sisters, we as women are not diminished by priesthood power, we are magnified by it. I know this is true, for I have experienced it again and again.
11. Your future husbands and the men with whom you serve will need the support only you can give. You have an inner spiritual strength that President James E. Faust said equals and even surpasses that of men. Do not abdicate your spiritual responsibility. Your faith will preach compelling sermons. No amount of time in front of the mirror will make you as attractive as having the Holy Ghost with you. Bless your family and the Church as only a woman of God can—with virtue, faith, integrity, and constant compassion.
12. Young men, your ordination to the priesthood is a grand privilege and responsibility, and not a license to dominate. Be unfailingly worthy to exercise this godly power, which is given you to be of service. A man is never more magnificent than when he is guided by the Spirit to honor the priesthood he holds.
13. If you will marry a virtuous woman who can hear the voice of the Lord, she will bless your life every day of your life. Consider Eve. She was the first to see that the fruit of the tree was good, and after partaking, she “gave unto her husband . . . , and he did eat.” Were it not for Eve, our progression would have ceased. Elder Dallin H. Oaks stated that her act was “a glorious necessity [that opened] the doorway toward eternal life. Adam showed his wisdom by doing the same.”
14. Young men, you will preside at home and in the Church. But be humble enough to listen to and learn from the women in your life. They will provide insight, balance, and unique wisdom. And when challenges come, you will see how resilient a woman committed to God the Father and Jesus Christ is.
15. This divine pattern for men and women that strengthens marriages and families also fortifies the Church. For the Church cannot achieve the full measure of its creation unless both faithful men who bear the priesthood and righteous women who rejoice in serving under the direction of the priesthood work together. Time and again I have experienced this joy.
16. I think of a meeting in Brazil where I had a translator who was unsure of her ability to convert my English into Portuguese. But as it turned out, she and I communicated with ease. After the meeting I found out why. I learned that not only had the General Authority who presided been literally on the edge of his seat behind us the entire meeting, prompting the translator when necessary, but he had also assigned another priesthood leader to pray for both of us throughout the meeting.
17. That General Authority created a safety net of support so that I could fulfill the assignment he had given me. Such a circle of support has no end, because there is no end to the good works of righteous men and women who respect each other and who thrust in their sickles and reap, side by side, in the Lord’s vineyard. If we are going to build the kingdom of God, we as men and women of God must build each other. There is no challenge—with activation, retention, families, or anything—that we can’t solve when we counsel together in councils and help each other lift the load.
18. My dear young friends, learn the Lord’s pattern for men and women now. Ponder the scriptural accounts of Adam and Eve and see what the Lord will teach you that will strengthen your marriage, your family, and your Church service. Recent devastating events in the United States seem to indicate difficult days ahead. But they are days that will be filled with confidence and courage if the men and women of your generation unite in righteousness as never before. There is no limit to what you can accomplish if you will work together, equally yoked, under the guidance of the priesthood.
19. Our Father’s patterns help us avoid deception. Look to the Lord and not to the world for your ideas and ideals about men and women. For, my young friends, you are the mothers, fathers, and leaders who were reserved for this unprecedented time because our Father knows you, and He knows you have what it takes to face the world and to be fearless in building the kingdom. Do it together, for it is not good for man or woman to be alone. Lift each other, and together you will be able to lift the beautiful burdens of mortality and have glory added upon your heads forever. The Lord must have righteous men and righteous women to build His kingdom. I know that this is so. God is our Father. His Only Begotten Son is the Christ. This is Their work and Their glory. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



The Moral Force of Women

Elder D. Todd Christofferson
General Conference, October 2013



1. From age immemorial, societies have relied on the moral force of women. While certainly not the only positive influence at work in society, the moral foundation provided by women has proved uniquely beneficial to the common good. Perhaps, because it is pervasive, this contribution of women is often underappreciated. I wish to express gratitude for the influence of good women, identify some of the philosophies and trends that threaten women's strength and standing, and voice a plea to women to cultivate the innate moral power within them.
2. Women bring with them into the world a certain virtue, a divine gift that makes them adept at instilling such qualities as faith, courage, empathy, and refinement in relationships and in cultures. When praising the "unfeigned faith" he found in Timothy, Paul noted that this faith "dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice."¹
3. Years ago, while living in Mexico, I observed firsthand what Paul meant. I recall a particular young mother, one of many among the women of the Church in Mexico whose faith in God graces their lives so naturally that they seem scarcely aware of it. This lovely woman radiated a moral authority, born of goodness, that influenced all around her for good. With her husband, she sacrificed a number of pleasures and possessions for their higher priorities, seemingly without a second thought. Her ability to perform feats of lifting, bending, and balancing with her children was near superhuman. The demands on her were many and her tasks often repetitive and mundane, yet underneath it all was a beautiful serenity, a sense of being about God's work. As with the Savior, she was ennobled by blessing others through service and sacrifice. She was love personified.
4. I have been remarkably blessed by the moral influence of women, in particular my mother and my wife. Among other women that I look to in gratitude is Anna Daines. Anna and her husband, Henry, and their four children were among the pioneers of the Church in New Jersey, in the United States. Beginning in the 1930s, when Henry was a doctoral student at Rutgers University, he and Anna worked tirelessly with school and civic organizations in Metuchen, where they lived, to overcome deeply rooted prejudice against Mormons and to make the community a better place for all parents to raise their children.
5. Anna, for example, volunteered at the Metuchen YMCA and made herself indispensable. Within a year she was appointed president of the Mothers' Auxiliary and then "was asked to run for one of the three women's positions on the YMCA board of directors. She won without opposition, and so joined the very council that only a few years before had refused to let the Saints meet in their building!"²
6. My family moved into the New Brunswick Ward when I was a teenager. Sister Daines took notice of me and often expressed her confidence in my abilities and potential, which inspired me to reach high—higher than I would have without her encouragement. Once, because of a thoughtful and timely warning from her, I avoided a situation that would surely have led to regret. Although she is no longer here, Anna Daines's influence continues to be felt and reflected in the lives of her descendants and countless others, myself included.
7. My grandmother Adena Warnick Swenson taught me to be conscientious in priesthood service. She encouraged me to memorize the sacramental blessings on the bread and water, explaining that in this way I could express them with greater understanding and feeling. Observing how she sustained my grandfather, a stake patriarch, engendered in me a reverence for sacred things. Grandma Swenson never learned how to drive a car, but she knew how to help boys become priesthood men.
8. A woman's moral influence is nowhere more powerfully felt or more beneficially employed than in the home. There is no better setting for rearing the rising generation than the traditional family, where a father and a mother work in harmony to provide for, teach, and nurture their children. Where this ideal does not exist, people strive to duplicate its benefits as best they can in their particular circumstances.
9. In all events, a mother can exert an influence unequalled by any other person in any other relationship. By the power of her example and teaching, her sons learn to respect womanhood and to incorporate discipline and high moral standards in their own lives. Her daughters learn to cultivate their own virtue and to stand up for

what is right, again and again, however unpopular. A mother's love and high expectations lead her children to act responsibly without excuses, to be serious about education and personal development, and to make ongoing contributions to the well-being of all around them. Elder Neal A. Maxwell once asked: "When the real history of mankind is fully disclosed, will it feature the echoes of gunfire or the shaping sound of lullabies? The great armistices made by military men or the peacemaking of women in homes and in neighborhoods? Will what happened in cradles and kitchens prove to be more controlling than what happened in congresses?"³

10. Most sacred is a woman's role in the creation of life. We know that our physical bodies have a divine origin⁴ and that we must experience both a physical birth and a spiritual rebirth to reach the highest realms in God's celestial kingdom.⁵ Thus, women play an integral part (sometimes at the risk of their own lives) in God's work and glory "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."⁶ As grandmothers, mothers, and role models, women have been the guardians of the wellspring of life, teaching each generation the importance of sexual purity—of chastity before marriage and fidelity within marriage. In this way, they have been a civilizing influence in society; they have brought out the best in men; they have perpetuated wholesome environments in which to raise secure and healthy children.
11. Sisters, I don't want to overpraise you as we sometimes do in Mother's Day talks that make you cringe. You don't have to be perfect;⁷ I don't claim that you are (with one possible exception who is sitting nearby at the moment). What I mean to say is that whether you are single or married, whether you have borne children or not, whether you are old, young, or in between, your moral authority is vital, and perhaps we have begun to take it and you for granted. Certainly there are trends and forces at work that would weaken and even eliminate your influence, to the great detriment of individuals, families, and society at large. Let me mention three as a caution and a warning.
12. A pernicious philosophy that undermines women's moral influence is the devaluation of marriage and of motherhood and homemaking as a career. Some view homemaking with outright contempt, arguing it demeans women and that the relentless demands of raising children are a form of exploitation.⁸ They ridicule what they call "the mommy track" as a career. This is not fair or right. We do not diminish the value of what women or men achieve in any worthy endeavor or career—we all benefit from those achievements—but we still recognize there is not a higher good than motherhood and fatherhood in marriage. There is no superior career, and no amount of money, authority, or public acclaim can exceed the ultimate rewards of family. Whatever else a woman may accomplish, her moral influence is no more optimally employed than here.
13. Attitudes toward human sexuality threaten the moral authority of women on several fronts. Abortion for personal or social convenience strikes at the heart of a woman's most sacred powers and destroys her moral authority. The same is true of sexual immorality and of revealing dress that not only debases women but reinforces the lie that a woman's sexuality is what defines her worth.
14. There has long been a cultural double standard that expected women to be sexually circumspect while excusing male immorality. The unfairness of such a double standard is obvious, and it has been justifiably criticized and rejected. In that rejection, one would have hoped that men would rise to the higher, single standard, but just the opposite has occurred—women and girls are now encouraged to be as promiscuous as the double standard expected men to be. Where once women's higher standards demanded commitment and responsibility from men, we now have sexual relations without conscience, fatherless families, and growing poverty. Equal-opportunity promiscuity simply robs women of their moral influence and degrades all of society.⁹ In this hollow bargain, it is men who are "liberated" and women and children who suffer most.
15. A third area of concern comes from those who, in the name of equality, want to erase all differences between the masculine and the feminine. Often this takes the form of pushing women to adopt more masculine traits—be more aggressive, tough, and confrontational. It is now common in movies and video games to see women in terribly violent roles, leaving dead bodies and mayhem in their wake. It is soul-numbing to see men in such roles and certainly no less so when women are the ones perpetrating and suffering the violence.
16. Former Young Women general president Margaret D. Nadauld taught: "The world has enough women who are tough; we need women who are tender. There are enough women who are coarse; we need women who are kind. There are enough women who are rude; we need women who are refined. We have enough women of fame and fortune; we need more women of faith. We have enough greed; we need more goodness. We have enough vanity; we need more virtue. We have enough popularity; we need more purity."¹⁰ In blurring feminine and masculine differences, we lose the distinct, complementary gifts of women and men that together produce a greater whole.
17. My plea to women and girls today is to protect and cultivate the moral force that is within you. Preserve that innate virtue and the unique gifts you bring with you into the world. Your intuition is to do good and to be good, and as you follow the Holy Spirit, your moral

authority and influence will grow. To the young women I say, don't lose that moral force even before you have it in full measure. Take particular care that your language is clean, not coarse; that your dress reflects modesty, not vanity; and that your conduct manifests purity, not promiscuity. You cannot lift others to virtue on the one hand if you are entertaining vice on the other.

18. Sisters, of all your associations, it is your relationship with God, your Heavenly Father, who is the source of your moral power, that you must always put first in your life. Remember that Jesus's power came through His single-minded devotion to the will of the Father. He never varied from that which pleased His Father.¹¹ Strive to be that kind of disciple of the Father and the Son, and your influence will never fade.
19. And do not be afraid to apply that influence without fear or apology. "Be ready always to give an answer to every [man, woman, and child] that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."¹² "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."¹³ "Bring up your children in light and truth."¹⁴ "Teach [them] to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord."¹⁵
20. In these exhortations to women, let no one willfully misunderstand. By praising and encouraging the moral force in women, I am not saying that men and boys are somehow excused from their own duty to stand for truth and righteousness, that their responsibility to serve, sacrifice, and minister is somehow less than that of women or can be left to women. Brethren, let us stand with women, share their burdens, and cultivate our own companion moral authority.
21. Dear sisters, we rely on the moral force you bring to the world, to marriage, to family, to the Church. We rely on blessings you bring down from heaven by your prayers and faith. We pray for your security, welfare, and happiness and for your influence to be sustained. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. 2 Timothy 1:5.
2. Orson Scott Card, "Neighborliness: Daines Style," *Ensign*, Apr. 1977, 19.
3. Neal A. Maxwell, "The Women of God," *Ensign*, May 1978, 10–11.
4. See Moses 2:27.
5. See Moses 6:57–60.
6. Moses 1:39.
7. "A century ago, attachment scholar John Bowlby found that the bond created through the innumerable caring interactions between a mother and child is the critical foundation for social-emotional development. ... And feminist scholar Sara Ruddick identified a mother's 'attentive love' as the core of effective parenting. Through the 'patient eye of love,' mothers develop a special knowledge of their children—a knowledge that gives them unique insight into what the truly 'best practices' for each child should be" (Jenet Jacob Erickson, "Love, Not Perfection, Root of Good Mothering," *Deseret News*, May 12, 2013, G3).
8. It is true that many women over many generations have been exploited or saddled

with unfair burdens both in family and employment, but selflessness and sacrifice need not and should not become abusive or exploitative. Elder Bruce C. Hafen observed: "If being 'selfless' means a woman must give up her own inner identity and personal growth, that understanding of selflessness is wrong. ... But today's liberationist model goes too far the other way, stereotyping women as excessively independent of their families. A more sensible view is that husbands and wives are interdependent with each other. ... The critics who moved mothers from dependence to independence skipped the fertile middle ground of interdependence. Those who moved mothers from selflessness to selfishness skipped the fertile middle ground of self-chosen service that contributes toward a woman's personal growth. Because of these excesses, debates about the value of motherhood have, ironically, caused the general society to discount not only mothers but women in general" ("Motherhood and the Moral Influence of Women" [remarks to the World Congress of Families II, Geneva, Plenary Session IV, Nov. 16, 1999], http://worldcongress.org/wcf2_spkrs/wcf2_hafen).

9. One mother in a Wall Street Journal editorial observed: "With the exception of some Mormons, evangelicals and Orthodox Jews, scads of us don't know how to teach our own sons and daughters not to give away their bodies so readily. ... Still, in my own circle of girlfriends, the desire to push back is strong. I don't know one of them who doesn't have feelings of lingering discomfort regarding her own sexual past. And not one woman I've ever asked about the subject has said that she wishes she'd 'experimented' more" (Jennifer Moses, "Why Do We Let Them Dress Like That?" *Wall Street Journal*, Mar. 19, 2011, C3).

10. Margaret D. Nadauld, "The Joy of Womanhood," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 15; or *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 18.

11. See John 8:29.

12. 1 Peter 3:15.

13. 2 Timothy 4:2.

14. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40.

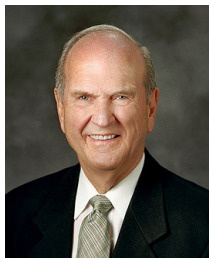
15. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28.

It is Not Good for Man or Woman to Be Alone

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2001/10/it-is-not-good-for-man-or-woman-to-be-alone?lang=eng>

The Moral Force of Women

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/the-moral-force-of-women?lang=eng#watch=video>



A Plea to My Sisters

President Russell M. Nelson
Ensign, November 2015



1. Brothers and sisters, when we met in general conference six months ago, none of us anticipated the coming changes that would tug at the heartstrings of the entire Church. Elder L. Tom Perry delivered a powerful message about the irreplaceable role that marriage and family occupy in the Lord's plan. We were stunned when just a few days later, we learned of the cancer that would soon take him from us.
2. Though President Boyd K. Packer's health had been declining, he continued to "soldier on" in the work of the Lord. He was frail last April, yet he was determined to declare his witness as long as he had breath. Then, just 34 days after Elder Perry's passing, President Packer also stepped across the veil.
3. We missed Elder Richard G. Scott at our last general conference, but we've reflected upon the powerful witness of the Savior he had borne in many previous conferences. And just 12 days ago, Elder Scott was called home and reunited with his beloved Jeanene.
4. I had the privilege of being with all of these Brethren during their final days, including joining members of President Packer's and Elder Scott's immediate families just before their passing. It has been difficult for me to believe that these three treasured friends, these magnificent servants of the Lord, are gone. I miss them more than I can say.
5. As I've reflected on this unexpected turn of events, one of the impressions that has lingered with me is that which I observed in these surviving wives. Etched in my mind are the serene images of Sister Donna Smith Packer and Sister Barbara Dayton Perry at their husbands' bedsides, both women filled with love, truth, and pure faith.
6. As Sister Packer sat next to her husband in his final hours, she radiated that peace that passes all understanding. Though she realized that her beloved companion of almost 70 years would soon depart, she showed the tranquility of a faith-filled woman. She seemed angelic, just as she was in this photo of them at the dedication of the Brigham City Utah Temple.
7. I saw that same kind of love and faith emanating from Sister Perry. Her devotion to both her husband and the Lord was obvious, and it moved me deeply.
8. Through their husbands' final hours and continuing to the present day, these stalwart women have shown the strength and courage that covenant-keeping women always demonstrate. It would be impossible to measure the influence that such women have, not only on families but also on the Lord's Church, as wives, mothers, and grandmothers; as sisters and aunts; as teachers and leaders; and especially as exemplars and devout defenders of the faith.
9. This has been true in every gospel dispensation since the days of Adam and Eve. Yet the women of this dispensation are distinct from the women of any other because this dispensation is distinct from any other. This distinction brings both privileges and responsibilities.
10. Thirty-six years ago, in 1979, President Spencer W. Kimball made a profound prophecy about the impact that covenant-keeping women would have on the future of the Lord's Church. He prophesied: "Much of the major growth that is coming to the Church in the last days will come because many of the good women of the world ... will be drawn to the Church in large numbers. This will happen to the degree that the women of the Church reflect righteousness and articulateness in their lives and to the degree that the women of the Church are seen as distinct and different—in happy ways—from the women of the world."
11. My dear sisters, you who are our vital associates during this winding-up scene, the day that President Kimball foresaw is today. You are the women he foresaw! Your virtue, light, love, knowledge, courage, character, faith, and righteous lives will draw good women of the world, along with their families, to the Church in unprecedented numbers!
12. We, your brethren, need your strength, your conversion, your conviction, your ability to lead, your wisdom, and your voices. The kingdom of God is not and cannot be

complete without women who make sacred covenants and then keep them, women who can speak with the power and authority of God!

13. President Packer declared:
14. “We need women who are organized and women who can organize. We need women with executive ability who can plan and direct and administer; women who can teach, women who can speak out. ...
15. “We need women with the gift of discernment who can view the trends in the world and detect those that, however popular, are shallow or dangerous.”
16. Today, let me add that we need women who know how to make important things happen by their faith and who are courageous defenders of morality and families in a sin-sick world. We need women who are devoted to shepherding God’s children along the covenant path toward exaltation; women who know how to receive personal revelation, who understand the power and peace of the temple endowment; women who know how to call upon the powers of heaven to protect and strengthen children and families; women who teach fearlessly.
17. Throughout my life, I have been blessed by such women. My departed wife, Dantzel, was such a woman. I will always be grateful for the life-changing influence she had on me in all aspects of my life, including my pioneering efforts in open-heart surgery.
18. Fifty-eight years ago I was asked to operate upon a little girl, gravely ill from congenital heart disease. Her older brother had previously died of a similar condition. Her parents pleaded for help. I was not optimistic about the outcome but vowed to do all in my power to save her life. Despite my best efforts, the child died. Later, the same parents brought another daughter to me, then just 16 months old, also born with a malformed heart. Again, at their request, I performed an operation. This child also died. This third heartbreaking loss in one family literally undid me.
19. I went home grief stricken. I threw myself upon our living room floor and cried all night long. Dantzel stayed by my side, listening as I repeatedly declared that I would never perform another heart operation. Then, around 5:00 in the morning, Dantzel looked at me and lovingly asked, “Are you finished crying? Then get dressed. Go back to the lab. Go to work! You need to learn more. If you quit now, others will have to painfully learn what you already know.”
20. Oh, how I needed my wife’s vision, grit, and love! I went back to work and learned more. If it weren’t for Dantzel’s inspired prodding, I would not have pursued open-heart

surgery and would not have been prepared to do the operation in 1972 that saved the life of President Spencer W. Kimball.

21. Sisters, do you realize the breadth and scope of your influence when you speak those things that come to your heart and mind as directed by the Spirit? A superb stake president told me of a stake council meeting in which they were wrestling with a difficult challenge. At one point, he realized that the stake Primary president had not spoken, so he asked if she had any impressions. “Well, actually I have,” she said and then proceeded to share a thought that changed the entire direction of the meeting. The stake president continued, “As she spoke, the Spirit testified to me that she had given voice to the revelation we had been seeking as a council.”
22. My dear sisters, whatever your calling, whatever your circumstances, we need your impressions, your insights, and your inspiration. We need you to speak up and speak out in ward and stake councils. We need each married sister to speak as “a contributing and full partner” as you unite with your husband in governing your family. Married or single, you sisters possess distinctive capabilities and special intuition you have received as gifts from God. We brethren cannot duplicate your unique influence.
23. We know that the culminating act of all creation was the creation of woman! We need your strength!
24. Attacks against the Church, its doctrine, and our way of life are going to increase. Because of this, we need women who have a bedrock understanding of the doctrine of Christ and who will use that understanding to teach and help raise a sin-resistant generation.¹² We need women who can detect deception in all of its forms. We need women who know how to access the power that God makes available to covenant keepers and who express their beliefs with confidence and charity. We need women who have the courage and vision of our Mother Eve.
25. My dear sisters, nothing is more crucial to your eternal life than your own conversion. It is converted, covenant-keeping women—women like my dear wife Wendy—whose righteous lives will increasingly stand out in a deteriorating world and who will thus be seen as different and distinct in the happiest of ways.
26. So today I plead with my sisters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to step forward! Take your rightful and needful place in your home, in your community, and in the kingdom of God—more than you ever have before. I plead with you to fulfill President Kimball’s prophecy. And I promise you in the name of Jesus Christ that as you do so, the Holy Ghost will magnify your influence in an unprecedented way!

27. I bear witness of the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His redeeming, atoning, and sanctifying power. And as one of His Apostles, I thank you, my dear sisters, and bless you to rise to your full stature, to fulfill the measure of your creation, as we walk arm in arm in this sacred work. Together we will help prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord. Of this I testify, as your brother, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

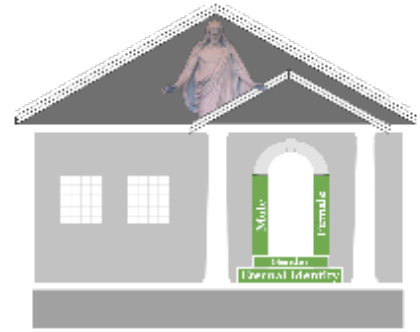
A Plea to My Sisters

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/10/a-plea-to-my-sisters?lang=eng>



“Brethren We Have a Work to Do” & “Let Us Be Men” (Excerpts)

Elder D. Todd Christofferson
General Conference, October 2006 & 2012



Brethren We Have a Work to Do

1. Brethren, much has been said and written in recent years about the challenges of men and boys. A sampling of book titles, for example, includes *Why There Are No Good Men Left*, *The Demise of Guys*, *The End of Men*, *Why Boys Fail*, and *Manning Up*. Interestingly, most of these seem to have been written by women. In any case, a common thread running through these analyses is that in many societies today men and boys get conflicting and demeaning signals about their roles and value in society.
2. The author of *Manning Up* characterized it this way: “It’s been an almost universal rule of civilization that whereas girls became women simply by reaching physical maturity, boys had to pass a test. They needed to demonstrate courage, physical prowess, or mastery of the necessary skills. The goal was to prove their competence as protectors of women and children; this was always their primary social role. Today, however, with women moving ahead in an advanced economy, provider husbands and fathers are now optional, and the character qualities men had needed to play their role—fortitude, stoicism, courage, fidelity—are obsolete and even a little embarrassing.”¹
3. In their zeal to promote opportunity for women, something we applaud, there are those who denigrate men and their contributions. They seem to think of life as a competition between male and female—that one must dominate the other, and now it’s the women’s turn. Some argue that a career is everything and marriage and children should be entirely optional—therefore, why do we need men?² In too many Hollywood films, TV and cable shows, and even commercials, men are portrayed as incompetent, immature, or self-absorbed. This cultural emasculation of males is having a damaging effect. ...
4. Some men and young men have taken the negative signals as an excuse to avoid responsibility and never really grow up. In an observation that is too often accurate, one university professor remarked, “The men come into class with their backward baseball caps and [their lame] the ‘word processor ate my homework’ excuses. Meanwhile, the women are checking their day planners and asking for recommendations for law school.”³ One female movie reviewer expressed the rather cynical view that “what we can count on men for, if we’re lucky and we choose to have a partner, is to be just that—a partner. Someone who stands in his own space even as he respects our standing in our own.”⁴
5. Brethren, it cannot be this way with us. As men of the priesthood, we have an essential role to play in society, at home, and in the Church. But we must be men that women can trust, that children can trust, and that God can trust. In the Church and kingdom of God in these latter days, we cannot afford to have boys and men who are drifting. We cannot afford young men who lack self-discipline and live only to be entertained. We cannot afford young adult men who are going nowhere in life, who are not serious about forming families and making a real contribution in this world. We cannot afford husbands and fathers who fail to provide spiritual leadership in the home. We cannot afford to have those who exercise the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God, waste their strength in pornography or spend their lives in cyberspace (ironically being of the world while not being in the world).
6. Brethren, we have work to do.
7. Young men, you need to do well in school and then continue your education beyond high school. Some of you will want to pursue university studies and careers in business, agriculture, government, or other professions. Some will excel in the arts, music, or teaching. Others will choose a military career or learn a trade. Over the years, I have had a number of craftsmen work on projects and repairs at my home, and I have admired the hard work and skill of these men. In whatever you choose, it is essential that you become proficient so that you can support a family and make a contribution for good in your community and your country. ...
8. You adult men—fathers, single adults, leaders, home teachers—be worthy models and help the rising generation of boys become men. Teach them social and other skills: how to participate in a conversation, how to get acquainted and interact with others, how to relate to women and girls, how to serve, how to be active

and enjoy recreation, how to pursue hobbies without becoming addicted, how to correct mistakes and make better choices.

9. And so to all who are listening, wherever this message may reach you, I say as Jehovah said to Joshua, “Be strong and of a good courage” (Joshua 1:6). Take heart and prepare the best you can, whatever your circumstances. Prepare to be a good husband and father; prepare to be a good and productive citizen; prepare to serve the Lord, whose priesthood you hold. Wherever you are, your Heavenly Father is mindful of you. You are not alone, and you have the priesthood and the gift of the Holy Ghost. ...
10. Of course, as has been repeated by prophets over the years, “The most important of the Lord’s work you will ever do will be within the walls of your own homes.”⁵ We have much to do to strengthen marriage in societies that increasingly trivialize its importance and purpose. We have much to do to teach our children “to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:28). Our task is nothing less than to help our children experience the mighty change of heart or conversion to the Lord spoken of so eloquently in the Book of Mormon (see Mosiah 5:1–12; Alma 26). Together with the Relief Society, priesthood quorums can build up parents and marriages, and quorums can provide the blessings of the priesthood to single-parent families.
11. Yes, brethren, we have work to do. Thank you for the sacrifices you make and the good you do. Keep going, and the Lord will help you. At times you may not know quite what to do or what to say—just move forward. Begin to act, and the Lord assures that “an effectual door shall be opened for [you]” (D&C 118:3). Begin to speak, and He promises, “You shall not be confounded before men; for it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say” (D&C 100:5–6). It is true that we are in many ways ordinary and imperfect, but we have a perfect Master who wrought a perfect Atonement, and we have call upon His grace and His priesthood. As we repent and purge our souls, we are promised that we will be taught and endowed with power from on high (see D&C 43:16).
12. The Church and the world and women are crying for men, men who are developing their capacity and talents, who are willing to work and make sacrifices, who will help others achieve happiness and salvation. They are crying, “Rise up, O men of God!”⁶ God help us to do it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Kay S. Hymowitz, Manning Up: How the Rise of Women Has Turned Men into Boys (2011), 16.
2. “When you ask young people today what will make them adults, almost no one mentions marriage. They are far more likely to see issues around work—completing education, financial independence, a full-time job—as

the signs that they have arrived. Work, career, independence: these are the primary sources of identity today” (Hymowitz, Manning Up, 45). The pressure on women to adopt this anti-marriage ethic is especially intense. A Times of London contributor wrote: “No one, not my family or my teachers, ever said, ‘Oh yes, and by the way you might want to be a wife and mother too.’ They were so determined we would follow a new, egalitarian, modern path that the historic ambitions of generations of women—to get married and raise a family—were intentionally airbrushed from their vision of our future” (Eleanor Mills, “Learning to Be Left on the Shelf,” Sunday Times, Apr. 18, 2010, www.thetimes.co.uk; in Hymowitz, Manning Up, 72). Another writer in her 40s quoted some responses to an article she wrote about her regrets over not marrying: “I am totally appalled by your need for a man,” “Get some self-esteem!” “You have taken codependency to a whole new low,” and “If my daughter grows up to want a man half as much as you do, I will know that I’ve done something wrong in raising her” (Lori Gottlieb, Marry Him: The Case for Settling for Mr. Good Enough [2010], 55). The good news is that most people, including educated young adults, aren’t buying the anti-marriage, antifamily message. “According to a study by a University of Pennsylvania economist, in the United States in 2008, 86 percent of college-educated white women were married by age 40, compared with 88 percent of those with less than a four-year degree. The numbers for white, college-educated men are similar: 84 percent of them were married by 40 in 2008. The conventional wisdom, not borne out by research, by the way, may have it that marriage is a raw deal for women. But college-educated white women don’t seem to believe it. They are the most likely of any group to think that ‘married people are generally happier than unmarried people.’ ... The large majority—70 percent—of first-year college students think raising a family is ‘essential’ or ‘very important’ to their futures” (Hymowitz, Manning Up, 173–74).

3. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *Why There Are No Good Men Left: The Romantic Plight of the New Single Woman* (2003), 67.

4. Amanda Dickson, “‘Hunger Games’ Main Character a Heroine for Our Day,” *Deseret News*, Apr. 2, 2012, www.deseretnews.com.

5. Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee (2000), 134.

6. “Rise Up, O Men of God,” Hymns, no. 323.

Let Us Be Men (excerpts)

1. Years ago, when my brothers and I were boys, our mother had radical cancer surgery. She came very close to death. Much of the tissue in her neck and shoulder had to be removed, and for a long time it was very painful for her to use her right arm.
2. One morning about a year after the surgery, my father took Mother to an appliance store and asked the manager to show her how to use a machine he had for ironing clothes. The machine was called an Ironrite. It was operated from a chair by pressing pedals with one’s knees to lower a padded roller against a heated metal surface and turn the roller, feeding in shirts, pants, dresses, and other articles. You can see that this would make ironing (of which there was a great deal in our family of five boys) much easier, especially for a woman with limited use of her arm. Mother was shocked when Dad told the manager they would buy the machine and then paid cash for it. Despite my father’s good income as a veterinarian, Mother’s surgery and medications had left them in a difficult financial situation.
3. On the way home, my mother was upset: “How can we afford it? Where did the money come from? How will

we get along now?” Finally Dad told her that he had gone without lunches for nearly a year to save enough money. “Now when you iron,” he said, “you won’t have to stop and go into the bedroom and cry until the pain in your arm stops.” She didn’t know he knew about that. I was not aware of my father’s sacrifice and act of love for my mother at the time, but now that I know, I say to myself, “There is a man.”

4. The prophet Lehi pled with his rebellious sons, saying, “Arise from the dust, my sons, and be men” (2 Nephi 1:21; emphasis added). By age, Laman and Lemuel were men, but in terms of character and spiritual maturity they were still as children. They murmured and complained if asked to do anything hard. They didn’t accept anyone’s authority to correct them. They didn’t value spiritual things. They easily resorted to violence, and they were good at playing the victim.
5. We see some of the same attitudes today. Some act as if a man’s highest goal should be his own pleasure. Permissive social mores have “let men off the hook” as it were, so that many think it acceptable to father children out of wedlock and to cohabit rather than marry. 1 Dodging commitments is considered smart, but sacrificing for the good of others, naive. For some, a life of work and achievement is optional. ...
6. We who hold the priesthood of God cannot afford to drift. We have work to do (see Moroni 9:6). We must arise from the dust of self-indulgence and be men! It is a wonderful aspiration for a boy to become a man—strong and capable; someone who can build and create things, run things; someone who makes a difference in the world. It is a wonderful aspiration for those of us who are older to make the vision of true manhood a reality in our lives and be models for those who look to us for an example.
7. In large measure, true manhood is defined in our relationship to women. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have given us the ideal to pursue in these words:
8. “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. ... 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.” 3
9. ... President Gordon B. Hinckley, speaking in this meeting in April 1998, gave specific counsel for young men:
10. “The girl you marry will take a terrible chance on you. ... [You] will largely determine the remainder of her life. ...
11. “Work for an education. Get all the training that you

can. The world will largely pay you what it thinks you are worth. Paul did not mince words when he wrote to Timothy, ‘But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel’ (1 Tim. 5:8).” 4

12. Integrity is fundamental to being men. Integrity means being truthful, but it also means accepting responsibility and honoring commitments and covenants. President N. Eldon Tanner, a former counselor in the First Presidency and a man of integrity, told of someone who sought his advice:
13. “A young man came to me not long ago and said, ‘I made an agreement with a man that requires me to make certain payments each year. I am in arrears, and I can’t make those payments, for if I do, it is going to cause me to lose my home. What shall I do?’
14. “I looked at him and said, ‘Keep your agreement.’
15. “‘Even if it costs me my home?’
16. “I said, ‘I am not talking about your home. I am talking about your agreement; and I think your wife would rather have a husband who would keep his word, meet his obligations, ... and have to rent a home than to have a home with a husband who will not keep his covenants and his pledges.’” 5
17. Good men sometimes make mistakes. A man of integrity will honestly face and correct his mistakes, and that is an example we can respect. Sometimes men try but fail. Not all worthy objectives are realized despite one’s honest and best efforts. True manhood is not always measured by the fruits of one’s labors but by the labors themselves—by one’s striving. 6
18. Though he will make some sacrifices and deny himself some pleasures in the course of honoring his commitments, the true man leads a rewarding life. He gives much, but he receives more, and he lives content in the approval of his Heavenly Father. The life of true manhood is the good life.
19. Most importantly, when we consider the admonition to be men, we must think of Jesus Christ. When Pilate brought Jesus forth wearing a crown of thorns, he declared, “Behold the man!” (see John 19:4–5). Pilate may not have fully understood the significance of his own words, but the Lord indeed stood before the people then as He stands today—the highest ideal of manhood. Behold the man!
20. The Lord asked His disciples what manner of men they should be and then answered, “Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27; see also 3 Nephi 18:24). That is our ultimate quest. What did He do that we can emulate as men?
21. Jesus rejected temptation. When confronted by the great tempter himself, Jesus “[yielded] not to the temptation” (Mosiah 15:5). He countered with scripture:

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Gospel commandments and standards are our protection also, and like the Savior, we may draw strength from the scriptures to resist temptation.

22. The Savior was obedient. He forsook completely the “natural man” (Mosiah 3:19) and yielded His will to the Father (see Mosiah 15:7). He was baptized to show “that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments” (2 Nephi 31:7).
23. Jesus “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). He employed the divine powers of the holy priesthood to bless those in need, “such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases” (Mosiah 3:5). Jesus told His Apostles: “Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:44–45). As His fellow servants, we may become great in His kingdom through love and service.
24. The Savior was fearless in opposing evil and error. “Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple ... and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matthew 21:12–13). He called upon all to repent (see Matthew 4:17) and be forgiven (see John 8:11; Alma 5:33). So might we stand firm in defending sacred things and in raising the warning voice.
25. He gave His life to redeem mankind. Surely we can accept responsibility for those He entrusts to our care.
26. Brethren, let us be men, even as He is.

Notes

1. See, for example, James E. Faust, “Challenges Facing the Family,” Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, Jan. 10, 2004, 1–2; Eduardo Porter and Michelle O’Donnell, “Middle-Aged, No Degree, No Wife,” *New York Times*, published in *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Aug. 6, 2006, p. A7; Peg Tyre, “The Trouble with Boys,” *Newsweek*, Jan. 30, 2006, 44–51.

2. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

3. “Living Worthy of the Girl You Will Someday Marry,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 49–50.

4. In *Conference Report*, Oct. 1966, 99; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1966, 1137.

5. In the late 1830s, after the Saints had abandoned Kirtland, the Lord called a man named Oliver Granger to go back and try to settle some unfinished matters for the First Presidency. In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said: “Therefore, let [Oliver Granger] contend earnestly for the redemption of the First Presidency of my Church, saith the Lord; and when he falls he shall rise again, for his sacrifice shall be more sacred unto me than his increase, saith the Lord. ... Therefore let no man despise my servant Oliver Granger, but let the blessings of my people be on him forever and

ever” (D&C 117:13, 15; emphasis added).

Brethren We Have a Work to Do

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2012/10/brethren-we-have-work-to-do?lang=eng#watch=video>

Let Us Be Men

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2006/10/let-us-be-men?lang=eng&query=Let+us+be+Men>



We'll Ascend Together

Linda K. Burton
Ensign, May 2015



1. Next to the inspiring talks, music, and prayers that always touch our hearts during general conference, I have been told by many sisters that what they love most is watching the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve as they exit this podium with their eternal companions. And don't we all enjoy hearing the Brethren tenderly express their love for them?
2. Speaking about his wife, Donna, President Boyd K. Packer said, "Because of the office I hold, I have a solemn obligation to tell the truth: She's perfect."
3. "She is the sunshine of my life," said President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of his wife, Harriet.
4. President Henry B. Eyring, referring to his wife, Kathleen, said, "She [is] a person who has always made me want to be the very best that I can be."
5. And President Thomas S. Monson, speaking of his beloved Frances, said, "She was the love of my life, my trusted confidant, and my closest friend. To say that I miss her does not begin to convey the depth of my feelings."
6. I too would like to express my love for my beloved companion, Craig. He is a precious gift to me! Referring to my husband, a cherished and sacred phrase in my patriarchal blessing promises that my life and the lives of my children will "be well in his keeping." It is clear to me that Craig is the fulfillment of that promise. Borrowing from the words of Mark Twain, I say that "life without [Craig] would not be life." I love him, heart and soul!

Divine Roles and Responsibilities

7. Today I wish to honor husbands, fathers, brothers, sons, and uncles who know who they are and who are doing their best to fulfill their God-given roles as described in the family proclamation, including righteously presiding and providing for and protecting their families. Please know that 8. I am painfully aware that the topics of fatherhood, motherhood, and marriage can be troubling for many. I know that some Church members feel that their homes will never reach what they perceive to be

the ideal. Many are hurting because of neglect, abuse, addictions, and incorrect traditions and culture. I do not condone the actions of men or women who have willfully or even ignorantly caused pain, anguish, and despair in their homes. But today I am speaking of something else.

9. I am convinced that a husband is never more attractive to his wife than when he is serving in his God-given roles as a worthy priesthood holder—most important in the home. I love and believe these words from President Packer to worthy husbands and fathers: "You have the power of the priesthood directly from the Lord to protect your home. There will be times when all that stands as a shield between your family and the adversary's mischief will be that power."

Spiritual Leaders and Teachers in the Home

10. Earlier this year I attended the funeral of an extraordinary ordinary man—my husband's uncle Don. One of Uncle Don's sons shared an experience he had as a small child, shortly after his parents had purchased their first home. Because there were five small children to feed and clothe, there was not enough money to fence the yard. Taking seriously one of his divine roles as the protector of his family, Uncle Don drove a few small wooden stakes into the ground, took some string, and tied the string from stake to stake all around the yard. He then called his children to him. He showed them the stakes and string and explained to them that if they would stay on the inside of that makeshift fence, they would be safe.
11. One day the visiting teachers watched in disbelief as they approached the house and saw five little children standing obediently at the edge of the string, looking longingly at a ball that had bounced beyond their boundaries and out into the street. One little child ran to get their daddy, who, in response, ran and retrieved the ball.
12. Later in the funeral, the oldest son tearfully expressed that all he had ever hoped in this life was to be like his beloved father.

13. President Ezra Taft Benson said:
14. "Oh, husbands and fathers in Israel, you can do so much for the salvation and exaltation of your families! ...
15. "Remember your sacred calling as a father in Israel—your most important calling in time and eternity—a calling from which you will never be released."
16. "You must help create a home where the Spirit of the Lord can abide."
17. How applicable those prophetic words are today.
18. It must be difficult, at best, for covenant men to live in a world that not only demeans their divine roles and responsibilities but also sends false messages about what it means to be a "real man." One false message is "It's all about me." On the other end of the scale is the degrading and mocking message that husbands and fathers are no longer needed. I plead with you not to listen to Satan's lies! He has forfeited that sacred privilege of ever becoming a husband or father. Because he is jealous of those who have the sacred roles he will never fill, he is intent on making "all men ... miserable like unto himself"!

Lifting and Helping in Our Complementary Roles

19. Brothers and sisters, we need each other! As covenant-keeping women and men, we need to lift each other and help each other become the people the Lord would have us become. And we need to work together to lift the rising generation and help them reach their divine potential as heirs of eternal life. We could do as Elder Robert D. Hales and his wife, Mary, have done and follow the proverb "Thee lift me and I'll lift thee, and we'll ascend together."
20. We know from the scriptures that "it is not good that ... man should be alone." That is why our Heavenly Father made "an help meet for him." The phrase help meet means "a helper suited to, worthy of, or corresponding to him." For example, our two hands are similar to each other but not exactly the same. In fact, they are exact opposites, but they complement each other and are suited to each other. Working together, they are stronger.
21. In a chapter about families, the Church handbook contains this statement: "The nature of male and female spirits is such that they complete each other." Please note that it does not say "compete with each other" but "complete each other"! We are here to help, lift, and rejoice with each other as we try to become our very

best selves. Sister Barbara B. Smith wisely taught, "There is so much more of happiness to be had when we can rejoice in another's successes and not just in our own." When we seek to "complete" rather than "compete," it is so much easier to cheer each other on!

22. When I was a young mother of several small children, at the end of days filled with diapering, dish washing, and disciplining, no one sang more emphatically the Primary song "I'm so glad when daddy comes home." I'm sad to admit, however, I was not always cheerful when Craig seemed to bounce through the door after a hard day of work. He always greeted each of us with a hug and kiss and turned many difficult and sometimes disastrous days into delightful daddy times. I wish I had been a little less preoccupied with the endless list of to-dos still to be done and had more wisely focused, like he did, on things that mattered most. I would have stopped more often and enjoyed sacred family time and would have thanked him more often for blessing our lives!

Let Us Oft Speak Kind Words to Each Other

23. Not long ago, a faithful sister in the Church shared with me a deep concern she had been praying about for some time. Her concern was for some of the sisters in her ward. She told me how it hurt her heart to observe that they sometimes spoke disrespectfully to their husbands and about their husbands, even in front of their children. She then told me how as a young woman she had earnestly desired and prayed to find and marry a worthy priesthood holder and build a happy home with him. She had grown up in a home where her mother had "ruled the roost" and her father had cowered to her mother's demands in order to keep peace at home. She felt that there was a better way. She had not seen it modeled in the home she grew up in, but as she prayed fervently for guidance, the Lord blessed her to know how to create a home with her husband where the Spirit would be warmly welcomed. I have been in that home and can testify it is a holy place!
24. Sisters and brothers, how often do we intentionally "speak kind words to each other"?
25. We might test ourselves by asking a few questions. With a little adaptation, these questions can apply to most of us, whether we are married or single, whatever our home situation might be.
26. When was the last time I sincerely praised my companion, either alone or in the presence of our children?
27. When was the last time I thanked, expressed love for, or earnestly pleaded in faith for him or her in prayer?

28. When was the last time I stopped myself from saying something I knew could be hurtful?
29. When was the last time I apologized and humbly asked for forgiveness—without adding the words “but if only you had” or “but if only you hadn’t”?
30. When was the last time I chose to be happy rather than demanding to be “right”?
31. Now, if any of these questions lead you to squirm or feel a tinge of guilt, remember that Elder David A. Bednar has taught that “guilt is to our spirit what pain is to our body—a warning of danger and a protection from additional damage.”
32. I invite each of us to heed Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s heartfelt plea: “Brothers and sisters, in this long eternal quest to be more like our Savior, may we try to be ‘perfect’ men and women in at least this one way now—by offending not in word, or more positively put, by speaking with a new tongue, the tongue of angels.”
33. As I have prepared for this opportunity today, the Spirit has taught me, and I have committed to speak words of kindness more often to my cherished companion and about him, to lift the men in my family and express gratitude for the ways they fulfill their divine and complementary roles. And I have committed to follow the proverb “Thee lift me and I’ll lift thee, and we’ll ascend together.”
34. Will you join me in seeking the help of the Holy Ghost to teach us how we can better lift each other in our complementary roles as covenant sons and daughters of our loving heavenly parents?
35. I know that through the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and our faith in Him, we can do it. I pray we will put our trust in Him to help us help each other live happily and eternally as we ascend together, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

We'll Ascend Together

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/04/well-ascend-together?lang=eng>



Helping Those Who Struggle With Same Gender Attraction

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland



1. A pleasant young man in his early 20s sat across from me. He had an engaging smile, although he didn't smile often during our talk. What drew me in was the pain in his eyes.
2. "I don't know if I should remain a member of the Church," he said. "I don't think I'm worthy."
3. "Why wouldn't you be worthy?" I asked.
4. "I'm gay."
5. I suppose he thought I would be startled. I wasn't. "And ... ?" I inquired.
6. A flicker of relief crossed his face as he sensed my continued interest. "I'm not attracted to women. I'm attracted to men. I've tried to ignore these feelings or change them, but ..."
7. He sighed. "Why am I this way? The feelings are very real."
8. I paused, then said, "I need a little more information before advising you. You see, same-gender attraction is not a sin, but acting on those feelings is—just as it would be with heterosexual feelings. Do you violate the law of chastity?"
9. He shook his head. "No, I don't."
10. This time I was relieved. "Thank you for wanting to deal with this," I said. "It takes courage to talk about it, and I honor you for keeping yourself clean."
11. "As for why you feel as you do, I can't answer that question. A number of factors may be involved, and they can be as different as people are different. Some things, including the cause of your feelings, we may never know in this life. But knowing why you feel as you do isn't as important as knowing you have not transgressed. If your life is in harmony with the commandments, then you are worthy to serve in the Church, enjoy full fellowship with the members, attend the temple, and receive all the blessings of the Savior's Atonement."
12. He sat up a little straighter. I continued, "You serve yourself poorly when you identify yourself primarily by your sexual feelings. That isn't your only characteristic, so don't give it disproportionate attention. You are first and foremost a son of God, and He loves you."
13. "What's more, I love you. My Brethren among the General Authorities love you. I'm reminded of a comment President Boyd K. Packer made in speaking to those with same-gender attraction. 'We do not reject you,' he said. '... We cannot reject you, for you are the sons and daughters of God. We will not reject you, because we love you.'"
14. We talked for another 30 minutes or so. Knowing I could not be a personal counselor to him, I directed him to his local priesthood leaders. Then we parted. I thought I detected a look of hope in his eyes that had not been there before. Although he yet faced challenges to work through—or simply endure—I had a feeling he would handle them well.

God Loveth His Children

15. When an angel asked Nephi a question about God, Nephi answered, "I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things" (1 Nephi 11:17). I too affirm that God loves all His children and acknowledge that many questions, including some related to same-gender attraction, must await a future answer, perhaps in the next life. Unfortunately, some people believe they have all the answers now and declare their opinions far and wide. Fortunately, such people do not speak for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
16. Although I believe members are eager to extend compassion to those different from themselves, it is human nature that when confronted with a situation we don't understand, we tend to withdraw. This is particularly true of same-gender attraction. We have so little reliable information about it that those wanting to help are left feeling a bit unsteady. Admitting my own inadequacy in this regard but wanting to assist, let me offer some suggestions to help those who have loved

ones or friends who are attracted to the same gender.

Our Father's Plan of Happiness

17. First, let's be absolutely clear on what God wants for each of us. He wants us to have all of the blessings of eternal life. He wants us to become like Him. To help us do that, He has given us a plan. This plan is based on eternal truths and is not altered according to the social trends of the day.
18. At the heart of this plan is the begetting of children, one of the crucial reasons Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden (see 2 Nephi 2:19–25; Moses 5:10–12). They were commanded to “be fruitful, and multiply” (Moses 2:28), and they chose to keep that commandment. We are to follow them in marrying and providing physical bodies for Heavenly Father's spirit children. Obviously, a same-gender relationship is inconsistent with this plan.
19. For various reasons, marriage and children are not immediately available to all. Perhaps no offer of marriage is forthcoming. Perhaps even after marriage there is an inability to have children. Or perhaps there is no present attraction to the opposite gender. Whatever the reason, God's richest blessings will eventually be available to all of His children if they are clean and faithful.
20. Through the exercise of faith, individual effort, and reliance upon the power of the Atonement, some may overcome same-gender attraction in mortality and marry. Others, however, may never be free of same-gender attraction in this life.
21. As fellow Church members, families, and friends, we need to recognize that those attracted to the same gender face some unique restrictions regarding expression of their feelings. While same-gender attraction is real, there must be no physical expression of this attraction. The desire for physical gratification does not authorize immorality by anyone. Such feelings can be powerful, but they are never so strong as to deprive anyone of the freedom to choose worthy conduct.
22. In saying this, let me make it clear that attractions alone, troublesome as they may be, do not make one unworthy. The First Presidency has stated, “There is a distinction between immoral thoughts and feelings and participating in either immoral heterosexual or any homosexual behavior.” If you do not act on temptations, you have not transgressed. The failure to see that distinction sometimes leads to despair. I ache for those who do not understand that every blessing offered by God is available to anyone who obeys the laws upon which those blessings are predicated (see D&C 130:20–21). No one who lives the gospel should despair. Hope

and peace come from the Comforter, and the answer to despair is to invite the Holy Ghost into our lives.

Ways to Help

23. Let's assume you are the family member or friend of someone with same-gender attraction who comes to you for help. What do you say? What do you do?
24. I'd begin by recognizing the courage that brought your son, daughter, sibling, or friend to you. I'd recognize the trust that person has extended. Discussing the issue with someone of trust is a healthy first step to dealing with confusing feelings, and it is imperative that these first steps be met with compassion.
25. Next, if you are a parent of one with same-gender attraction, don't assume you are the reason for those feelings. No one, including the one struggling, should try to shoulder blame. Nor should anyone place blame on another—including God. Walk by faith, and help your loved one deal the best he or she can with this challenge.
26. In doing so, recognize that marriage is not an all-purpose solution. Same-gender attractions run deep, and trying to force a heterosexual relationship is not likely to change them. We are all thrilled when some who struggle with these feelings are able to marry, raise children, and achieve family happiness. But other attempts have resulted in broken hearts and broken homes.
27. Above all, keep your lines of communication open. Open communication between parents and children is a clear expression of love, and pure love, generously expressed, can transform family ties. But love for a family member does not extend to condoning unrighteous behavior. Your children are welcome to stay in your home, of course, but you have every right to exclude from your dwelling any behavior that offends the Spirit of the Lord.

The Garden Principle

28. Next, consider a principle learned in gardening. Someone said that if we plant a garden with good seed, there will not be so much need of the hoe. Likewise, if we fill our lives with spiritual nourishment, we can more easily gain control over inclinations. This means creating a positive environment in our homes in which the Spirit is abundantly evident. A positive environment includes consistent private and public worship, prayer, fasting, scripture reading, service, and exposure to uplifting conversation, music, literature, and other media.
29. This same environment extends to experiences at

church. Some with same-gender attractions have unresolved fears and are offended at church when no offense is intended. On the other hand, some members exclude from their circle of fellowship those who are different. When our actions or words discourage someone from taking full advantage of Church membership, we fail them—and the Lord. The Church is made stronger as we include every member and strengthen one another in service and love (see D&C 84:110).

30. You may feel prompted to encourage the one you are trying to help to visit with a priesthood leader who holds the keys of inspired counsel. Please do so, knowing that the First Presidency has asked Church leaders to discuss these matters confidentially and in a spirit of Christlike love.

In the Lord's Hands

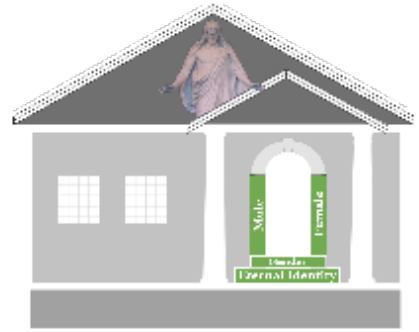
31. Not long ago I received a letter from a man in his early 30s who struggles with same-gender attraction. His struggle has not been easy, and he has not yet married. But, he wrote, “the Lord has helped me face my current circumstances, and I am content to do my best and leave my life in His hands.”
32. I weep with admiration and respect at the faith and courage of such a man who is living with a challenge I have never faced. I love him and the thousands like him, male or female, who “fight the good fight” (1 Timothy 6:12). I commend his attitude to all who struggle with—or who are helping others who struggle with—same-gender attraction.

Helping Those Who Struggle With
Same Gender Attraction

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/2007/10/helping-those-who-struggle-with-same-gender-attraction?lang=eng>

Unit 2 Additional Readings

Links and QR Codes



Elder Oaks & Elder Wickman, "Same Gender Attraction Interview"

<http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/interview-oaks-wickman-same-gender-attraction>

First Presidency Letter and Statement on Same-Sex Marriage

<http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/top-church-leaders-counsel-members-after-supreme-court-same-sex-marriage-decision>

Elder Richard G. Scott, "Finding Happiness"

https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/richard-g-scott_finding-happiness/

Elder Boyd K. Packer, “For Time and All Eternity”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1993/10/for-time-and-all-eternity?lang=eng>

“The Divine Institution of Marriage” LDS Newsroom

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1993/10/for-time-and-all-eternity?lang=eng&query=For+time+and+all+eternity#watch=video>

FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY
Large Group Study Guide #3
Gospel Ordinances and Covenants

“Revelation comes as words we feel more than hear.”

President Boyd K. Packer, "Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise," October 1994 General Conference

Name _____ Large Group Instructor _____ Class Time/Day _____

1. What doctrines or principles were you taught that you consider foundational to this Unit?
2. What impressions came to you? What were you taught during this large group session?
3. What questions will you ask in following class periods that will invite increased learning on this topic?

FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY

Unit 3 Scriptures

The covenants and ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are necessary for obtaining eternal life

Mosiah 18:9-11

9 Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life—

10 Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?

11 And now when the people had heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts.

Exodus 19:3-6

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

D&C 84:19-22

19 And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

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

21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

22 For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

D&C 84:33-39

33 For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

34 They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

35 And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

36 For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

37 And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

38 And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore ball that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

39 And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

D&C 109: 1, 14-15, 21-24

1 Thanks be to thy name, O Lord God of Israel, who keepest covenant and showest mercy unto thy servants who walk uprightly before thee, with all their hearts—

14 And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house may be taught words of wisdom out of the best books, and that they may seek learning even by study, and also by faith, as thou hast said;

15 And that they may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing;

21 And when thy people transgress, any of them, they may speedily repent and return unto thee, and find favor in thy sight, and be restored to the blessings which thou hast ordained to be poured out upon those who shall reverence thee in thy house.

22 And 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;

23 And from this place they may bear exceedingly great and glorious tidings, in truth, unto the ends of the earth, that they may know that this is thy work, and that thou hast put forth thy hand, to fulfil that which thou hast spoken by the mouths of the prophets, concerning the last days.

24 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;

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.

Entering the new and everlasting covenant of marriage is necessary for eternal life.

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 border 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 call power, and the angels are subject unto them.

Sacred ordinances performed in holy temples make it possible for deceased family members to receive the blessings of salvation

D&C 2:1-3

1 Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

2 And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.

3 If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.

D&C 128:18,24

18 I might have rendered a plainer translation to this, but it is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands. It is sufficient to know, in this case, that the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other—and behold what is that subject? It is the baptism for the dead. For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect. Neither can they nor we be made perfect without those who have died in the gospel also; for it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times.

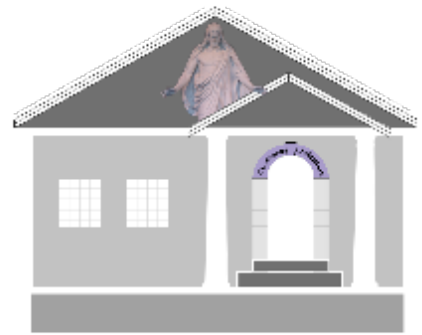
24 Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand; and who can abide the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer

unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptation.



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.
4. "It's gone," she said simply.
5. "What about your belongings?" he inquired.
6. "Everything was buried in the rubble of our home," Sister Conde replied.
7. "And yet," Elder Nash noted, "you are smiling as we talk."
8. "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."
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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).
13. 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).

14. 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).
15. 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

16. 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.
17. 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

18. 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.
19. 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).

20. Early Church leaders in this dispensation confirmed that adhering to the covenant path provides the reassurance we need in times of trial:
21. “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).
22. 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).
23. 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.
24. “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).
25. 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:

26. “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.
27. “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.
28. “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”

29. 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.
30. 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 “quickened 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.
31. 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).
32. 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
33. 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.”
34. 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.
35. 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).
36. 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.

37. The Apostle James taught the same lesson:
38. 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).
39. 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).

Notes

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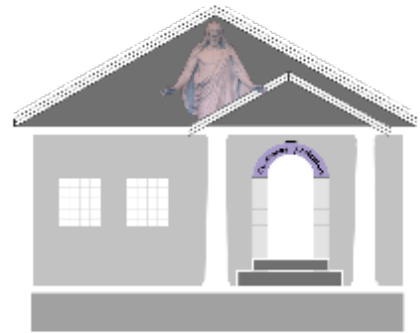
The Power of Covenants

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2009/04/the-power-of-covenants?lang=eng&query=power+of+covenants>



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 scriptorian 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.
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.”

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.

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!

18. Order--To put in ranks or rows, in proper sequence or relationship.
19. Ordain--The process of putting things in rows or proper relationship.
20. Ordinance--The ceremony by which things are put in proper order.
21. 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?
22. 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.
23. We learn from the revelations that:
24. This greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.
25. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.
26. 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)
27. 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.
28. 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.
29. 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.
30. 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.
31. 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.
32. 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.
33. 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.
34. 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."
35. Now let me apply this illustration to the ordinances of the gospel.
36. There are no discounts. No credit buying. Nothing is ever put on sale at special, reduced prices. There is

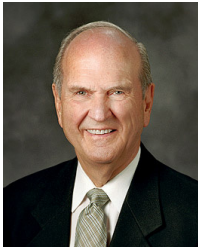
never something for nothing. There is no such thing as a “bargain.” You pay full value. Requirements and covenants are involved. And you will get, in due time, full value. But you must, positively must, deal with an authorized agent, or your claims will not be honored.

37. Let me quote this very meaningful scripture from section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants.
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.
38. Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion.
39. Will I accept of an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name?
40. Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed?
41. 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?
42. 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.
43. 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.
44. 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)
45. 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.”
46. 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.
47. 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.
48. 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.
49. 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).
50. 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.
51. 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.
52. 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.”

53. 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.
54. 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.

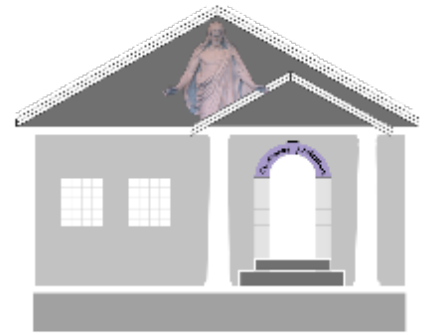
Covenants

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1987/04/covenants?lang=eng&query=-Covenants#watch=video>



Celestial Marriage

President Russell M. Nelson
Ensign, November 2008



1. My beloved brethren and sisters, I am deeply grateful for each of you. Together we feel a profound sense of gratitude for the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this world abounding with misery, we are truly thankful for God's "great plan of happiness." His plan declares that men and women are "that they might have joy." That joy comes when we choose to live in harmony with God's eternal plan.
2. The importance of choice may be illustrated by a homespun concept that came to mind one day when I was shopping in a large retail store. I call it "patterns of the shopper." As shopping is part of our daily life, these patterns may be familiar.
3. Wise shoppers study their options thoroughly before they make a selection. They focus primarily on the quality and durability of a desired product. They want the very best. In contrast, some shoppers look for bargains, and others may splurge, only to learn later—much to their dismay—that their choice did not endure well. And sadly, there are those rare individuals who cast aside their personal integrity and steal what they want. We call them shoplifters.
4. The patterns of the shopper may be applied to the topic of marriage. A couple in love can choose a marriage of the highest quality or a lesser type that will not endure. Or they can choose neither and brazenly steal what they want as "marital shoplifters."
5. The subject of marriage is debated across the world, where various arrangements exist for conjugal living. My purpose in speaking out on this topic is to declare, as an Apostle of the Lord,³ that marriage between a man and a woman is sacred—it is ordained of God. I also assert the virtue of a temple marriage. It is the highest and most enduring type of marriage that our Creator can offer to His children.
6. While salvation is an individual matter, exaltation is a family matter. Only those who are married in the temple and whose marriage is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise will continue as spouses after death and receive the highest degree of celestial glory, or exaltation.

A temple marriage is also called a celestial marriage. Within the celestial glory are three levels. To obtain the highest, a husband and wife must be sealed for time and all eternity and keep their covenants made in a holy temple.

7. The noblest yearning of the human heart is for a marriage that can endure beyond death. Fidelity to a temple marriage does that. It allows families to be together forever.
8. This goal is glorious. All Church activities, advancements, quorums, and classes are means to the end of an exalted family.
9. To make this goal possible, our Heavenly Father has restored priesthood keys in this dispensation so that essential ordinances in His plan can be performed by proper authority. Heavenly messengers—including John the Baptist; Peter, James, and John; Moses, Elias, and Elijah—have participated in that restoration.
10. Knowledge of this revealed truth is spreading across the earth. We, as the Lord's prophets and apostles, again proclaim to the world that "the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children."
11. We further proclaim that "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.
12. "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. [Heavenly Father's great] 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."

13. That proclamation on the family helps us realize that celestial marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other relationship. The earth was created and this Church was restored so that families could be formed, sealed, and exalted eternally.
14. Scriptures declare that “it is lawful that [a man] should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation.” Another affirms that “the man [is not] without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.” Thus, marriage is not only an exalting principle of the gospel; it is a divine commandment.
15. Our Heavenly Father declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” The Atonement of His Beloved Son enabled both of these objectives to be realized. Because of the Atonement, immortality—or resurrection from the dead—became a reality for all. And because of the Atonement, eternal life—which is living forever in God’s presence, the “greatest of all the gifts of God”—became a possibility. To qualify for eternal life, we must make an eternal and everlasting covenant with our Heavenly Father. This means that a temple marriage is not only between husband and wife; it embraces a partnership with God.
16. The family proclamation also reminds us that “husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other.” Children born of that union are “an heritage of the Lord.” When a family is sealed in the temple, that family may become as eternal as the kingdom of God itself.
17. Such a reward requires more than a hopeful wish. On occasion, I read in a newspaper obituary of an expectation that a recent death has reunited that person with a deceased spouse, when, in fact, they did not choose the eternal option. Instead, they opted for a marriage that was valid only as long as they both should live. Heavenly Father had offered them a supernal gift, but they refused it. And in rejecting the gift, they rejected the Giver of the gift.
18. One strong sentence of scripture clearly distinguishes between a hopeful wish and eternal truth: “All covenants, contracts, . . . obligations, oaths, vows, . . . 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, . . . 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.”
19. These truths are absolute. Members of this Church invite
- all people to learn them and to qualify for eternal life. We invite all to gain faith in God the Eternal Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ, to repent, to receive the Holy Ghost, to obtain the blessings of the temple, to make and keep sacred covenants, and to endure to the end.
20. Mercifully, God’s great plan of happiness and its eternal blessings can be extended to those who did not have the opportunity to hear the gospel in mortality. Temple ordinances can be done vicariously for them.
21. But what of the many mature members of the Church who are not married? Through no failing of their own, they deal with the trials of life alone. Be we all reminded that, in the Lord’s own way and time, no blessings will be withheld from His faithful Saints. The Lord will judge and reward each individual according to heartfelt desire as well as deed.
22. Meanwhile, mortal misunderstandings can make mischief in a marriage. In fact, each marriage starts with two built-in handicaps. It involves two imperfect people. Happiness can come to them only through their earnest effort. Just as harmony comes from an orchestra only when its members make a concerted effort, so harmony in marriage also requires a concerted effort. That effort will succeed if each partner will minimize personal demands and maximize actions of loving selflessness.
23. President Thomas S. Monson has said: “To find real happiness, we must seek for it in a focus outside ourselves. No one has learned the meaning of living until he has surrendered his ego to the service of his fellow man. Service to others is akin to duty—the fulfillment of which brings true joy.”
24. Harmony in marriage comes only when one esteems the welfare of his or her spouse among the highest of priorities. When that really happens, a celestial marriage becomes a reality, bringing great joy in this life and in the life to come.
25. God’s plan of happiness allows us to choose for ourselves. As with the patterns of the shopper, we may choose celestial marriage or lesser alternatives. Some marital options are cheap, some are costly, and some are cunningly crafted by the adversary. Beware of his options; they always breed misery!
26. The best choice is a celestial marriage. Thankfully, if a lesser choice has previously been made, a choice can now be made to upgrade it to the best choice. That requires a mighty change of heart and a permanent personal upgrade. Blessings so derived are worth all efforts made.
27. The full realization of the blessings of a temple marriage

is almost beyond our mortal comprehension. Such a marriage will continue to grow in the celestial realm. There we can become perfected. As Jesus ultimately received the fullness of the glory of the Father, so we may “come unto the Father ... and in due time receive of his fullness.”

28. Celestial marriage is a pivotal part of preparation for eternal life. It requires one to be married to the right person, in the right place, by the right authority, and to obey that sacred covenant faithfully. Then one may be assured of exaltation in the celestial kingdom of God. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Celestial Marriage

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2008/10/celestial-marriage?lang=eng>



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.
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.” 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.
- 4.
5. 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.
6. 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.” 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.
7. Still, the ground was cursed for their sake: their path of affliction also led to the joy of both redemption and comprehension. 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.
8. 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.”
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.

12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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. Further, the rates of divorce and births outside marriage are now so high that we may be witnessing "the collapse of marriage."
15. 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." 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."

16. 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."
17. 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.
18. 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, 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.
19. 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.
20. May we restore the concept of marriage as a covenant, even the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. 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. 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

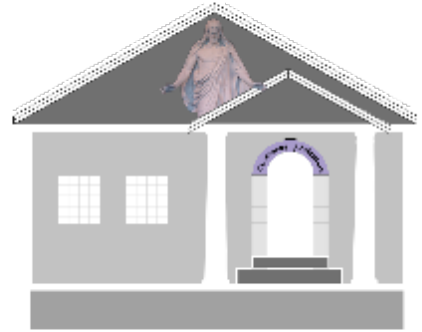
Covenant Marriage

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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.
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.
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.
 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).
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 Elshtain 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.

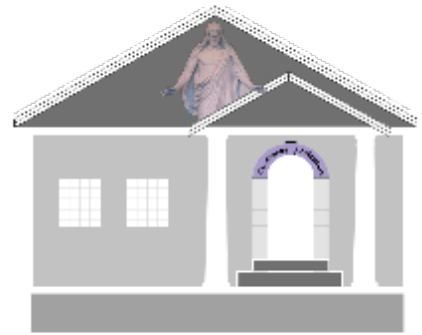
Divorce

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2007/04/divorce?lang=eng&query=Divorce#watch=video>



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.

Receive the Temple Blessings

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1999/04/receive-the-temple-blessings?lang=eng>



The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn

Elder David A. Bednar
Ensign, November 2011



1. As we study, learn, and live the gospel of Jesus Christ, sequence often is instructive. Consider, for example, the lessons we learn about spiritual priorities from the order of the major events that occurred as the fullness of the Savior's gospel was restored in these latter days.
2. In the Sacred Grove, Joseph Smith saw and talked with the Eternal Father and Jesus Christ. Among other things, Joseph learned about the true nature of the Godhead and of continuing revelation. This majestic vision ushered in "the dispensation of the fullness of times" (Ephesians 1:10) and is one of the signal events in the history of the world.
3. Approximately three years later, in response to earnest prayer on the evening of September 21, 1823, Joseph's bedroom filled with light until it "was lighter than at noonday" (Joseph Smith—History 1:30). A personage appeared at his bedside, called the young boy by name, and declared "he was a messenger sent from the presence of God ... and that his name was Moroni" (verse 33). He instructed Joseph about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. And then Moroni quoted from the book of Malachi in the Old Testament, with a little variation in the language used in the King James Version:
4. "Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.
5. "... And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming" (verses 38, 39).
6. Moroni's instructions to the young prophet ultimately included two primary themes: (1) the Book of Mormon and (2) the words of Malachi foretelling the role of Elijah in the Restoration "of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21). Thus, the introductory events of the Restoration revealed a correct understanding of the Godhead, emphasized the importance of the Book of Mormon, and anticipated the work of salvation and

exaltation for both the living and the dead. This inspiring sequence is instructive about the spiritual matters of highest priority to Deity.

7. My message focuses upon the ministry and Spirit of Elijah foretold by Moroni in his initial instructions to Joseph Smith. I earnestly pray for the assistance of the Holy Ghost.

The Ministry of Elijah

8. Elijah was an Old Testament prophet through whom mighty miracles were performed. He sealed the heavens, and no rain fell in ancient Israel for 3½ years. He multiplied a widow's meal and oil. He raised a young boy from the dead, and he called down fire from heaven in a challenge to the prophets of Baal. (See 1 Kings 17–18.) At the conclusion of Elijah's mortal ministry, he "went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings 2:11) and was translated.
9. "We learn from latter-day revelation that Elijah held the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood and was the last prophet to do so before the time of Jesus Christ" (Bible Dictionary, "Elijah"). The Prophet Joseph Smith explained, "The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the ... fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood ... ; and to ... obtain ... all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God" (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007], 311; emphasis added). This sacred sealing authority is essential for priesthood ordinances to be valid and binding both on earth and in heaven.
10. Elijah appeared with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:3) and conferred this authority upon Peter, James, and John. Elijah appeared again with Moses and others on April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple and conferred the same keys upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.
11. Scripture records that Elijah the prophet stood before Joseph and Oliver and said:
12. "Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah]

should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—

13. “To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—
14. “Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors” (D&C 110:14–16).
15. The restoration of the sealing authority by Elijah in 1836 was necessary to prepare the world for the Savior’s Second Coming and initiated a greatly increased and worldwide interest in family history research.

The Spirit and Work of Elijah

16. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared: “The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead. ... For it is necessary that the sealing power should be in our hands to seal our children and our dead for the fulness of the dispensation of times—a dispensation to meet the promises made by Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world for the salvation of man. ... Hence, God said, ‘I will send you Elijah the prophet’” (Teachings: Joseph Smith, 475).
17. Joseph further explained:
18. “But what is the object of [the coming of Elijah]? or how is it to be fulfilled? The keys are to be delivered, the spirit of Elijah is to come, the Gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, and the Saints to come up as saviors on Mount Zion [see Obadiah 1:21]. “But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples ... and going forth and receiving all the ordinances ... in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead ... ; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah” (Teachings: Joseph Smith, 472–73).
19. Elder Russell M. Nelson has taught that the Spirit of Elijah is “a manifestation of the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family” (“A New Harvest Time,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 34). This distinctive influence of the Holy Ghost draws people to identify, document, and cherish their ancestors and family members—both past and present. The Spirit of Elijah affects people inside and outside of the Church. However, as members of Christ’s restored Church, we have the covenant responsibility to search out our ancestors and provide for them the saving ordinances of the gospel. “They without us should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:40; see also Teachings: Joseph Smith, 475). And “neither can we without our dead be made perfect” (D&C 128:15).
20. For these reasons we do family history research, build temples, and perform vicarious ordinances. For these reasons Elijah was sent to restore the sealing authority that binds on earth and in heaven. We are the Lord’s agents in the work of salvation and exaltation that will prevent “the whole earth [from being] smitten with a curse” (D&C 110:15) when He returns again. This is our duty and great blessing.

An Invitation to the Rising Generation

21. I now invite the attention of the young women, young men, and children of the rising generation as I emphasize the importance of the Spirit of Elijah in your lives today. My message is intended for the entire Church in general—but for you in particular.
22. Many of you may think family history work is to be performed primarily by older people. But I know of no age limit described in the scriptures or guidelines announced by Church leaders restricting this important service to mature adults. You are sons and daughters of God, children of the covenant, and builders of the kingdom. You need not wait until you reach an arbitrary age to fulfill your responsibility to assist in the work of salvation for the human family.
23. The Lord has made available in our day remarkable resources that enable you to learn about and love this work that is sparked by the Spirit of Elijah. For example, FamilySearch is a collection of records, resources, and services easily accessible with personal computers and a variety of handheld devices, designed to help people discover and document their family history. These resources also are available in the family history centers located in many of our Church buildings throughout the world.
24. It is no coincidence that FamilySearch and other tools have come forth at a time when young people are so familiar with a wide range of information and communication technologies. Your fingers have been trained to text and tweet to accelerate and advance the work of the Lord—not just to communicate quickly with your friends. The skills and aptitude evident among many young people today are a preparation to contribute to the work of salvation.
25. I invite the young people of the Church to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah. I encourage you to study, to search out your ancestors, and to prepare yourselves to perform proxy baptisms in the house of the Lord for your kindred dead (see D&C 124:28–36). And I urge you to help other people identify their family histories.

26. As you respond in faith to this invitation, your hearts shall turn to the fathers. The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be implanted in your hearts. Your patriarchal blessing, with its declaration of lineage, will link you to these fathers and be more meaningful to you. Your love and gratitude for your ancestors will increase. Your testimony of and conversion to the Savior will become deep and abiding. And I promise you will be protected against the intensifying influence of the adversary. As you participate in and love this holy work, you will be safeguarded in your youth and throughout your lives.
27. Parents and leaders, please help your children and youth to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah. But do not overly program this endeavor or provide too much detailed information or training. Invite young people to explore, to experiment, and to learn for themselves (see Joseph Smith—History 1:20). Any young person can do what I am suggesting, using the modules available at [lds.org/familyhistoryyouth](https://www.lds.org/familyhistoryyouth). Aaronic Priesthood quorum and Young Women class presidencies can play an important role in helping all youth become acquainted with these basic resources. Young people increasingly need to be learners who act and thereby receive additional light and knowledge by the power of the Holy Ghost—and not merely passive students who primarily are acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:26).
28. Parents and leaders, you will stand all amazed at how rapidly your children and the youth of the Church become highly skilled with these tools. In fact, you will learn valuable lessons from these young people about effectively using these resources. The youth can offer much to older individuals who are uncomfortable with or intimidated by technology or are unfamiliar with FamilySearch. You also will count your many blessings as young people devote more time to family history work and temple service and less time to video games, surfing the Internet, and Facebooking.
29. Troy Jackson, Jaren Hope, and Andrew Allan are bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood who were called by an inspired bishop to team teach a family history class in their ward. These young men are representative of so many of you in their eagerness to learn and desire to serve.
30. Troy stated, “I used to come to church and just sit there, but now I realize that I need to go home and do something. We can all do family history.”
31. Jaren reported that as he learned more about family history, he realized “that these were not just names but real people. I became more and more excited about taking the names to the temple.”
32. And Andrew commented, “I have taken to family history with a love and vigor I did not know I could muster. As I prepared each week to teach, I was often nudged by the Holy Spirit to act and try some of the methods taught in the lesson. Before, family history was a scary thing. But aided by the Spirit I was able to step up to my calling and help many people in our ward.”
33. My beloved young brothers and sisters, family history is not simply an interesting program or activity sponsored by the Church; rather, it is a vital part of the work of salvation and exaltation. You have been prepared for this day and to build up the kingdom of God. You are here upon the earth now to assist in this glorious work.
34. I testify Elijah returned to the earth and restored the sacred sealing authority. I witness that what is bound on earth can be bound in heaven. And I know the youth of the rising generation have a key role to play in this great endeavor. I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2011/10/the-hearts-of-the-children-shall-turn?lang=eng>

Unit 3 Additional Readings

Links and QR Codes



Elder Bruce R. McConkie, "Celestial Marriage"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=jTGD6wA5MfY&app=desktop>

Elder David A. Bednar, "Honorably Hold a Name and a Standing"

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2009/04/honorably-hold-a-name-and-standing?lang=eng>

The Law of Chastity and the Sanctity of Life

President Boyd K. Packer, "Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise," October 1994 General Conference

Name _____ Large Group Instructor _____ Class Time/Day _____

3. What questions will you ask in following class periods that will invite increased learning on this topic?

FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY

Unit 4 Scriptures

God's commandment for his children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force and the means by which mortal life is created is divinely appointed

Genesis 1:27-28

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it:

Genesis 2:24-25

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Psalms 127:3

3 Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

D&C 49:15-17

15 And again, verily I say unto you, that whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man.

16 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;

17 And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made.

The sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between a man and a woman lawfully wedded as husband and wife

1 Corinthians 6:13-20

13 . . . Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an

harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are abouted with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Alma 39:3-9

3 And this is not all, my son. Thou didst do that which was grievous unto me; for thou didst forsake the ministry, and did go over into the land of Siron among the borders of the Lamanites, after the harlot Isabel.

4 Yea, she did steal away the hearts of many; but this was no excuse for thee, my son. Thou shouldst have tended to the ministry wherewith thou wast entrusted.

5 Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost?

6 For behold, if ye deny the Holy Ghost when it once has had place in you, and ye know that ye deny it, behold, this is a sin which is unpardonable; yea, and whosoever murdereth against the light and knowledge of God, it is not easy for him to obtain forgiveness; yea, I say unto you, my son, that it is not easy for him to obtain a forgiveness.

7 And now, my son, I would to God that ye had not been guilty of so great a crime. I would not dwell upon your crimes, to harrow up your soul, if it were not for your good.

8 But behold, ye cannot hide your crimes from God; and except ye repent they will stand as a testimony against you at the last day.

9 Now my son, I would that ye should repent and forsake your sins, and go no more after the lusts of your eyes, but cross yourself in all these things; for except ye do this ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Oh, remember, and take it upon you, and cross yourself in these things.

3 Nephi 12:27-30

27 Behold, it is written by them of old time, that thou shalt not commit adultery;

28 But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart.

29 Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart;

30 For it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell.

D&C 42:22-24

22 Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.

23 And he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit; and if he repents not he shall be cast out.

24 Thou shalt not commit adultery; and he that committeth adultery, and repenteth not, shall be cast out.

D&C 59:6

6 Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it.

D&C 63:16

16 And verily I say unto you, as I have said before, he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear.

1 Corinthians 7:1-5

1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

D&C 121:45-46

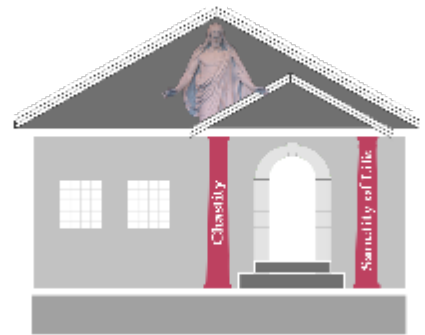
45 Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

46 The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.



Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
Deseret Book, Salt Lake City, 2001.



1. The topic of human intimacy is as sacred as any I know. In discussing it, the subject can quickly slide from the sacred into the merely sensational. It would be better not to address the topic at all than to damage it with casualness or carelessness.
2. Some may feel this is a topic we hear discussed too frequently, but given the world in which we live, we may not be hearing it enough. All of the prophets, past and present, have spoken on it. Most in the Church are doing wonderfully well in the matter of personal purity, but some are not doing so well, and much of the world around us is not doing well at all.
3. Unfortunately, the degree of unchaste behavior around us is likely to increase rather than decrease as the times become more secular, more sophisticated, and more self-indulgent. Edward Gibbon, the distinguished British historian of the eighteenth century, wrote, "Although the progress of civilisation has undoubtedly contributed to assuage the fiercer passions of human nature, it seems to have been less favourable to the virtue of chastity. . . . The refinements of life [seem to] corrupt, [even as] they polish, the [relationship] of the sexes."¹
4. But it is not our purpose here to document social problems or wring our hands over the dangers that such outside influences may hold for us. As serious as such contemporary realities are, I wish to discuss this topic in quite a different way, discuss it specifically for Latter-day Saints. So I conspicuously set aside statistics on such tragedies as AIDS, abortions, and illegitimate births and refer rather to a gospel-based view of personal purity.
5. Indeed, I wish to do something even a bit more difficult than listing the dos and don'ts of personal purity. I wish to examine, to the best of my ability, why we should be clean, why moral discipline is such a significant matter in God's eyes. I know that may sound presumptuous, but a philosopher once said, "Tell me sufficiently why a thing should be done, and I will move heaven and earth to do it." Hoping you will feel the same way as he, and with full recognition of my limitations, I wish to try to give at least a partial answer to "Why be morally clean?" I will need first to pose briefly what I see as the doctrinal

seriousness of the matter before then offering at least three reasons for such seriousness.

The Significance of Sanctity

6. Why is the matter of sexual relationships so severe that fire is almost always the metaphor, with passion pictured vividly in flames?
7. May I begin with one-half of a nine-line poem by Robert Frost. (The other half is worth a sermon also, but it will have to wait for another day.) Here are the first four lines of Frost's "Fire and Ice":
8. Some say the world will end in fire, Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire I hold with those who favor fire.²
9. A second, less poetic but more specific opinion is offered by the writer of Proverbs: "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? . . . But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away."³
10. In getting at the doctrinal seriousness of this subject, why is the matter of sexual relationships so severe that fire is almost always the metaphor, with passion pictured vividly in flames? What is there in the potentially hurtful heat of this that leaves one's soul—or perhaps the whole world, according to Frost—destroyed, if that flame is left unchecked and those passions unrestrained? What is there in all of this that prompts Alma to warn his son Corianton that sexual transgression is "an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost"?⁴
11. Setting aside sins against the Holy Ghost as a special category unto themselves, it is LDS doctrine that sexual transgression is second only to murder in the Lord's list of life's most serious sins. By assigning such rank to a physical appetite so conspicuously evident in all of us,

what is God trying to tell us about its place in His plan for all men and women in mortality? I submit to you He is doing precisely that—commenting about the very plan of life itself. Clearly God’s greatest concerns regarding mortality are how one gets into this world and how one gets out of it. These two most important issues in our very personal and carefully supervised progress are the two issues that He as our Creator, Father, and Guide wishes most to reserve to Himself. These are the two matters that He has repeatedly told us He wants us never to take illegally, illicitly, unfaithfully, without sanction.

12. As for the taking of life, we are generally quite responsible. Most people, it seems to me, readily sense the sanctity of life and as a rule do not run up to friends, put a loaded revolver to their heads, and cavalierly pull the trigger. Furthermore, when there is a click of the hammer rather than an explosion of lead, and a possible tragedy seems to have been averted, no one in such a circumstance would be so stupid as to sigh, “Oh, good. I didn’t go all the way.”
13. No, “all the way” or not, the insanity of such action with fatal powder and steel is obvious on the face of it. Such a person running about with an arsenal of loaded handguns or military weaponry firing at young people would be apprehended, prosecuted, and institutionalized if in fact such a lunatic would not himself have been killed in all the pandemonium.
14. After such a moment of horror, we would undoubtedly sit in our homes or classrooms with terror on our minds for many months to come, wondering how such a thing could possibly happen—especially to members of the Church.
15. Fortunately, in the case of how life is taken, I think we seem to be quite responsible. The seriousness of that does not often have to be spelled out, and not many sermons need to be devoted to it. But in the significance and sanctity of giving life, some of us are not so responsible, and in the larger world swirling around us we find near-criminal irresponsibility. What would in the case of taking life bring absolute horror and demand grim justice, in the case of giving life brings dirty jokes, four-letter language, and wholesale voyeurism in movies, on television, over the internet, and almost everywhere else we turn.
16. Is all of this so wrong? That question has always been asked, usually by the guilty. “Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.”⁵ No murder here. Well, maybe not. But sexual transgression? “He that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.”⁶ Sounds near-fatal to me.

17. It is this doctrinal seriousness that should help us prevent such painful moments and avoid what Alma called the “inexpressible horror” of standing in the presence of God unworthily. Care and caution in this matter will permit the intimacy it is your right, privilege, and delight to enjoy in marriage to be untainted by such crushing remorse and guilt. May I now give those three reasons I mentioned earlier as to why this is an issue of such magnitude and consequence.

The Doctrine of the Soul

18. When one toys with the God-given . . . body of another, he or she toys with the very soul of that individual, toys with the central purpose and product of life.
19. First, we simply must understand the revealed, restored Latter-day Saint doctrine of the soul, and the high and inextricable part the body plays in that doctrine.
20. One of the “plain and precious” truths restored to this dispensation is that “the spirit and the body are the soul of man,”⁷ and that when the spirit and body are separated, men and women “cannot receive a fulness of joy.”⁸ Certainly that suggests something of the reason why obtaining a body is so fundamentally important to the plan of salvation in the first place, why sin of any kind is such a serious matter (namely, because its automatic consequence is death, the separation of the spirit from the body and the separation of the spirit and the body from God), and why the resurrection of the body is so central to the great abiding and eternal triumph of Christ’s atonement. We do not have to be a herd of demonically possessed swine charging down Gadarene slopes toward the sea⁹ to understand that a body is the great prize of mortal life, and that even a pig’s will do for those frenzied premortal spirits that rebelled and to this day remain dispossessed in their first, unembodied estate.
21. May I quote a 1913 sermon by Elder James E. Talmage on this doctrinal point:
22. “We have been taught . . . to look upon these bodies of ours as gifts from God. We Latter-day Saints do not regard the body as something to be condemned, something to be abhorred. . . . We regard [the body] as the sign of our royal birthright. . . . We recognize the fact that those who kept not their first estate . . . were denied that inestimable blessing. . . . We believe that these bodies . . . may be made, in very truth, the temple of the Holy Ghost. . . .
23. “It is peculiar to the theology of the Latter-day Saints that we regard the body as an essential part of the soul. Read your dictionaries, the lexicons, and encyclopedias, and you will find that nowhere, outside of the Church of

Jesus Christ, is the solemn and eternal truth taught that the soul of man is the body and the spirit combined.”¹⁰

24. So partly in answer to why such seriousness, we answer that when one toys with the God-given—and satanically coveted—body of another, he or she toys with the very soul of that individual, toys with the central purpose and product of life, “the very key” to life, as Elder Boyd K. Packer once called it.¹¹ In trivializing the soul of another (please include the word body there) we trivialize the atonement, which saved that soul and guaranteed its continued existence. And when one toys with the Son of Righteousness, the Day Star Himself, one toys with white heat and a flame hotter and holier than the noonday sun. You cannot do so and not be burned. You cannot with impunity “crucify . . . the Son of God afresh.”¹² Exploitation of the body (please include the word soul there) is, in the last analysis, an exploitation of Him who is the Light and the Life of the world. Perhaps here Paul’s warning to the Corinthians takes on newer, higher meaning:
25. “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. . . . Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. . . . Flee fornication. . . . He that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”¹³
26. Our soul is what is at stake here—our spirit and our body. Paul understood that doctrine of the soul every bit as well as Elder James E. Talmage did, because it is gospel truth. The purchase price for our fullness of joy—body and spirit eternally united—is the pure and innocent blood of the Savior of the world. We cannot then say in ignorance or defiance, “Well, it’s my life” or worse yet, “It’s my body.” It is not your life or your body. “Ye are not your own,” Paul said. “Ye are bought with a price.” As a result of the excruciating suffering endured by Him in the atonement—the payment He made for our sins—we are eternally indebted to Jesus. That is one reason we call Him “Master,” in the holiest sense of the word. So in answer to the question, “Why does God care so much about sexual transgression?” it is partly because of the precious gift offered by and through His Only Begotten Son to redeem the souls—bodies and spirits—we too often share and abuse in such cheap and tawdry ways. Christ restored the very seeds of eternal lives,¹⁴ and we desecrate them at our peril. The first key reason for personal purity? Our very souls are involved and at stake.
27. You may come to that moment of real love, of total union, only to discover to your horror that what you should have saved has been spent.
28. Second, human intimacy, that sacred, physical union ordained of God for a married couple, deals with a symbol that demands special sanctity.
29. Such an act of love between a man and a woman is—or certainly was ordained to be—a symbol of total union: union of their hearts, their hopes, their lives, their love, their family, their future, their everything. It is a symbol that we try to suggest in the temple with a word like seal. The Prophet Joseph Smith once said we perhaps could render such a sacred bond as welding—that those united in matrimony and eternal families are welded together, inseparable if you will, to withstand the temptations of the adversary and the afflictions of mortality.¹⁵
30. But such a total, virtually unbreakable union, such an unyielding commitment between a man and a woman, can come only with the proximity and permanence afforded in a marriage covenant, with the union of all that they possess—their very hearts and minds, all their days and all their dreams. They work together, they cry together, they enjoy Brahms and Beethoven and breakfast together, they sacrifice and save and live together for all the abundance that such a totally intimate life provides such a couple. And the external symbol of that union, the physical manifestation of what is a far deeper spiritual and metaphysical bonding, is the physical blending that is part of—indeed, a most beautiful and gratifying expression of—that larger, more complete union of eternal purpose and promise.
31. As delicate as it is to mention, I nevertheless trust the reader’s maturity to understand that physiologically we are created as men and women to form such a union. In this ultimate physical expression of one man and one woman, they are as nearly and as literally one as two separate physical bodies can ever be. It is in that act of ultimate physical intimacy that we most nearly fulfill the commandment of the Lord given to Adam and Eve, living symbols for all married couples, when He invited them to cleave unto one another only, and thus become “one flesh.”¹⁶
32. Obviously, such a commandment to these two, the first husband and wife of the human family, has unlimited implications—social, cultural, and religious as well as physical—but that is exactly my point. As all couples come to that moment of bonding in mortality, it is to be just such a complete union. That commandment cannot be fulfilled, and that symbolism of “one flesh” cannot be preserved, if we hastily, guiltily, and surreptitiously share intimacy in a darkened corner of a darkened hour,

A Symbol of Total Unity

then just as hastily, guiltily, and surreptitiously retreat to our separate worlds—not to eat or live or cry or laugh together, not to do the laundry and the dishes and the homework, not to manage a budget and pay the bills and tend the children and plan together for the future. No, we cannot do that until we are truly one—united, bound, linked, tied, welded, sealed, married.

33. Can you see then the moral duplicity that comes from pretending we are one, sharing the physical symbols and physical intimacy of our union, but then fleeing, retreating, severing all such other aspects—and symbols—of what was meant to be a total obligation, only to unite again furtively some other night or, worse yet, furtively unite (and you can tell how cynically I use that word) with some other partner who is no more bound to us, no more one with us than the last was or than the one that will come next week or next month or next year or anytime before the binding commitments of marriage?
34. You must wait until you can give everything, and you cannot give everything until you are at least legally and, for Latter-day Saint purposes, eternally pronounced as one. To give illicitly that which is not yours to give (remember, “you are not your own”) and to give only part of that which cannot be followed with the gift of your whole heart and your whole life and your whole self is its own form of emotional Russian roulette. If you persist in sharing part without the whole, in pursuing satisfaction devoid of symbolism, in giving parts and pieces and inflamed fragments only, you run the terrible risk of such spiritual, psychic damage that you may undermine both your physical intimacy and your wholehearted devotion to a truer, later love. You may come to that moment of real love, of total union, only to discover to your horror that what you should have saved has been spent and that only God’s grace can recover that piecemeal dissipation of your virtue.
35. A good Latter-day Saint friend, Dr. Victor L. Brown Jr., has written of this issue:
36. “Fragmentation enables its users to counterfeit intimacy. . . . If we relate to each other in fragments, at best we miss full relationships. At worst, we manipulate and exploit others for our gratification. Sexual fragmentation can be particularly harmful because it gives powerful physiological rewards which, though illusory, can temporarily persuade us to overlook the serious deficits in the overall relationship. Two people may marry for physical gratification and then discover that the illusion of union collapses under the weight of intellectual, social, and spiritual incompatibilities. . . .
37. “Sexual fragmentation is particularly harmful because it is particularly deceptive. The intense human intimacy that should be enjoyed in and symbolized by sexual union is counterfeited by sensual episodes which suggest—but cannot deliver—acceptance, understanding, and love. Such encounters mistake the end for the means as lonely, desperate people seek a common denominator which will permit the easiest, quickest gratification.”¹⁷
38. Listen to a far more biting observation by a non-Latter-day Saint regarding such acts devoid of both the soul and the symbolism we have been discussing. He writes: “Our sexuality has been animalized, stripped of the intricacy of feeling with which human beings have endowed it, leaving us to contemplate only the act, and to fear our impotence in it. It is this animalization from which the sexual manuals cannot escape, even when they try to do so, because they are reflections of it. They might [as well] be textbooks for veterinarians.”¹⁸
39. In this matter of counterfeit intimacy and deceptive gratification, I express particular caution to the men who read this message. I have heard all my life that it is the young woman who has to assume the responsibility for controlling the limits of intimacy in courtship because a young man cannot. Seldom have I heard any point made about this subject that makes me more disappointed than that. What kind of man is he, what priesthood or power or strength or self-control does this man have, that lets him develop in society, grow to the age of mature accountability, perhaps even pursue a university education and prepare to affect the future of colleagues and kingdoms and the course of the world, yet he does not have the mental capacity or the moral will to say, “I will not do that thing”? No, this sorry drugstore psychology would have us say, “I just can’t help myself. My glands have complete control over my life—my mind, my will, my entire future.”
40. To say that a young woman in such a relationship has to bear her responsibility and that of the young man too is one of the most inappropriate suggestions I can imagine. In most instances if there is sexual transgression, I lay the burden squarely on the shoulders of the young man—for our purposes probably a priesthood bearer—and that’s where I believe God intended responsibility to be. In saying that, I do not excuse young women who exercise no restraint and have not the character or conviction to demand intimacy only in its rightful role. Unfortunately, I have had enough experience in Church callings to know that women as well as men can be predatory, a phenomenon more and more evident (and more and more tragic) in modern times. But I also refuse to accept the feigned innocence of some young man who wants to sin and calls it psychology.
41. Indeed, most tragically, it is the young woman who is most often the victim; it is the young woman who most often suffers the greater pain; it is the young woman who most often feels used and abused and terribly

unclean. And for that imposed uncleanness the man as well as the woman will pay, as surely as the sun sets and rivers run to the sea.

42. Note the prophet Jacob's straightforward language on this account in the Book of Mormon. After a bold confrontation on the subject of sexual transgression among the Nephites, he quotes Jehovah: "For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land. . . . And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Hosts, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people . . . shall come up unto me against the men of my people, saith the Lord of Hosts.
43. "For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction."¹⁹
44. Don't be deceived and don't be destroyed. Unless such fire is controlled, your clothes and your future will be burned, and your world, short of painful and perfect repentance, can go up in flames. I give that to you on good word: I give it to you on God's word.

Sacramental Moments

45. Sexual union is . . . a sacrament of the highest order, a union not only of a man and a woman but very much the union of that man and that woman with God.
46. Third, after soul and symbol comes the word sacrament, a term closely related to the other two.

Sexual intimacy is not only a symbolic union between a man and a woman—the uniting of their very souls—but it is also symbolic of a union between mortals and deity, between otherwise ordinary and fallible humans uniting for a rare and special moment with God Himself and all the powers by which He gives life in this wide universe of ours.

47. In this latter sense, human intimacy is a kind of sacrament, a very special symbol. For our purpose, a sacrament could be any one of a number of gestures or acts or ordinances that unite us with God and His limitless powers. We are imperfect and mortal; He is perfect and immortal. But from time to time—indeed, as often as is possible and appropriate—we find ways and go to places and create circumstances where we can unite symbolically with Him and, in so doing, gain access to His power. Those special moments of union with God are sacramental moments, such as kneeling at a marriage altar or blessing a newborn baby or partaking of the emblems of the Lord's Supper. This latter ordinance is the one we in the Church have come to associate most traditionally with the word sacrament,

though it is technically only one of many such moments when we formally take the hand of God and feel His divine power.

48. These are moments when we quite literally unite our will with God's will, our spirit with His Spirit, where communion through the veil becomes very real. At such moments we not only acknowledge His divinity, but we also quite literally take something of that divinity to ourselves. Such are the holy sacraments.
49. Now, I know of no one who would rush into a sacramental service, grab the linen from the tables, throw the bread the full length of the room, tip the water trays onto the floor, and laughingly retreat from the building to await an opportunity to do the same thing at another worship service the next Sunday. No one would do that during one of the truly sacred moments of our religious worship. Nor would anyone violate any of the other sacramental moments in our lives, those times when we consciously claim God's power and by invitation stand with Him in privilege and principality.

50. But I wish to stress, as my third of three reasons to be clean, that sexual union is also, in its own profound way, a sacrament of the highest order, a union not only of a man and a woman but very much the union of that man and that woman with God. Indeed, if our definition of sacrament is that act of claiming, sharing, and exercising God's own inestimable power, then I know of virtually no other divine privilege so routinely given to us all—women or men, ordained or unordained, Latter-day Saint or non-Latter-day Saint—than the miraculous and majestic power of transmitting life, the unspeakable, unfathomable, unbroken power of procreation. There are those special moments in our lives when the other, more formal ordinances of the gospel—the sacraments, if you will—allow us to feel the grace and grandeur of God's power. Many are one-time experiences (such as our own confirmation or our own marriage), and some are repeatable (such as administering to the sick or doing ordinance work for others in the temple). But I know of nothing so earth-shatteringly powerful and yet so universally and unstintingly given to us as the God-given power available in every one of us from our early teen years on to create a human body, that wonder of all wonders, a genetically and spiritually unique being never before seen in the history of the world and never to be duplicated again in all the ages of eternity: a child, our child—with eyes and ears and fingers and toes and a future of unspeakable grandeur.

51. Imagine that, if you will. Veritable teenagers—and all of us for many decades thereafter—carrying daily, hourly, minute-to-minute, virtually every waking and sleeping moment of our lives, the power and the chemistry and the eternally transmitted seeds of life to grant someone

else her second estate, someone else his next level of development in the divine plan of salvation. I submit to you that no power, priesthood or otherwise, is given by God so universally to so many with virtually no control over its use except self-control. And I submit that we will never be more like God at any other time in this life than when we are expressing that particular power. Of all the titles He has chosen for Himself, Father is the one He declares, and creation is His watchword—especially human creation, creation in His image. His glory isn't a mountain, as stunning as mountains are. It isn't in sea or sky or snow or sunrise, as beautiful as they all are. It isn't in art or technology, be that a concerto or computer. No, His glory—and His grief—is in His children. We—you and I—are His prized possessions, and we are the earthly evidence, however inadequate, of what He truly is. Human life is the greatest of God's powers, the most mysterious and magnificent chemistry of it all, and you and I have been given it, but under the most serious and sacred of restrictions. You and I—who can make neither mountain nor moonlight, not one rain-drop or a single rose—have this greater gift in an absolutely unlimited way. And the only control placed on us is self-control—self-control born of respect for the divine sacramental power it is. Surely God's trust in us to respect this future-forming gift is an awesomely staggering one. We who may not be able to repair a bicycle or assemble an average jigsaw puzzle can yet, in all of our weaknesses and imperfections, carry this procreative power which makes us so very much like God in at least that one grand and majestic way.

A Serious Matter

52. "Sex is a river of fire that must be banked and cooled by a hundred restraints if it is not to consume [us] in chaos." –Will and Ariel Durant
53. Souls. Symbols. Sacraments. Do these words suggest why human intimacy is such a serious matter? Why it is so right and rewarding, so stunningly beautiful when it is within marriage and approved of God (not just "good" but "very good"),²⁰ and so blasphemously wrong—like unto murder—when it is outside such a covenant? It is my understanding that we park and pet and sleep over and sleep with at the peril of our very lives. Our penalty may not come on the precise day of our transgression, but it comes surely and certainly enough, and were it not for a merciful God and the treasured privilege of personal repentance, far too many would even now be feeling that hellish pain which, like the passion we have been discussing, is also always described in the metaphor of fire. Someday, somewhere, sometime the morally unclean will, until they repent, pray like the rich man, wishing Lazarus to "dip . . . his finger in the water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."²¹

54. In closing, consider this from two students of civilization's long, instructive story:
55. "No one man [or woman], however brilliant or well-informed, can come in one lifetime to such fullness of understanding as to safely judge and dismiss the customs or institutions of his society, for these are the wisdom of generations after centuries of experiment in the laboratory of history. A youth boiling with hormones will wonder why he should not give full freedom to his sexual desires; and if he is unchecked by custom, morals, or laws, he may ruin his life [or hers] before he matures sufficiently to understand that sex is a river of fire that must be banked and cooled by a hundred restraints if it is not to consume in chaos both the individual and the group."²²
56. Or, in the more ecclesiastical words of Elder James E. Talmage:
57. "It has been declared in the solemn word of revelation, that the spirit and the body constitute the soul of man; and, therefore, we should look upon this body as something that shall endure in the resurrected state, beyond the grave, something to be kept pure and holy. Be not afraid of soiling its hands; be not afraid of scars that may come to it if won in earnest effort, or [won] in honest fight, but beware of scars that disfigure, that have come to you in places where you ought not have gone, that have befallen you in unworthy undertakings [pursued where you ought not have been]; beware of the wounds of battles in which you have been fighting on the wrong side."²³
58. If some are feeling the "scars . . . that have come to you in places where you ought not have gone," to them is extended the special peace and promise available through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. His love and the restored gospel principles and ordinances that make His love available to us with all their cleansing and healing power are freely given. The power of these principles and ordinances, including complete and redeeming repentance, are fully realized only in this, the true and living Church of the true and living God. We should all "come unto Christ"²⁴ and be morally clean in order to claim all the blessings of love—His love for us, our love for Him, and a couple's truest love for each other.

Notes

1. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 40 of *Great Books of the Western World*, 1952, 92.
2. In *New Hampshire* (New York: Henry Holt, 1923), 80.
3. Proverbs 6:27–28, 32–33.
4. Alma 39:5; emphasis added.
5. Proverbs 30:20.

6. Proverbs 6:32.
 7. D&C 88:15; emphasis added.
 8. D&C 93:34.
 9. See Matthew 8:28–32.
 10. Conference Report, October 1913, 117.
 11. “The Very Key,” filmstrip based on a talk by Elder Boyd K. Packer (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987).
 12. Hebrews 6:6.
 13. 1 Corinthians 6:13–20; emphasis added.
 14. See D&C 132:19, 24.
 15. See D&C 128:18.
 16. Genesis 2:24.
 17. Human Intimacy: Illusion & Reality (Salt Lake City: Parliament Publishers, 1981), 5–6.
 18. Fairlie, The Seven Deadly Sins Today (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 182.
 19. Jacob 2:31–34; emphasis added.
 20. Genesis 1:31.
 21. Luke 16:24.
 22. Will and Ariel Durant, The Lessons of History (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), 35–36.
 23. Conference Report, October 1913, 117.
 24. Moroni 10:30, 32.
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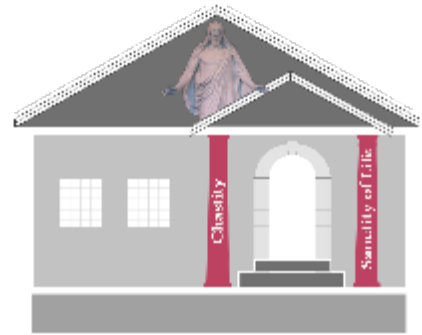
Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments

<http://www.familylifeeducation.org/gillil-and/procgroup/Souls.htm>



We Believe in Being Chaste

Elder David A. Bednar
General Conference, April 2013



1. My message addresses a fundamental question of great spiritual consequence: Why is the law of chastity so important? I pray the Holy Ghost will confirm the truthfulness of the principles I emphasize.
2. The eternal importance of chastity can only be understood within the overarching context of our Heavenly Father's plan of happiness for 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 ... has a divine nature and destiny" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2010, 129). All men and women lived with God as His spirit children before coming to the earth as mortal beings. The Father's plan enables His spirit sons and daughters to obtain physical bodies, to gain mortal experience, and to progress toward exaltation..
3. Our physical bodies make possible a breadth, a depth, and an intensity of experience that simply could not be obtained in our premortal existence. Thus, our relationships with other people, our capacity to recognize and act in accordance with truth, and our ability to obey the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ are amplified through our physical bodies. In the school of mortality, we experience tenderness, love, kindness, happiness, sorrow, disappointment, pain, and even the challenges of physical limitations in ways that prepare us for eternity. Simply stated, there are lessons we must learn and experiences we must have, as the scriptures describe, "according to the flesh" (1 Nephi 19:6; Alma 7:12–13).
4. After the earth was created, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden. Importantly, however, God said "it was not good that the man should be alone" (Moses 3:18; see also Genesis 2:18), and Eve became Adam's wife and helpmeet. The unique combination of spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional capacities of both males and females was needed to enact the plan of happiness. "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11). The man and the woman are intended to learn from, strengthen, bless, and complete each other.
5. The means by which mortal life is created is divinely appointed. "The first commandment ... God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife" (Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2010, 129). The commandment to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force today. Thus, marriage between a man and a woman is the authorized channel through which premortal spirits enter mortality. Complete sexual abstinence before marriage and total fidelity within marriage protect the sanctity of this sacred channel.
6. The power of procreation is spiritually significant. Misuse of this power subverts the purposes of the Father's plan and of our mortal existence. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son are creators and have entrusted each of us with a portion of Their creative power. Specific guidelines for the proper use of the ability to create life are vital elements in the Father's plan. How we feel about and use that supernal power will determine in large measure our happiness in mortality and our destiny in eternity
7. Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained: "The power to create mortal life is the most exalted power God has given his children. Its use was mandated in the first commandment, but another important commandment was given to forbid its misuse. The emphasis we place on the law of chastity is explained by our understanding of the purpose of our procreative powers in the accomplishment of God's plan. ...
8. "Outside the bonds of marriage, all uses of the procreative power are to one degree or another a sinful degrading and perversion of the most divine attribute of men and women" ("The Great Plan of Happiness," Ensign, Nov. 1993, 74).
9. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a single, undeviating standard of sexual morality: intimate relations are proper only between a man and a woman in the marriage relationship prescribed in God's plan. Such relations are not merely a curiosity to be explored, an appetite to be satisfied, or a type of recreation or entertainment to be pursued selfishly.

They are not a conquest to be achieved or simply an act to be performed. Rather, they are in mortality one of the ultimate expressions of our divine nature and potential and a way of strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife. We are agents blessed with moral agency and are defined by our divine heritage as children of God—and not by sexual behaviors, contemporary attitudes, or secular philosophies.

10. To some degree, the natural man described by King Benjamin is alive and well in each of us (see Mosiah 3:19). The natural man or woman is unrepentant, is carnal and sensual (see Mosiah 16:5; Alma 42:10; Moses 5:13), is indulgent and excessive, and is prideful and selfish. As President Spencer W. Kimball taught, “The ‘natural man’ is the ‘earthy man’ who has allowed rude animal passions to overshadow his spiritual inclinations” (“Ocean Currents and Family Influences,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 112).
11. In contrast, the “man [or woman] of Christ” (Helaman 3:29) is spiritual and bridles all passions (see Alma 38:12), is temperate and restrained, and is benevolent and selfless. Men and women of Christ lay hold upon the word of God, deny themselves and take up His cross (see Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; D&C 56:2), and press forward along a strait and narrow course of faithfulness, obedience, and devotion to the Savior and His gospel.
12. As sons and daughters of God, we have inherited divine capacities from Him. But we presently live in a fallen world. The very elements out of which our bodies were created are by nature fallen and ever subject to the pull of sin, corruption, and death. Consequently, the Fall of Adam and its spiritual and temporal consequences affect us most directly through our physical bodies. And yet we are dual beings, for our spirit that is the eternal part of us is tabernacled in a physical body that is subject to the Fall. As Jesus emphasized to the Apostle Peter, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41).

The precise nature of the test of mortality, then, can be summarized in the following question: Will I respond to the inclinations of the natural man, or will I yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit and put off the natural man and become a saint through the Atonement of Christ the Lord (see Mosiah 3:19)? That is the test. Every appetite, desire, propensity, and impulse of the natural man may be overcome by and through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We are here on the earth to develop godlike qualities and to bridle all of the passions of the flesh.

13. The Father’s plan is designed to provide direction for His children, to help them become happy, and to bring them

safely home to Him with resurrected, exalted bodies. Heavenly Father desires us to be together in the light and filled with hope. In contrast, Lucifer labors to make the sons and daughters of God confused and unhappy and to hinder their eternal progression. The overarching intent of the father of lies is that all of us would become “miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27). Lucifer wants us ultimately to be alone in the dark and without hope.

14. Satan relentlessly works to distort the most important elements of the Father’s plan. He does not have a body, and his eternal progress has been halted. Just as water flowing in a riverbed is stopped by a dam, so the adversary’s eternal progress is thwarted because he does not have a physical body. Because of his rebellion, Lucifer has denied himself all of the mortal blessings and experiences made possible through a body of flesh and bones. He cannot learn the lessons that only an embodied spirit can learn. He resents the reality of a literal and universal resurrection of all mankind. One of the potent scriptural meanings of the word damned is illustrated in his inability to continue developing and becoming like our Heavenly Father.
15. Because a physical body is so central to the Father’s plan of happiness and our spiritual development, Lucifer seeks to frustrate our progression by tempting us to use our bodies improperly. One of the ultimate ironies of eternity is that the adversary, who is miserable precisely because he has no physical body, entices us to share in his misery through the improper use of our bodies. The very tool he does not have is thus the primary target of his attempts to lure us to spiritual destruction.
16. Violating the law of chastity is a grievous sin and a misuse of our physical tabernacles. To those who know and understand the plan of salvation, defiling the body is an act of rebellion (see Mosiah 2:36–37; D&C 64:34–35) and a denial of our true identity as sons and daughters of God. As we look beyond mortality and into eternity, it is easy to discern that the counterfeit companionship advocated by the adversary is temporary and empty.
17. Alma counseled his son Shiblon to “bridle all [of his] passions, that [he] may be filled with love” (Alma 38:12). Significantly, disciplining the natural man in each of us makes possible a richer, a deeper, and a more enduring love of God and of His children. Love increases through righteous restraint and decreases through impulsive indulgence.
18. President Marion G. Romney declared:
19. “I can think of no blessings to be more fervently desired than those promised to the pure and the virtuous.

Jesus spoke of specific rewards for different virtues but reserved the greatest, so it seems to me, for the pure in heart, 'for they,' said he, 'shall see God' (Matt. 5:8). And not only shall they see the Lord, but they shall feel at home in his presence.

our progress in eternity. Chastity and virtue are now, always have been, and always will be "most dear and precious above all things" (Moroni 9:9). I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

20. "Here is ... the Savior's promise: 'Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God' (D&C 121:45)" ("Trust in the Lord," Ensign, May 1979, 42).
21. We also are promised that, as we pursue the pathway of virtue, "the Holy Ghost shall be [our] constant companion" (D&C 121:46). Thus, living the law of chastity invites some of the greatest blessings men and women can receive in mortality: appropriate spiritual confidence in the presence of family, friends, Church associates, and, ultimately, the Savior. Our innate longing to belong is fulfilled in righteousness as we walk in the light with hope.
22. Some of you who receive this message need to repent of sexual or other sins. The Savior is often referred to as the Great Physician, and this title has both symbolic and literal significance. All of us have experienced the pain associated with a physical injury or wound. When we are in pain, we typically seek relief and are grateful for the medication and treatments that help to alleviate our suffering. Consider sin as a spiritual wound that causes guilt or, as described by Alma to his son Corianton, "remorse of conscience" (Alma 42:18). Guilt is to our spirit what pain is to our body—a warning of danger and a protection from additional damage. From the Atonement of the Savior flows the soothing salve that can heal our spiritual wounds and remove guilt. However, this salve can only be applied through the principles of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, and consistent obedience. The results of sincere repentance are peace of conscience, comfort, and spiritual healing and renewal.
23. Your bishop or branch president is the spiritual physician's assistant who is authorized to help you repent and heal. Please remember, however, that the extent and intensity of your repentance must match the nature and severity of your sins—especially for Latter-day Saints who are under sacred covenant. Serious spiritual wounds require sustained treatment and time to heal completely and fully.
24. The doctrine I have described will seem to be archaic and outdated to many people in a world that increasingly mocks the sanctity of procreation and minimizes the worth of human life. But the Lord's truth is not altered by fads, popularity, or public opinion polls. I promise that obedience to the law of chastity will increase our happiness in mortality and make possible

We Believe in Being Chaste

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/04/we-believe-in-being-chaste?lang=eng&query=we+believe+in+being+chaste#watch=video>



Children

Elder Neil L. Andersen

Ensign, November 2011



1. As we look into the eyes of a child, we see a fellow son or daughter of God who stood with us in the premortal life.
2. It is a crowning privilege of a husband and wife who are able to bear children to provide mortal bodies for these spirit children of God. We believe in families, and we believe in children.
3. When a child is born to a husband and wife, they are fulfilling part of our Heavenly Father's plan to bring children to earth. The Lord said, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." Before immortality, there must be mortality.
4. The family is ordained of God. Families are central to our Heavenly Father's plan here on earth and through the eternities. After Adam and Eve were joined in marriage, the scripture reads, "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." In our day prophets and apostles have declared, "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."
5. This commandment has not been forgotten or set aside in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We express deep gratitude for the enormous faith shown by husbands and wives (especially our wives) in their willingness to have children. When to have a child and how many children to have are private decisions to be made between a husband and wife and the Lord. These are sacred decisions—decisions that should be made with sincere prayer and acted on with great faith.
6. Years ago, Elder James O. Mason of the Seventy shared this story with me: "The birth of our sixth child was an unforgettable experience. As I gazed on this beautiful, new daughter in the nursery just moments after her birth, I distinctly heard a voice declare, 'There will yet be another, and it will be a boy.' Unwisely, I rushed back to the bedside of my absolutely exhausted wife and told her the good news. It was very bad timing on my part." 5 Year after year the Masons anticipated the arrival of their seventh child. Three, four, five, six, seven years passed. Finally, after eight years, their seventh child was born—a little boy.
7. Last April, President Thomas S. Monson declared:
8. "Where once the standards of the Church and the standards of society were mostly compatible, now there is a wide chasm between us, and it's growing ever wider.
9. "The Savior of mankind described Himself as being in the world but not of the world. We also can be in the world but not of the world as we reject false concepts and false teachings and remain true to that which God has commanded."
10. Many voices in the world today marginalize the importance of having children or suggest delaying or limiting children in a family. My daughters recently referred me to a blog written by a Christian mother (not of our faith) with five children. She commented: "[Growing] up in this culture, it is very hard to get a biblical perspective on motherhood. Children rank way below college. Below world travel for sure. Below the ability to go out at night at your leisure. Below honing your body at the gym. Below any job you may have or hope to get." She then adds: "Motherhood is not a hobby, it is a calling. You do not collect children because you find them cuter than stamps. It is not something to do if you can squeeze the time in. It is what God gave you time for."
11. Having young children is not easy. Many days are just difficult. A young mother got on a bus with seven children. The bus driver asked, "Are these all yours, lady? Or is it a picnic?"
12. "They're all mine," she replied. "And it's no picnic!"
13. As the world increasingly asks, "Are these all yours?" we thank you for creating within the Church a sanctuary for families, where we honor and help mothers with children.

14. To a righteous father, there are no words sufficient to express the gratitude and love he feels for his wife's incalculable gift of bearing and caring for their children.
15. Elder Mason had another experience just weeks after his marriage that helped him prioritize his family responsibilities. He said:
16. "Marie and I had rationalized that to get me through medical school it would be necessary for her to remain in the workplace. Although this was not what we [wanted] to do, children would have to come later. [While looking at a Church magazine at my parents' home,] I saw an article by Elder Spencer W. Kimball, then of the Quorum of the Twelve, [highlighting] responsibilities associated with marriage. According to Elder Kimball, one sacred responsibility was to multiply and replenish the earth. My parents' home was [close to] the Church Administration Building. I immediately walked to the offices, and 30 minutes after reading his article, I found myself sitting across the desk from Elder Spencer W. Kimball." (This wouldn't be so easy today.)
17. "I explained that I wanted to become a doctor. There was no alternative but to postpone having our family. Elder Kimball listened patiently and then responded in a soft voice, 'Brother Mason, would the Lord want you to break one of his important commandments in order for you to become a doctor? With the help of the Lord, you can have your family and still become a doctor. Where is your faith?'"
18. Elder Mason continued: "Our first child was born less than a year later. Marie and I worked hard, and the Lord opened the windows of heaven." The Masons were blessed with two more children before he graduated from medical school four years later.
19. Across the world, this is a time of economic instability and financial uncertainty. In April general conference, President Thomas S. Monson said: "If you are concerned about providing financially for a wife and family, may I assure you that there is no shame in a couple having to scrimp and save. It is generally during these challenging times that you will grow closer together as you learn to sacrifice and to make difficult decisions."
20. Elder Kimball's piercing question, "Where is your faith?" turns us to the holy scriptures.
21. It was not in the Garden of Eden that Adam and Eve bore their first child. Leaving the garden, "Adam [and Eve] began to till the earth. ... Adam knew his wife, and she [bore] ... sons and daughters, and [acting in faith] they began to multiply and to replenish the earth."
22. It was not in their Jerusalem home, with gold, silver, and precious things, that Lehi and Sariah, acting in faith, bore their sons Jacob and Joseph. It was in the wilderness. Lehi spoke of his son Jacob as "my first-born in the days of my tribulation in the wilderness." Lehi said of Joseph, "Thou wast born in the wilderness of [our] afflictions; yea, in the days of [our] greatest sorrow did thy mother bear thee."
23. In the book of Exodus, a man and woman married and, acting in faith, had a baby boy. There was no welcoming sign on the front door to announce his birth. They hid him because Pharaoh had instructed that every newborn male Israelite should be "cast into the river." You know the rest of the story: the baby lovingly laid in a little ark made of bulrushes, placed in the river, watched over by his sister, found by Pharaoh's daughter, and cared for by his own mother as his nurse. The boy was returned to Pharaoh's daughter, who took him as her son and called him Moses.
24. In the most beloved story of a baby's birth, there was no decorated nursery or designer crib—only a manger for the Savior of the world.
25. In "the best of times [and] ... the worst of times," the true Saints of God, acting in faith, have never forgotten, dismissed, or neglected "God's commandment ... to multiply and replenish the earth." We go forward in faith—realizing the decision of how many children to have and when to have them is between a husband and wife and the Lord. We should not judge one another on this matter.
26. The bearing of children is a sensitive subject that can be very painful for righteous women who do not have the opportunity to marry and have a family. To you noble women, our Heavenly Father knows your prayers and desires. How grateful we are for your remarkable influence, including reaching out with loving arms to children who need your faith and strength.
27. The bearing of children can also be a heartbreaking subject for righteous couples who marry and find that they are unable to have the children they so anxiously anticipated or for a husband and wife who plan on having a large family but are blessed with a smaller family.
28. We cannot always explain the difficulties of our mortality. Sometimes life seems very unfair—especially when our greatest desire is to do exactly what the Lord has commanded. As the Lord's servant, I assure you that this promise is certain: "Faithful members whose circumstances do not allow them to receive the blessings of eternal marriage and parenthood in this life will receive all promised blessings in the eternities, [as] they keep the covenants they have made with God."

29. President J. Scott Dorius of the Peru Lima West Mission told me their story. He said:
30. “Becky and I were married for 25 years without being able to have [or adopt] children. We moved several times. Introducing ourselves in each new setting was awkward and sometimes painful. Ward members wondered why we [didn’t have] children. They weren’t the only ones wondering.
31. “When I was called as a bishop, ward members [expressed] concern that I did not have any experience with children and teenagers. I thanked them for their sustaining vote and asked them to allow me to practice my child-raising skills on their children. They lovingly obliged.
32. “We waited, gained perspective, and learned patience. After 25 years of marriage, a miracle baby came into our lives. We adopted two-year-old Nicole and then newborn Nikolai. Strangers now compliment us on our beautiful grandchildren. We laugh and say, “They are our children. We have lived our lives backwards.”
33. Brothers and sisters, we should not be judgmental with one another in this sacred and private responsibility.
34. “And [Jesus] took a child ... in his arms [and] said ...
35. “Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth ... him that sent me.”
36. What a wonderful blessing we have to receive sons and daughters of God into our home.
37. Let us humbly and prayerfully seek to understand and accept God’s commandments, reverently listening for the voice of His Holy Spirit.
38. Families are central to God’s eternal plan. I testify of the great blessing of children and of the happiness they will bring us in this life and in the eternities, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

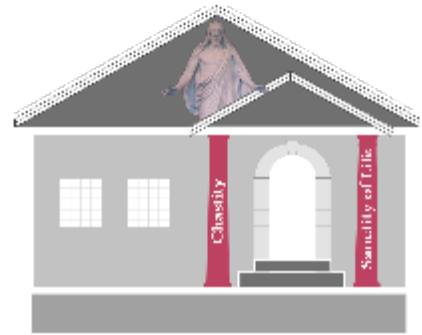
Children

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2011/10/children?lang=eng>



The Plan of Happiness

President Boyd K. Packer
Ensign, May 2015



1. Many years ago, after World War II, I was attending college. There I met Donna Smith. About that time I read that two essential ingredients to a successful marriage are a cookie and a kiss. I thought that was a pretty good balance.
2. I attended college in the morning and then went back to Brigham City to work in my father's auto-repair garage in the afternoon. Donna's last morning class was home economics. I stopped by her classroom before leaving. The door had a frosted glass window, but if I stood close to the glass, she could see my shadow outside. She would slip out with a cookie and a kiss. The rest is history. We were married in the Logan Temple, and that began the great adventure of our lives.
3. Over the years I have frequently taught an important principle: the end of all activity in the Church is to see that a man and a woman with their children are happy at home, sealed together for time and for all eternity.
4. In the beginning:
5. "The Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them.
6. "And the Gods said: We will bless them. And the Gods said: We will cause them to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Abraham 4:27–28).
7. And so the cycle of human life began on this earth as "Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth.
8. "And ... the sons and daughters of Adam began to divide two and two in the land, ... and they also begat sons and daughters" (Moses 5:2–3).
9. The commandment to multiply and replenish the earth has never been rescinded. It is essential to the plan of redemption and is the source of human happiness. Through the righteous exercise of this power, we may

come close to our Father in Heaven and experience a fulness of joy, even godhood. The power of procreation is not an incidental part of the plan; it is the plan of happiness; it is the key to happiness.

10. The desire to mate in humankind is constant and very strong. Our happiness in mortal life, our joy and exaltation are dependent upon how we respond to these persistent, compelling physical desires. As the procreative power matures in early manhood and womanhood, very personal feelings occur, in a natural way, unlike any other physical experience.
11. Ideally, mating begins with romance. Though customs may vary, it flourishes with all the storybook feelings of excitement and anticipation, even sometimes rejection. There are moonlight and roses, love letters, love songs, poetry, the holding of hands, and other expressions of affection between a young man and a young woman. The world disappears around the couple, and they experience feelings of joy.
12. And if you suppose that the full-blown rapture of young romantic love is the sum total of the possibilities which spring from the fountains of life, you have not yet lived to see the devotion and the comfort of longtime married love. Married couples are tried by temptation, misunderstandings, financial problems, family crises, and illness, and all the while love grows stronger. Mature love has a bliss not even imagined by newlyweds.
13. True love requires reserving until after marriage the sharing of that affection which unlocks those sacred powers in that fountain of life. It means avoiding situations where physical desire might take control. Pure love presupposes that only after a pledge of eternal fidelity, a legal and lawful ceremony, and ideally after the sealing ordinance in the temple are those procreative powers released in God's eye for the full expression of love. It is to be shared solely and only with that one who is your companion forever.
14. When entered into worthily, this process combines the most exquisite and exalted physical, emotional, and spir-

itual feelings associated with the word love. That part of life has no equal, no counterpart, in all human experience. It will, when covenants are made and kept, last eternally, “for therein are the keys of the holy priesthood ordained, that you may receive honor and glory” (D&C 124:34), “which glory shall be a fullness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever” (D&C 132:19).

15. But romantic love is incomplete; it is a prelude. Love is nourished by the coming of children, who spring from that fountain of life entrusted to couples in marriage. Conception takes place in a wedded embrace between husband and wife. A tiny body begins to form after a pattern of magnificent complexity. A child comes forth in the miracle of birth, created in the image of its earthly father and mother. Within its mortal body is a spirit able to feel and perceive spiritual things. Dormant in that mortal body of this child is the power to beget offspring in its own image.
16. “The spirit and the body are the soul of man” (D&C 88:15), and there are spiritual and physical laws to obey if we are to be happy. There are eternal laws, including laws relating to this power to give life, “irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated” (D&C 130:20). These are spiritual laws which define the moral standard for mankind (see Joseph Smith Translation, Romans 7:14–15 [in the Bible appendix]; 2 Nephi 2:5; D&C 29:34; 134:6). There are covenants which bind, seal, and safeguard and give promise of eternal blessings.
17. Alma admonished his son Shiblon, “See that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love” (Alma 38:12). A bridle is used to guide, to direct, to restrain. Our passion is to be controlled. When lawfully used, the power of procreation will bless and will sanctify (see Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith [1998], 158).
18. Temptations are ever present. Because the adversary cannot beget life, he is jealous toward all who have that supernal power. He and those who followed him were cast out and forfeited the right to a mortal body. “He seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27). He will tempt, if he can, to degrade, to corrupt, and, if possible, to destroy this gift by which we may, if we are worthy, have eternal increase (see D&C 132:28–31).
19. If we pollute our fountains of life or lead others to transgress, there will be penalties more “exquisite” and “hard to bear” (D&C 19:15) than all the physical pleasure could ever be worth.
20. Alma told his son Corianton, “Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost?” (Alma 39:5). We cannot escape the consequences when we transgress.
21. The only legitimate, authorized expression of the powers of procreation is between husband and wife, a man and a woman, who have been legally and lawfully married. Anything other than this violates the commandments of God. Do not yield to the awful temptations of the adversary, for every debt of transgression must be paid “till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing” (Matthew 5:26).
22. Nowhere is the generosity and mercy of God more manifest than in repentance.
23. Our physical bodies, when harmed, are able to repair themselves, sometimes with the help of a physician. If the damage is extensive, however, often a scar will remain as a reminder of the injury.
24. With our spiritual bodies it is another matter. Our spirits are damaged when we make mistakes and commit sins. But unlike the case of our mortal bodies, when the repentance process is complete, no scars remain because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The promise is: “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42).
25. When we speak of marriage and family life, there inevitably comes to mind, “What about the exceptions?” Some are born with limitations and cannot beget children. Some innocents have their marriage wrecked because of the infidelity of their spouse. Others do not marry and live in single worthiness.
26. For now I offer this comfort: God is our Father! All the love and generosity manifest in the ideal earthly father is magnified in Him who is our Father and our God beyond the capacity of the mortal mind to comprehend. His judgments are just; His mercy without limit; His power to compensate beyond any earthly comparison. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19).
27. Reverently now I use the word temple. I envision a sealing room and an altar with a young couple kneeling there. This sacred temple ordinance is much more than a wedding, for this marriage can be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, and the scriptures declare that we “shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions” (D&C 132:19). I see the joy that awaits those who accept this supernal gift and use it worthily.

28. Sister Donna Smith Packer and I have been side by side in marriage for nearly 70 years. When it comes to my wife, the mother of our children, I am without words. The feeling is so deep and the gratitude so powerful that I am left almost without expression. The greatest reward we have received in this life, and the life to come, is our children and our grandchildren. Toward the end of our mortal days together, I am grateful for each moment I am with her side by side and for the promise the Lord has given that there will be no end.
29. I bear witness that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of the living God. He stands at the head of the Church. Through His Atonement and the power of the priesthood, families which are begun in mortality can be together through the eternities. The Atonement, which can reclaim each one of us, bears no scars. That means that no matter what we have done or where we have been or how something happened, if we truly repent, He has promised that He would atone. And when He atoned, that settled that. There are so many of us who are thrashing around, as it were, with feelings of guilt, not knowing quite how to escape. You escape by accepting the Atonement of Christ, and all that was heartache can turn to beauty and love and eternity.
30. I am so grateful for the blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the power of procreation, for the power of redemption, for the Atonement—the Atonement which can wash clean every stain no matter how difficult or how long or how many times repeated. The Atonement can put you free again to move forward, cleanly and worthily, to pursue that path that you have chosen in life.
31. I bear witness that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that the Atonement is not a general thing that is for the whole Church. The Atonement is individual, and if you have something that is bothering you—sometimes so long ago you can hardly remember it—put the Atonement to work. It will clean it up, and you, as does He, will remember your sins no more. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

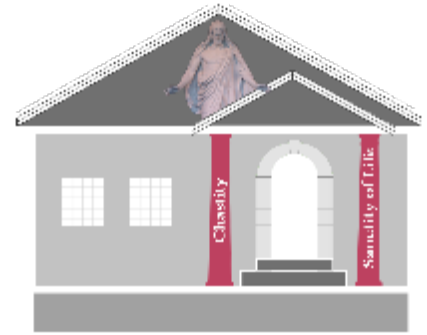
The Plan of Happiness

https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/04/the-plan-of-happiness?lang=eng&_r=1



Making The Right Choices

Elder Richard G. Scott
General Conference, October 1994



1. Present tonight are many young men who hold the priesthood of God.¹ Some of you look forward to being a missionary when you are older. Others are planning to go soon; still others have completed missions and are seeking an eternal companion. I am sobered by the realization that some of you will not reach these worthy goals because of other choices you are making now.
2. I am grateful this is a private priesthood meeting, for I have felt impressed to treat sensitive yet important matters. While they apply to all present, I particularly want to talk with you young men. I will speak as though you and I were alone in a private interview and no one else can hear us. My purpose is to help you learn how to make the right choices. That will help you develop strong feelings of self-worth. You will have confidence to do right and overcome strong negative peer pressure and bad influences.
3. As a young boy, I felt that some things that I heard discussed by others at school about private parts of the body were wrong. Yet I wasn't really sure how wrong or why they were wrong. You may have similar feelings. Since in tonight's setting you cannot ask me anything, I will use some of the confidential questions most frequently asked by youth I have met across the world. I will answer them by what I have learned from the scriptures and the prophets. You then will have clear standards from which to make choices. I pray that as we talk the Holy Ghost will let you feel the truth of what is said. I know that as you listen and think of how our interview applies to you, there will come impressions regarding what to do about it in your own life.

Question: Could you give us some help about resisting peer pressure? Why do some people do things that are wrong, then brag about how much fun they are having? When I don't participate, they make me feel stupid because I won't do it.

4. Answer: You can't please God without upsetting Satan, so you will get pressure from those he tempts to do wrong. Individuals who do wrong want you to join them because they feel more comfortable in what they are doing when others do it also. They may also want to take

advantage of you. It is natural to want to be accepted by peers, to be part of a group—some even join gangs because of that desire to belong, but they lose their freedom, and some lose their lives. One of the hardest things for you to recognize is how truly strong you already are and how others silently respect you. We have great confidence in you. You don't need to compromise your standards to be accepted by good friends. The more obedient you are, the more you stand for true principles, the more the Lord can help you overcome temptation.² You can also help others because they will feel your strength. Let them know about your standards by consistently living them. Answer questions about your principles when you are asked, but avoid being preachy. I know from personal experience that works.

5. No one intends to make serious mistakes. They come when you compromise your standards to be more accepted by others. You be the strong one. You be the leader. Choose good friends and resist peer pressure together.

Question: How do we keep bad thoughts from entering our minds, and what do we do when they come?

6. Answer: Some bad thoughts come by themselves. Others come because we invite them by what we look at and listen to.³ Talking about or looking at immodest pictures of a woman's body can stimulate powerful emotions. It will tempt you to watch improper videocassettes or movies. These things surround you, but you must not participate in them. Work at keeping your thoughts clean by thinking of something good.⁴ The mind can think of only one thing at a time. Use that fact to crowd out ugly thoughts.⁵ Above all, don't feed thoughts by reading or watching things that are wrong. If you don't control your thoughts, Satan will keep tempting you until you eventually act them out.⁶

Question: Why is the law of chastity so important? Why is sex before marriage wrong?

7. Answer: Fundamental to the great plan of happiness and central to the teachings of the Savior is the family. A new family begins when a man and woman make

sacred marriage vows and are legally bound together to become husband and wife, father and mother. The perfect beginning is through sealing in the temple. With marriage they commit the best of themselves to be absolutely loyal to each other and to invite children to be nurtured and taught. The father assumes his role as provider and protector, the mother her role as the heart of the home, with her tender, loving, nurturing influence.

8. Together they strive to instill in themselves and their children principles such as prayer, obedience, love, giving of oneself, and the quest for knowledge.
9. Within the enduring covenant of marriage, the Lord permits husband and wife the expression of the sacred procreative powers in all their loveliness and beauty within the bounds He has set.⁷ One purpose of this private, sacred, intimate experience is to provide the physical bodies for the spirits Father in Heaven wants to experience mortality. Another reason for these powerful and beautiful feelings of love is to bind husband and wife together in loyalty, fidelity, consideration of each other, and common purpose.
10. However, those intimate acts are forbidden by the Lord outside the enduring commitment of marriage because they undermine His purposes.⁸ Within the sacred covenant of marriage, such relationships are according to His plan. When experienced any other way, they are against His will. They cause serious emotional and spiritual harm. Even though participants do not realize that is happening now, they will later. Sexual immorality creates a barrier to the influence of the Holy Spirit with all its uplifting, enlightening, and empowering capabilities. It causes powerful physical and emotional stimulation. In time that creates an unquenchable appetite that drives the offender to ever more serious sin. It engenders selfishness and can produce aggressive acts such as brutality, abortion, sexual abuse, and violent crime. Such stimulation can lead to acts of homosexuality, and they are evil and absolutely wrong.⁹
11. Sexual transgression would defile the priesthood you now hold, sap your spiritual strength, undermine your faith in Jesus Christ, and frustrate your ability to serve Him. Consistent, willing obedience increases your confidence and ability. It produces character that allows you to face difficult challenges and overcome them. It qualifies you to receive inspiration and power from the Lord.¹⁰

Question: They always tell us we shouldn't become sexually involved, but they never tell us the limits. What are they?

12. Answer: Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of

marriage—I mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another's body, with or without clothing—is a sin and is forbidden by God. It is also a transgression to intentionally stimulate these emotions within your own body.¹¹ Satan tempts one to believe that there are allowable levels of physical contact between consenting individuals who seek the powerful stimulation of emotions they produce, and if kept within bounds, no harm will result. As a witness of Jesus Christ, I testify that is absolutely false. Satan particularly seeks to tempt one who has lived a pure, clean life to experiment through magazines, videocassettes, or movies with powerful images of a woman's body. He wants to stimulate appetite to cause experimentation that quickly results in intimacies and defilement. Powerful habits are formed which are difficult to break. Mental and emotional scars result.

13. When you are mature enough to plan seriously for marriage, keep your expressions of feelings to those that are comfortable in the presence of your parents.¹² To help you keep these sacred commandments, make a covenant with the Lord that you will obey them. Decide what you will do and will not do. When temptation comes, do not change your standards. Do not abandon them when circumstances seem to justify an exception. That is Satan's way to hurt you by making it seem that sometimes God's law does not apply. There are no exceptions.

Question: Before you are married, how far is too far to go if it is with your girlfriend?

14. Answer: Before marriage there can be no sexual contact with a girlfriend, fiancée, or anyone else, period.¹³ While a commandment, that standard is for your happiness. That's why the Church counsels you to go in groups and not to date while you are young. Later, as you prepare for marriage, remember that true love elevates, protects, respects, and enriches another. It motivates you to make sacrifices for the girl you love. Satan would promote counterfeit love, which is really lust. That is driven by hunger to satisfy personal appetite. Protect the one you love by controlling your emotions to the limits set by the Lord. You know how to be clean. We trust you to do it.

Question: How do you go about repenting after a sexual sin is committed? What sins should you tell the bishop?

15. Answer: All of the sexual transgressions we have discussed require sincere repentance with the participation of the bishop. Should you have done any of this, repent now. It is wrong to violate these commandments of the Lord. It is worse to do nothing about it. Sin is like cancer in the body. It will never heal itself. It will become worse unless cured through repentance. Your parents can help strengthen you. Then

you can become clean and pure by repentance under the guidance of the bishop. He may seem to be busy or unavailable. Tell him you are in trouble and need help. He will listen.

16. A youth in serious trouble said: "I have done things that I knew were bad. I have been taught they were ever since I can remember. I know repentance is a great gift; without it I would be lost. But I'm not ready to repent of my sins, yet I know when I am ready I can." How tragic. The thought of intentionally committing serious sin now and repenting later is perilously wrong. Never do that.¹⁴ Many start that journey of intentional transgression and never make it back. Premeditated sin has greater penalties and is harder to overcome. If there is sin, repent now—while you can.
17. I pray that as we have talked you have had feelings to do better.¹⁵ You hold the priesthood of God. That is a sacred responsibility,¹⁶ and also a singular privilege.¹⁷ You will be fortified in your determination to live righteously as you study the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. Listen to your parents, leaders, and the prophet we have sustained today. Have faith in the Savior. He will help you.¹⁸ Remember He said, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise."¹⁹
18. Please stay morally clean. The Lord will make that possible as you do your part with all your strength.²⁰ Jesus Christ lives, and He loves you. He will help you as you do your part. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

17. See The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p. 494.

18. See Moro. 10:32.

19. D&C 82:10.

20. See 3 Ne. 18:20.

Notes

1. See Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, sel. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946), p. 64; see also Millennial Star, 51 (1889):657.

2. See 1 Cor. 10:13.

3. See H. Burke Peterson, Ensign, Nov. 1993, pp. 42–44.

4. See The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), pp. 278, 445–46.

5. See Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, Jan. 1974, pp. 27–28.

6. See Thomas S. Monson, Ensign, Nov. 1990, p. 47; see also Robert L. Simpson, Ensign, Jan. 1973, p. 112.

7. See Spencer W. Kimball, Ensign, May 1974, p. 7.

8. See Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, July 1972, pp. 111–13.

9. See Spencer W. Kimball, Ensign, Nov. 1980, pp. 97–98.

10. See D&C 43:9, 15–16.

11. See Spencer W. Kimball, Ensign, Nov. 1974, p. 8; Nov. 1977, p. 6; Nov. 1980, p. 97.

12. See The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, pp. 283–84.

13. See The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), pp. 65, 176–77.

14. Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, pp. 70–72.

15. See D&C 64:33–34.

16. See D&C 84:35–39. See also Spencer W. Kimball, The Miracle of Forgiveness (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), pp. 124–25.

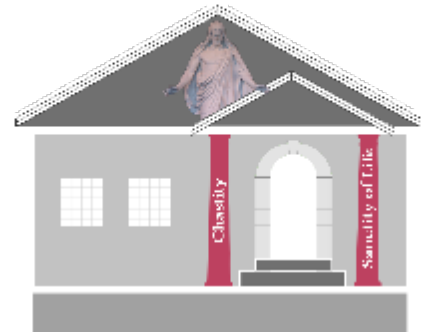
Making The Right Choices

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1994/10/making-the-right-choices?lang=eng&query=Making+the+right+choices>



Pornography

Elder Dallin H. Oaks
General Conference, April 2005



1. Last summer Sister Oaks and I returned from two years in the Philippines. We loved our service there, and we loved returning home. When we have been away, we see our surroundings in a new light, with increased appreciation and sometimes with new concerns.
2. We were concerned to see the inroads pornography had made in the United States while we were away. For many years our Church leaders have warned against the dangers of images and words intended to arouse sexual desires. Now the corrupting influence of pornography, produced and disseminated for commercial gain, is sweeping over our society like an avalanche of evil.
3. At our last conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley devoted an entire talk to this subject, warning in the plainest terms that “this is a very serious problem even among us” (“A Tragic Evil among Us,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 61). Most of the bishops we meet in stake conferences now report major concerns with this problem.
4. My fellow holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and also our young men, I wish to speak to you today about pornography. I know that many of you are exposed to this and that many of you are being stained by it.
5. In concentrating my talk on this subject I feel like the prophet Jacob, who told the men of his day that it grieved him to speak so boldly in front of their sensitive wives and children. But notwithstanding the difficulty of the task, he said he had to speak to the men about this subject because God had commanded him (see Jacob 2:7–11). I do so for the same reason.
6. In the second chapter of the book that bears his name, Jacob condemns men for their “whoredoms” (vv. 23, 28). He told them they had “broken the hearts of [their] tender wives, and lost the confidence of [their] children, because of [their] bad examples before them” (v. 35).
7. What were these grossly wicked “whoredoms”? No doubt some men were already guilty of evil acts. But the main focus of Jacob’s great sermon was not with evil acts completed, but with evil acts contemplated.
8. Jacob began his sermon by telling the men that “as yet, [they had] been obedient unto the word of the Lord” (Jacob 2:4). However, he then told them he knew their thoughts, that they were “beginning to labor in sin, which sin appeareth very abominable . . . unto God” (v. 5). “I must testify unto you concerning the wickedness of your hearts” (v. 6), he added. Jacob was speaking as Jesus spoke when He said, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28; see also 3 Nephi 12:28; D&C 59:6; 63:16).
9. More than 30 years ago, I urged BYU students to avoid the “promotional literature of illicit sexual relations” in what they read and viewed. I gave this analogy:
10. “Pornographic or erotic stories and pictures are worse than filthy or polluted food. The body has defenses to rid itself of unwholesome food. With a few fatal exceptions, bad food will only make you sick but do no permanent harm. In contrast, a person who feasts upon filthy stories or pornographic or erotic pictures and literature records them in this marvelous retrieval system we call a brain. The brain won’t vomit back filth. Once recorded, it will always remain subject to recall, flashing its perverted images across your mind and drawing you away from the wholesome things in life.”¹
11. Here, brethren, I must tell you that our bishops and our professional counselors are seeing an increasing number of men involved with pornography, and many of those are active members. Some involved in pornography apparently minimize its seriousness and continue to exercise the priesthood of God because they think no one will know of their involvement. But the user knows, brethren, and so does the Lord.
12. Some have suggested that pornography should be a separate question in the temple recommend interview. It is already. At least five different questions should elicit a confession and discussion on this subject if the person being interviewed has the spiritual sensitivity and honesty we expect of those who worship in the house of the Lord.

13. One of the Savior's most memorable teachings applies to men who are secretly viewing pornography:
 14. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.
 15. "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matthew 23:25–26; see also Alma 60:23).
 16. The Savior continues His denunciation of those who treat what is visible but neglect to cleanse the inner man:
 17. "Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.
 18. "Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matthew 23:27–28).
19. The immediate spiritual consequences of such hypocrisy are devastating. Those who seek out and use pornography forfeit the power of their priesthood. The Lord declares: "When we undertake to cover our sins, . . . behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man" (D&C 121:37).
20. Patrons of pornography also lose the companionship of the Spirit. Pornography produces fantasies that destroy spirituality. "To be carnally minded is death"—spiritual death (Romans 8:6; see also 2 Nephi 9:39).
21. The scriptures repeatedly teach that the Spirit of the Lord will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle. When we worthily partake of the sacrament, we are promised that we will "always have his Spirit to be with [us]." To qualify for that promise we covenant that we will "always remember him" (D&C 20:77). Those who seek out and use pornography for sexual stimulation obviously violate that covenant. They also violate a sacred covenant to refrain from unholy and impure practices. They cannot have the Spirit of the Lord to be with them. All such need to heed the Apostle Peter's plea: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22).
22. Brethren, you have noticed that I am not discussing the effects of pornography on mental health or criminal behavior. I am discussing its effects on spirituality—on our ability to have the companionship of the Spirit of the Lord and our capacity to exercise the power of the priesthood.
23. Pornography also inflicts mortal wounds on our most precious personal relationships. In his talk to men of the priesthood last October, President Hinckley quoted the letter of a woman who asked him to warn Church members that pornography "has the effect of damaging hearts and souls to their very depths, strangling the life out of relationships" (Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2004, 60).
24. At a recent stake conference a woman handed me a similar letter. Her husband had also served in important Church callings for many years while addicted to pornography. She told of great difficulty in getting priesthood leaders to take this problem of pornography seriously: "I got all kinds of responses—like I was overreacting or it was my fault. The bishop we have now has been great. And now after 15 years my husband is trying to deal with his addiction, but now it is 15 years harder to quit for him and the loss has been incalculable."
25. Pornography impairs one's ability to enjoy a normal emotional, romantic, and spiritual relationship with a person of the opposite sex. It erodes the moral barriers that stand against inappropriate, abnormal, or illegal behavior. As conscience is desensitized, patrons of pornography are led to act out what they have witnessed, regardless of its effects on their life and the lives of others.
26. Pornography is also addictive. It impairs decision-making capacities and it "hooks" its users, drawing them back obsessively for more and more. A man who had been addicted to pornography and to hard drugs wrote me this comparison: "In my eyes cocaine doesn't hold a candle to this. I have done both. . . . Quitting even the hardest drugs was nothing compared to [trying to quit pornography]" (letter of Mar. 20, 2005).
27. Some seek to justify their indulgence by arguing that they are only viewing "soft," not "hard," porn. A wise bishop called this refusing to see evil as evil. He quoted men seeking to justify their viewing choices by comparisons such as "not as bad as" or "only one bad scene." But the test of what is evil is not its degree but its effect. When persons entertain evil thoughts long enough for the Spirit to withdraw, they lose their spiritual protection and they are subject to the power and direction of the evil one. When they use Internet or other pornography for what this bishop described as "arousal on demand" (letter of Mar. 13, 2005), they are deeply soiled by sin.
28. King Benjamin's great sermon describes the terrible consequences. When we withdraw from the Spirit of the Lord, we become an enemy to righteousness, we have a lively sense of our guilt, and we "shrink from the presence of the Lord" (see Mosiah 2:36–38). "Mercy hath no claim on that man," he concluded; "therefore his final

doom is to endure a never-ending torment” (v. 39).

29. Consider the tragic example of King David. Though a spiritual giant in Israel, he allowed himself to look upon something he should not have viewed (see 2 Samuel 11). Tempted by what he saw, he violated two of the Ten Commandments, beginning with “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). In this way a prophet-king fell from his exaltation (see D&C 132:39).
30. But the good news is that no one needs to follow the evil, downward descent to torment. Everyone caught on that terrible escalator has the key to reverse his course. He can escape. Through repentance he can be clean.
31. Alma the Younger described it:
 32. “Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell. . . .
 33. “. . . The very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror. . . .
 34. “And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.
 35. “Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.
 36. “And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.
 37. “And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!” (Alma 36:13–14, 17–20).
38. My brethren who are caught in this addiction or troubled by this temptation, there is a way.
39. *First*, acknowledge the evil. Don’t defend it or try to justify yourself. For at least a quarter century our leaders have pleaded with men, and also with women and children, to avoid this evil.² Our current Church magazines are full of warnings, information, and helps on this subject—with more than a score of articles published or to be published this year and last year alone.³
40. *Second*, seek the help of the Lord and His servants. Hear

and heed President Hinckley’s words:

- “Plead with the Lord out of the depths of your soul that He will remove from you the addiction which enslaves you. And may you have the courage to seek the loving guidance of your bishop and, if necessary, the counsel of caring professionals” (Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2004, 62).
41. Third, do all that you can to avoid pornography. If you ever find yourself in its presence—which can happen to anyone in the world in which we live—follow the example of Joseph of Egypt. When temptation caught him in her grip, he left temptation and “got him out” (Genesis 39:12).
 42. Don’t accommodate any degree of temptation. Prevent sin and avoid having to deal with its inevitable destruction. So, turn it off! Look away! Avoid it at all costs. Direct your thoughts in wholesome paths. Remember your covenants and be faithful in temple attendance. The wise bishop I quoted earlier reported that “an endowed priesthood bearer’s fall into pornography never occurs during periods of regular worship in the temple; it happens when he has become casual in his temple worship” (letter of Mar. 13, 2005).
 43. We must also act to protect those we love. Parents install alarms to warn if their household is threatened by smoke or carbon monoxide. We should also install protections against spiritual threats, protections like filters on Internet connections and locating access so others can see what is being viewed. And we should build the spiritual strength of our families by loving relationships, family prayer, and scripture study.
 44. *Finally*, do not patronize pornography. Do not use your purchasing power to support moral degradation. And young women, please understand that if you dress immodestly, you are magnifying this problem by becoming pornography to some of the men who see you.
 45. Please heed these warnings. Let us all improve our personal behavior and redouble our efforts to protect our loved ones and our environment from the onslaught of pornography that threatens our spirituality, our marriages, and our children.
 46. I testify that this is what we should do to enjoy the blessings of Him whom we worship. I testify of Jesus Christ, the Light and Life of the World, whose Church this is, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Challenges for the Year Ahead (pamphlet, 1974), 4–5; reprinted in “Things They’re Saying,” New Era, Feb. 1974, 18.

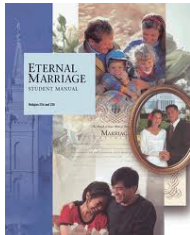
2. See, for example, Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Tragic Evil among Us,” Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2004, 59–62; David E. Sorensen, “You Can’t Pet a Rat-

tlesnake,” Liahona, July 2001, 48–50; Ensign, May 2001, 41–43; Thomas S. Monson, “Pornography—the Deadly Carrier,” Ensign, Nov. 1979, 66–67; David B. Haight, “Personal Morality,” Ensign, Nov. 1984, 70–73.

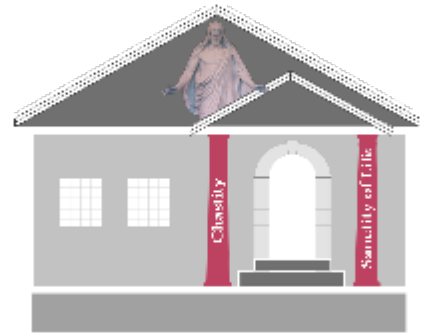
3. See, for example, Rory C. Reid, “The Road Back: Abandoning Pornography,” Liahona, Feb. 2005, 28–33; Ensign, Feb. 2005, 46–51; Arianne B. Cope, “Internet Café,” New Era, Mar. 2005, 34–37; Nycole S. Larsen, “The Decision,” Friend, Mar. 2004, 40–41.

Pornography

https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2005/04/pornography?lang=eng&_r=1



Statements on Intimacy in Marriage



Selected Teachings

Related Scripture

1 Corinthians 7:2–5

“Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

“The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

“Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.”

Physical Intimacy Ordained of God

President John Taylor

“We have a great many principles innate in our natures that are correct, but they want sanctifying. God said to man, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.’ (Genesis 1:28.) Well, he has planted, in accordance with this, a natural desire in woman towards man, and in man towards woman and a feeling of affection, regard, and sympathy exists between the sexes. We bring it into the world with us, but that, like everything else, has to be sanctified. An unlawful gratification of these feelings and sympathies is wrong in the sight of God, and leads down to death, while a proper exercise of our functions leads to life, happiness, and exaltation in this world and the world to come. And so it is in regard to a thousand other things” (Gospel Kingdom, 61).

President Joseph F. Smith

“The lawful association of the sexes is ordained of God, not only as the sole means of race perpetuation,

but for the development of the higher faculties and nobler traits of human nature, which the love-inspired companionship of man and woman alone can insure” (“Unchastity the Dominant Evil of the Age,” Improvement Era, June 1917)

President Spencer W. Kimball

“It is the destiny of men and women to join together to make eternal family units. In the context of lawful marriage, the intimacy of sexual relations is right and divinely approved. There is nothing unholy or degrading about sexuality in itself, for by that means men and women join in a process of creation and in an expression of love” (President Kimball Speaks Out, 2).

“The union of the sexes, husband and wife (and only husband and wife), was for the principal purpose of bringing children into the world. Sexual experiences were never intended by the Lord to be a mere plaything or merely to satisfy passions and lusts. We know of no directive from the Lord that proper sexual experience between husbands and wives need be limited totally to the procreation of children, but we find much evidence from Adam until now that no provision was ever made by the Lord for indiscriminate sex” (“The Lord’s Plan for Men and Women,” Ensign, Oct. 1975, 4).

Elder Parley P. Pratt

“Our natural affections are planted in us by the Spirit of God, for a wise purpose; and they are the very main-springs of life and happiness—they are the cement of all virtuous and heavenly society—they are the essence of charity, or love; . . .

“There is not a more pure and holy principle in existence than the affection which glows in the bosom of a virtuous man for his companion; . . .

“The fact is, God made man, male and female; he planted in their bosoms those affections which are calculated to promote their happiness and union” (Writings of Parley Parker Pratt, 52–53).

Physical Intimacy Only in Marriage

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“The expression of our procreative powers is pleasing to God, but he has commanded that this be confined within the relationship of marriage” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 99; or Ensign, Nov. 1993, 74).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage — I mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another’s body, with or without clothing — is a sin and is forbidden by God” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 51; or Ensign, Nov. 1994, 38).

Purposes of Intimacy

President Lorenzo Snow

“Think of the promises that are made to you in the beautiful and glorious ceremony that is used in the marriage covenant in the temple. When two Latter-day Saints are united together in marriage, promises are made to them concerning their offspring, that reach from eternity to eternity. They are promised that they shall have the power and the right to govern and control and administer salvation and exaltation and glory to their offspring worlds without end. And what offspring they do not have here, undoubtedly there will be opportunities to have them hereafter. What else could man wish? A man and a woman in the other life, having celestial bodies, free from sickness and disease, glorified and beautified beyond description, standing in the midst of their posterity, governing and controlling them, administering life, exaltation, and glory, worlds without end” (Teachings of Lorenzo Snow, 138).

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Your love, like a flower, must be nourished. There will come a great love and interdependence between you, for your love is a divine one. It is deep, inclusive, comprehensive. It is not like that association of the world which is misnamed love, but which is mostly physical attraction. When marriage is based on this only, the parties soon tire of each other. There is a break and a divorce, and a new, fresher physical attraction comes with another marriage which in turn may last only until it, too, becomes stale. The love of which the Lord speaks is not only physical attraction, but spiritual attraction as well. It is faith and confidence in, and understanding of, one another. It is a total partnership. It is companionship with common ideals and standards. It is unselfishness toward and sacrifice for one another. It is cleanliness of thought and action and faith in God and his program. It is parenthood in mortality ever looking toward godhood and creationship, and parenthood of spirits. It is vast, all-inclusive, and limitless. This kind of love never tires or wanes. It lives on through sickness and

sorrow, through prosperity and privation, through accomplishment and disappointment, through time and eternity” (Faith Precedes the Miracle, 130–31).

Misused Physical Intimacy

President David O. McKay

“Let us instruct young people who come to us, first, young men throughout the Church, to know that a woman should be queen of her own body. The marriage covenant does not give the man the right to enslave her, or to abuse her, or to use her merely for the gratification of his passion. Your marriage ceremony does not give you that right” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1952, 86).

President Spencer W. Kimball

“If it is unnatural, you just don’t do it. That is all, and all the family life should be kept clean and worthy and on a very high plane. There are some people who have said that behind the bedroom doors anything goes. That is not true and the Lord would not condone it” (Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, 312).

“We urge, with Peter, ‘. . . Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.’ (1 Pet. 2:11.) No indecent exposure or pornography or other aberrations to defile the mind and spirit. No fondling of bodies, one’s own or that of others, and no sex between persons except in proper marriage relationships. This is positively prohibited by our Creator in all places, at all times, and we reaffirm it. Even in marriage there can be some excesses and distortions. No amount of rationalization to the contrary can satisfy a disappointed Father in heaven” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, 8–9; or Ensign, May 1974, 7).

President Howard W. Hunter

“Keep yourselves above any domineering or unworthy behavior in the tender, intimate relationship between husband and wife. Because marriage is ordained of God, the intimate relationship between husbands and wives is good and honorable in the eyes of God. He has commanded that they be one flesh and that they multiply and replenish the earth (see Moses 2:28; 3:24). You are to love your wife as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it (see Ephesians 5:25–31).

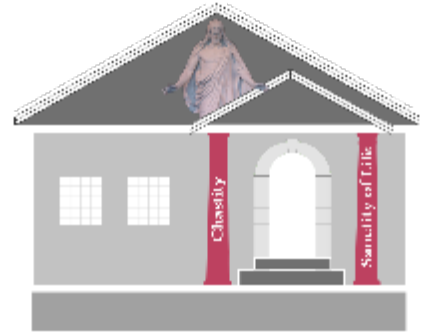
“Tenderness and respect—never selfishness—must be the guiding principles in the intimate relationship between husband and wife. Each partner must be considerate and sensitive to the other’s needs and desires. Any domineering, indecent, or uncontrolled behavior in the intimate relationship between husband and wife is condemned by the Lord” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or Ensign, Nov. 1994, 51).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

“Even though sex can be an important and satisfactory part of married life, we must remember that life is not designed just for sex. Even marriage does not make proper certain extremes in sexual indulgence. To the Ephesian saints Paul begged for propriety in marriage: ‘So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.’ (Eph. 5:28.) And perhaps the Lord’s condemnation included secret sexual sins in marriage, when he said: ‘ . . . And those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God.’ (D&C 132:52.)” (Miracle of Forgiveness, 73).

Unit 4 Additional Readings

Links and QR Codes



Elder Boyd K. Packer, “The Fountain of Life”

<https://www.lds.org/manual/eternal-marriage-student-manual/intimacy-in-marriage?lang=eng>

Sister Linda S. Reeves, “Protection from Pornography”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2014/04/protection-from-pornography-a-christ-focused-home?lang=eng>

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “He Heals the Heavy Laden”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2006/10/he-heals-the-heavy-laden?lang=eng>

Elder Jeffery R. Holland, “Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments”

<http://www.familylifeeducation.org/gilliland/procgroup/Souls.htm>

Elder David A. Bednar, “Things as They Really Are”

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/2010/06/things-as-they-really-are?lang=eng>

“Birth Control” True to the Faith & Handbook 2

<https://www.lds.org/manual/true-to-the-faith/birth-control?lang=eng>

FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY
Large Group Study Guide #5
Happiness in Family Life

“Revelation comes as words we feel more than hear.”

President Boyd K. Packer, "Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise," October 1994 General Conference

Name _____ Large Group Instructor _____ Class Time/Day _____

1. What doctrines or principles were you taught that you consider foundational to this Unit?
2. What impressions came to you? What were you taught during this large group session?
3. What questions will you ask in following class periods that will invite increased learning on this topic?

FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY

Unit 5 Scriptures

Husbands and wives have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other

John 13:34-35

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John 15:13

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Ephesians 5:23, 25, 28

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. . .

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it . . .

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

D&C 25:5

14 And the office of thy calling shall be for a comfort unto my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., thy husband, in his afflictions, with consoling words, in the spirit of meekness.

D&C 42:22

22 Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.

D&C 83:2

2 Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken; and if they are not found transgressors they shall have fellowship in the church.

Mothers and Fathers have a sacred duty to love, teach, and nurture their children

Mosiah 4:14-15

14 And ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin, or who is the devil spirit which hath been spoken of by our fathers, he being an enemy to all righteousness.

15 But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another,

and to serve one another.

D&C 68:25-31

25 And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.

26 For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized.

27 And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands.

28 And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.

29 And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

30 And the inhabitants of Zion also shall remember their labors, inasmuch as they are appointed to labor, in all faithfulness; for the idler shall be had in remembrance before the Lord.

31 Now, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them; and their children are also growing up in wickedness; they also seek not earnestly the riches of eternity, but their eyes are full of greediness.

D&C 93:40-43, 50

40 But I have commanded you to bring up your children in blight and truth.

41 But verily I say unto you, my servant Frederick G. Williams, you have continued under this condemnation;

42 You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your affliction.

43 And now a commandment I give unto you—if you will be delivered you shall set in order your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house. . . .

50 My servant Newel K. Whitney also, a bishop of my church, hath need to be chastened, and set in order his family, and see that they are more diligent and concerned at home, and pray always, or they shall be removed out of their place.

D&C 83:4-5

4 All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age.

5 And after that, they have claim upon the church, or in other words upon the Lord's storehouse, if their parents have not wherewith to give them inheritances.

Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ**Matthew 5:7-9**

7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Matthew 7:12

12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets

3 Nephi 11:29-30

29 For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

30 Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away.

D&C 68:9-11

9 Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

10 I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

11 And ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds.



The Sacred Calling of Fathers and Mothers

President Ezra Taft Benson

Teachings of Presidents of the Church, Chapter 15



From the Life of Ezra Taft Benson

1. By word and example, at home and around the world, in Church and civic settings, President Ezra Taft Benson taught the importance of being good parents. “Nurture your children with love and the admonitions of the Lord,” he said. “God holds parents responsible for their stewardship in rearing their family. It is a most sacred responsibility.”
2. President Benson and his wife, Flora, worked closely together in fulfilling their sacred responsibilities as parents. They “approached the task of nurturing their family unit with energy and enthusiasm.” They frequently counseled together about their children and other matters. “I could see that I had a spiritually perceptive woman at my side,” President Benson said.
3. They worked together to create a home where their children could grow and learn—and where their children wanted to be. “I would have rather been home than anywhere,” their son Mark said. “It was a refuge from the storm. Mother was the protective element, and Dad was there with his strength.”
4. President and Sister Benson approached their responsibilities as parents prayerfully. Mark said: “Mother had more faith than any woman I’ve ever known. . . . I’ve never seen more praying in my life. At the drop of a hat she’d be on her knees, praying for the children, whether it was about a test or a fight on the school grounds, it didn’t matter. She and Dad both had that simple faith.”
5. President Benson was frequently away from home because of his work and Church duties, so Flora assumed much of the responsibility for nurturing and teaching their six children. She relished her role of motherhood. “The home is the center of our mortal affections,” she said. Mark recalled, “Mother absolutely loved home. And she loved us—not because it was her duty to, but because that was her life.” Expressing her feelings about the importance of being a mother, Flora wrote: “If you want to find greatness, don’t go to the throne, go to the cradle. There is mighty power in a mother. She is the one who molds hearts, lives, and shapes character.”
6. When President Benson was away from home, he always sought ways to watch over and strengthen his family. He maintained regular contact with them through phone calls and letters. When he was home, he spent as much time with them as possible. He often cited the story of “a busy father who explained the hours he spent playing ball with his son by saying, ‘I’d sooner have a backache now than a heartache later.’”
7. He also spent extended time individually with his children. Mark recalled his father taking him to Salt Lake City, Utah, to see a medical specialist: “How fun it was to be with Dad, just him and me! We talked about anything I wanted to talk about. Even as a boy, I knew Dad loved me, because he was with me and helping me get better.”
8. When he could, President Benson took his children with him during his travels. In March 1948 he took his daughter Bonnie, who was seven years old at the time, to an agriculture meeting in Nebraska. “The press was so intrigued by the poise of the little girl, and by the anomalous example of a father bringing such a young child on such a long trip to attend such a distinguished function, that a picture of Bonnie was featured on the front page [of the newspaper] the next morning. But to Elder Benson the incident was not an anomaly. He frequently took the children with him on out-of-town trips, both as a means of cementing good relations and of educating them.”
9. Fathers, yours is an eternal calling from which you are never released. Callings in the Church, as important as they are, by their very nature are only for a period of

Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson

time, and then an appropriate release takes place. But a father's calling is eternal, and its importance transcends time. It is a calling for both time and eternity.

10. Our pattern, or model, for fatherhood is our Heavenly Father. How does He work with His children? Well, in order to know that, of course, [fathers] will need to know something about the gospel, the great plan of the Lord.
11. For a man, there is no calling as high as that of a righteous patriarch, married in the house of the Lord, presiding over His children. Even the very Elohim has us address Him as "our Father who art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9; 3 Nephi 13:9).
12. The father must hunger and thirst and yearn to bless his family, go to the Lord, ponder the words of the Lord, and live by the Spirit to know the mind and will of the Lord and what he must do to lead his family.
[Fathers,] you have a sacred responsibility to provide spiritual leadership in your family.
13. In a pamphlet published some years ago by the Council of the Twelve, we said the following: "Fatherhood is leadership, the most important kind of leadership. It has always been so; it always will be so. Father, with the assistance and counsel and encouragement of your eternal companion, you preside in the home" (Father, Consider Your Ways [pamphlet, 1973], 4–5).
14. With love in my heart for the fathers in Israel, may I suggest 10 specific ways that fathers can give spiritual leadership to their children:
15. 1. Give father's blessings to your children. Baptize and confirm your children. Ordain your sons to the priesthood. These will become spiritual highlights in the lives of your children.
16. 2. Personally direct family prayers, daily scripture reading, and weekly family home evenings. Your personal involvement will show your children how important these activities really are.
17. 3. Whenever possible, attend Church meetings together as a family. Family worship under your leadership is vital to your children's spiritual welfare.
18. 4. Go on daddy-daughter dates and father-and-sons' outings with your children.

19. 5. Build traditions of family vacations and trips and outings. These memories will never be forgotten by your children.
20. 6. Have regular one-on-one visits with your children. Let them talk about what they would like to. Teach them gospel principles. Teach them true values. Tell them you love them. Personal time with your children tells them where Dad puts his priorities.
21. 7. Teach your children to work, and show them the value of working toward a worthy goal.
22. 8. Encourage good music and art and literature in your homes. Homes that have a spirit of refinement and beauty will bless the lives of your children forever.
23. 9. As distances allow, regularly attend the temple with your wife. Your children will then better understand the importance of temple marriage and temple vows and the eternal family unit.
24. 10. Have your children see your joy and satisfaction in service to the Church. This can become contagious to them, so they, too, will want to serve in the Church and will love the kingdom.
25. Oh, husbands and fathers in Israel, you can do so much for the salvation and exaltation of your families! Your responsibilities are so important.
26. We sometimes hear accounts of men, even in the Church, who think that being head of the home somehow puts them in a superior role and allows them to dictate and make demands upon their family.
27. The Apostle Paul points out that "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23; italics added). That is the model we are to follow in our role of presiding in the home. We do not find the Savior leading the Church with a harsh or unkind hand. We do not find the Savior treating His Church with disrespect or neglect. We do not find the Savior using force or coercion to accomplish His purposes. Nowhere do we find the Savior doing anything but that which edifies, uplifts, comforts, and exalts the Church. Brethren, I say to you with all soberness, He is the model we must follow as we take the spiritual lead in our families.

28. As the patriarch in your home, you have a serious responsibility to assume leadership in working with your children. You must help create a home where the Spirit of the Lord can abide.
29. Your homes should be havens of peace and joy for your family. Surely no child should fear his own father—especially a priesthood father. A father's duty is to make his home a place of happiness and joy. ... The powerful effect of righteous fathers in setting an example, disciplining and training, nurturing and loving is vital to the spiritual welfare of [their] children.
30. [Mothers] are, or should be, the very heart and soul of the family. No more sacred word exists in secular or holy writ than that of mother. There is no more noble work than that of a good and God-fearing mother. In the eternal family, God established that fathers are to preside in the home. Fathers are to provide, to love, to teach, and to direct. A mother's role is also God-ordained. Mothers are to conceive, to bear, to nourish, to love, and to train. So declare the revelations.
31. We realize that some women, through no fault of their own, are not able to bear children. To these lovely sisters, every prophet of God has promised that they will be blessed with children in the eternities and that posterity will not be denied them.
32. Through pure faith, pleading prayers, fasting, and special blessings, many of these same lovely sisters, with their noble companions at their sides, have had miracles take place in their lives and have been blessed with children. Others have prayerfully chosen to adopt children. We salute these wonderful couples for the sacrifices and love you have given to those children you have chosen to call your own.
33. God bless our wonderful mothers. We pray for you. We sustain you. We honor you as you bear, nourish, train, teach, and love for eternity. I promise you the blessings of heaven and "all that [the] Father hath" (see D&C 84:38) as you magnify the noblest calling of all—a mother in Zion.
34. Mothers in Zion, your God-given roles are so vital to your own exaltation and to the salvation and exaltation of your family. A child needs a mother more than all the things money can buy. Spending time with your children is the greatest gift of all.
35. With love in my heart for the mothers in Zion, I would now like to suggest 10 specific ways our mothers may spend effective time with their children.
36. [First,] whenever possible, be at the crossroads when your children are either coming or going—when they leave and return from school, when they leave or return from dates, when they bring friends home. Be there at the crossroads whether your children are 6 or 16.
37. Second, mothers, take time to be a real friend to your children. Listen to your children, really listen. Talk with them, laugh and joke with them, sing with them, play with them, cry with them, hug them, honestly praise them. Yes, regularly spend one-on-one time with each child. Be a real friend to your children.
38. Third, take time to read to your children. Starting from the cradle, read to your sons and daughters. You will plant a love for good literature and a real love for the scriptures if you will read to your children regularly.
39. Fourth, take time to pray with your children. Family prayers, under the direction of the father, should be held morning and night. Have your children feel of your faith as you call down the blessings of heaven upon them. Have your children participate in family and personal prayers, and rejoice in their sweet utterances to their Father in Heaven.
40. Fifth, take time to have a meaningful weekly home evening. Have your children actively involved. Teach them correct principles. Make this one of your family traditions.
41. Sixth, take time to be together at mealtimes as often as possible. This is a challenge as the children get older and lives get busier. But happy conversation, sharing of the day's plans and activities, and special teaching moments occur at mealtime because parents and children work at it.
42. Seventh, take time daily to read the scriptures together as a family. Reading the Book of Mormon together as a family will especially bring increased spirituality into your home and will give both parents and children the power to resist temptation and to have the Holy Ghost as their constant companion. I promise you that the Book of Mormon will change the lives of your family.
43. Eighth, take time to do things as a family. Make family outings and picnics and birthday celebrations and trips special times and memory builders. Whenever possible, attend, as a family, events where one of the family

members is involved, such as a school play, a ball game, a talk, a recital. Attend Church meetings together, and sit together as a family when you can. Mothers who help families pray and play together will [help them] stay together and will bless children's lives forever.

44. Ninth, mothers, take time to teach your children. Catch the teaching moments at mealtime, in casual settings, or at special sit-down times together, at the foot of the bed at the end of the day, or during an early-morning walk together.
45. A mother's love and prayerful concern for her children are the most important ingredients in teaching her own. Teach children gospel principles. Teach them it pays to be good. Teach them there is no safety in sin. Teach them a love for the gospel of Jesus Christ and a testimony of its divinity.
46. Teach your sons and daughters modesty, and teach them to respect manhood and womanhood. Teach your children sexual purity, proper dating standards, temple marriage, missionary service, and the importance of accepting and magnifying Church callings.
47. Teach them a love for work and the value of a good education.
48. Teach them the importance of the right kind of entertainment, including appropriate movies, videos, music, books, and magazines. Discuss the evils of pornography and drugs, and teach them the value of living the clean life.
49. Yes, mothers, teach your children the gospel in your own home, at your own fireside. This is the most effective teaching that your children will ever receive.
50. Tenth and finally, mothers, take the time to truly love your little children. A mother's unqualified love approaches Christlike love.
51. Your teenage children also need that same kind of love and attention. It seems easier for many mothers and fathers to express their love to their children when they are young, but more difficult when they are older. Work at this prayerfully. There need be no generation gap. And the key is love. Our young people need love and attention, not indulgence. They need empathy and understanding, not indifference from mothers and fathers. They need the parents' time. A mother's kindly teachings and her love for and confidence in a teenage

son or daughter can literally save them from a wicked world.

52. Do you know one reason why righteous mothers love their children so much? Because they sacrifice so much for them. We love what we sacrifice for and we sacrifice for what we love.
53. Husbands and wives, as co-creators, should eagerly and prayerfully invite children into their homes. Blessed is the husband and wife who have a family of children. The deepest joys and blessings in life are associated with family, parenthood, and sacrifice. To have those sweet spirits come into the home is worth practically any sacrifice. When parents, in companionship, love, and unity, fulfill their heaven-imposed responsibility and children respond with love and obedience, great joy is the result.
54. God help us to support one another. May it start in the home as we support our families. May there be a spirit of loyalty, unity, love, and mutual respect. May husbands be loyal to their wives, true to them, love them, strive to ease their burdens, and share the responsibility for the care, training, and the rearing of the children. May mothers and wives show a spirit of helpfulness to their husbands, uphold and sustain them in their priesthood duties, and be loyal and true to the calls that come to them from the priesthood of God.
55. May we be faithful to this great obligation of parenthood, this sacred obligation, that we may build our homes solidly upon eternal principles, that we may have no regrets. May we never be recreant [unfaithful] to the great trust which has been imposed in us. May we always keep in mind that these spirits that have entered our homes are choice spirits.

The Sacred Calling of Father and Mothers

<https://www.lds.org/manual/teachings-of-presidents-of-the-church-ezra-taft-benson/chapter-15-the-sacred-callings-of-fathers-and-mothers?lang=eng>



In Praise of Those Who Save

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Ensign, May 2016



1. Many years ago, I was at the Frankfurt Germany Temple when I noticed an elderly couple holding hands. The caring tenderness and affection they showed to each other warmed my heart.
2. I'm not completely sure why this scene affected me so profoundly. Perhaps it was the sweetness of the love these two people shared for one another—a compelling symbol of perseverance and commitment. It was clear that this couple had been together for a long time and their affection for one another was still alive and strong.

A Society of Disposables

3. I think another reason this tender scene has stayed with me for so long is the contrast to some of today's attitudes. In so many societies around the world, everything seems to be disposable. As soon as something starts to break down or wear out—or even when we simply grow tired of it—we throw it out and replace it with an upgrade, something newer or shinier.
4. We do this with cell phones, clothes, cars—and, tragically, even with relationships.
5. While there may be value in decluttering our lives of material things we no longer need, when it comes to things of eternal importance—our marriages, our families, and our values—a mind-set of replacing the original in favor of the modern can bring profound remorse.
6. I am grateful that I belong to a church that values marriage and family. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are known throughout the world for having some of the finest marriages and families you can find. I believe this is, in part, due to the precious truth restored by Joseph Smith that marriages and families are meant to be eternal. Families are not just meant to make things run more smoothly here on earth and to be cast off when we get to heaven. Rather, they are the order of heaven. They are an echo of a celestial pattern and an emulation of God's eternal family.
7. But strong marriage and family relationships do not happen just because we are members of the Church.

They require constant, intentional work. The doctrine of eternal families must inspire us to dedicate our best efforts to saving and enriching our marriages and families. I admire and applaud those who have preserved and nourished these critical, eternal relationships.

8. Today I wish to speak in praise of those who save.

Saving Our Marriages

9. Over the years, I have performed the sealing ordinance for many hopeful and loving couples. I have never met anyone who, as they looked at each other across the altar, thought they would end up divorced or heartbroken.
10. Unfortunately, some do.
11. Somehow, as the days multiply and the color of romantic love changes, there are some who slowly stop thinking of each other's happiness and start noticing the little faults. In such an environment, some are enticed by the tragic conclusion that their spouse isn't smart enough, fun enough, or young enough. And somehow they get the idea that this gives them justification to start looking elsewhere.
12. Brethren, if this comes close to describing you at all, I warn you that you are on a road that leads to broken marriages, broken homes, and broken hearts. I plead with you to stop now, turn around, and come back to the safe path of integrity and loyalty to covenants. And, of course, the same principles apply for our dear sisters.
13. Now, just one word to those of our single brethren who follow the deception that they first have to find the "perfect woman" before they can enter into serious courting or marriage.
14. My beloved brethren, may I remind you, if there were a perfect woman, do you really think she would be that interested in you?
15. In God's plan of happiness, we are not so much looking for someone perfect but for a person with whom, throughout a lifetime, we can join efforts to create a

loving, lasting, and more perfect relationship. That is the goal.

16. Brethren, those who save their marriages understand that this pursuit takes time, patience, and, above all, the blessings of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It requires you to be kind, envy not, seek not your own, not be easily provoked, think no evil, and rejoice in the truth. In other words, it requires charity, the pure love of Christ.
17. All this won't just happen in an instant. Great marriages are built brick by brick, day after day, over a lifetime.
18. And that is good news.
19. Because no matter how flat your relationship may be at the present, if you keep adding pebbles of kindness, compassion, listening, sacrifice, understanding, and selflessness, eventually a mighty pyramid will begin to grow.
20. If it appears to take forever, remember: happy marriages are meant to last forever! So "be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great [marriage]. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great."
21. It may be a gradual work, but it doesn't have to be a cheerless one. In fact, at the risk of stating the obvious, divorce rarely happens when the husband and wife are happy.
22. So be happy!
23. And brethren, astonish your wife by doing things that make her happy.
24. Those who save their marriages choose happiness. While it's true that some types of chronic depression require specialized treatment, I am fond of this bit of wisdom by Abraham Lincoln: "Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." It fits nicely with its scriptural companion: "Seek, and ye shall find."
25. If we look for imperfections in our spouse or irritations in our marriage, we will certainly find them, because everyone has some. On the other hand, if we look for the good, we will surely find it, because everyone has many good qualities too.
26. Those who save marriages pull out the weeds and water the flowers. They celebrate the small acts of grace that spark tender feelings of charity. Those who save marriages save future generations.
27. Brethren, remember why you fell in love.

28. Work each day to make your marriage stronger and happier.

29. My dear friends, let us do our very best to be numbered among those hallowed and happy souls who save their marriages.

Saving Our Families

30. Today I also wish to speak in praise of those who save their relationships with their families. Every family needs saving.
31. As wonderful as it is that this Church is known for its strong families, we may often feel this must apply to every Latter-day Saint family except ours. But the reality is that there are no perfect families.
32. Every family has moments of awkwardness.
33. Like when your parents ask you to take a "selfie" of them, or when your great-aunt insists that you are still single because you are just too picky, or when your opinionated brother-in-law thinks his political view is the gospel view, or when your dad arranges a family portrait with everyone dressed like characters in his favorite movie.
34. And you get the Chewbacca costume.
35. Families are like that.
36. We may share the same gene pool, but we are not the same. We have unique spirits. We are influenced in different ways by our experiences. And each of us ends up different as a result.
37. Rather than attempting to force everyone into a mold of our own making, we can choose to celebrate these differences and appreciate them for adding richness and constant surprises to our lives.
38. Sometimes, however, members of our families make choices or do things that are thoughtless, hurtful, or immoral. What should we do in these cases?
39. There is not one solution that covers every situation. Those who save their families are successful because they counsel with their spouse and family, seek the will of the Lord, and listen for the promptings of the Holy Ghost. They know that what is right for one family may not be right for another.
40. However, there is one thing that is right in every case.
41. In the Book of Mormon we learn of a people who had discovered the secret to happiness. For generations,

“there was no contention. . . . And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.” How did they do it? “Because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.”

- 42. Whatever problems your family is facing, whatever you must do to solve them, the beginning and the end of the solution is charity, the pure love of Christ. Without this love, even seemingly perfect families struggle. With it, even families with great challenges succeed.
- 43. “Charity never faileth.”
- 44. It is true for saving marriages! It is true for saving families!

Set Aside Pride

- 45. The great enemy of charity is pride. Pride is one of the biggest reasons marriages and families struggle. Pride is short-tempered, unkind, and envious. Pride exaggerates its own strength and ignores the virtues of others. Pride is selfish and easily provoked. Pride assumes evil intent where there is none and hides its own weaknesses behind clever excuses. Pride is cynical, pessimistic, angry, and impatient. Indeed, if charity is the pure love of Christ, then pride is the defining characteristic of Satan.
- 46. Pride may be a common human failing. But it is not part of our spiritual heritage, and it has no place among holders of the priesthood of God.
- 47. Life is short, brethren. Regrets can last a long time—some will have repercussions that echo through eternity.
- 48. The way you treat your wife or children or parents or siblings may influence generations to come. What legacy do you want to leave your posterity? One of harshness, vengeance, anger, fear, or isolation? Or one of love, humility, forgiveness, compassion, spiritual growth, and unity?
- 49. We all need to remember, “Judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.”
- 50. For the sake of your family relationships, for the sake of your soul, please be merciful, for “mercy triumphs over judgment.”
- 51. Set aside pride.
- 52. Sincerely apologizing to your children, your wife, your family, or your friends is not a sign of weakness but of strength. Is being right more important than fostering an environment of nurturing, healing, and love?
- 53. Build bridges; don’t destroy them.
- 54. Even when you are not at fault—perhaps especially when you are not at fault—let love conquer pride.
- 55. If you do this, whatever adversity you are facing will pass, and because of the love of God in your hearts, contention will fade. These principles of saving relationships apply to all of us, regardless of whether we are married, divorced, widowed, or single. We all can be saviors of strong families.

The Greatest Love

- 56. Brethren, in our efforts to save our marriages and families, as in all things, let us follow the example of the One who saves us. The Savior won “our souls with love.” Jesus Christ is our Master. His work is our work. It is a saving work, and it begins in our homes.
- 57. Love in the fabric of the plan of salvation is selfless and seeks the well-being of others. That is the love our Heavenly Father has for us.
- 58. As we emulate the Savior’s love, He will surely bless and prosper our righteous efforts to save our marriages and strengthen our families.
- 59. May the Lord bless you in your untiring and righteous efforts to be numbered among those who save. This is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

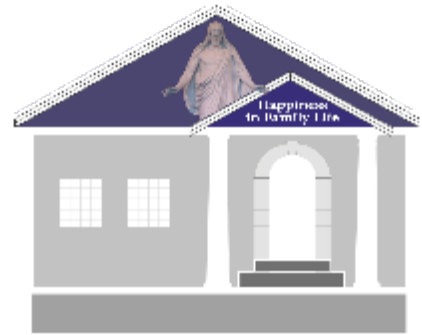
In Praise of Those Who Save

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/2016/05/general-priesthood-session/in-praise-of-those-who-save?lang=eng>



Marriage: Watch and Learn

Elder L. Whitney Clayton
Ensign, May 2013



1. One evening several years ago, my wife and I were visiting the home of one of our sons and his wife and children for dinner. It was a typical event for a family with small children: there was much noise and even more fun. Shortly after dinner our four-year-old granddaughter, Anna, and I were still sitting at the table. Realizing that she had my full attention, she stood up straight on a bench and fixed her eyes on me. When she was sure that I was looking at her, she solemnly ordered me to “watch and learn.” She then danced and sang a song for me.
2. Anna’s instruction to “watch and learn” was wisdom from the mouth of a babe. We can learn so much by watching and then considering what we have seen and felt. In that spirit, let me share with you a few principles I have observed by watching and learning from wonderful, faithful marriages. These principles build strong, satisfying marriages that are compatible with heavenly principles. I invite you to watch and learn with me.
3. First, I have observed that in the happiest marriages both the husband and wife consider their relationship to be a pearl beyond price, a treasure of infinite worth. They both leave their fathers and mothers and set out together to build a marriage that will prosper for eternity. They understand that they walk a divinely ordained path. They know that no other relationship of any kind can bring as much joy, generate as much good, or produce as much personal refinement. Watch and learn: the best marriage partners regard their marriages as priceless.
4. Next, faith. Successful eternal marriages are built on the foundation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and adherence to His teachings. I have observed that couples who have made their marriages priceless practice the patterns of faith: they attend sacrament and other meetings every week, hold family home evening, pray and study the scriptures together and as individuals, and pay an honest tithing. Their mutual quest is to be obedient and good. They do not consider the commandments to be a buffet from which they can pick and choose only the most appealing offerings.
5. Faith is the foundation of every virtue that strengthens marriage. Strengthening faith strengthens marriage. Faith grows as we keep the commandments, and so do the harmony and joy in marriage. Thus, keeping the commandments is fundamental to establishing strong eternal marriages. Watch and learn: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of happy eternal marriages.
6. Third, repentance. I have learned that happy marriages rely on the gift of repentance. It is an essential element in every good marital relationship. Spouses who regularly conduct honest self-examination and promptly take needed steps to repent and improve experience a healing balm in their marriages. Repentance helps restore and maintain harmony and peace.
7. Humility is the essence of repentance. Humility is selfless, not selfish. It doesn’t demand its own way or speak with moral superiority. Instead, humility answers softly and listens kindly for understanding, not vindication. Humility recognizes that no one can change someone else, but with faith, effort, and the help of God, we can undergo our own mighty change of heart. Experiencing the mighty change of heart causes us to treat others, especially our spouses, with meekness. Humility means that both husbands and wives seek to bless, help, and lift each other, putting the other first in every decision. Watch and learn: repentance and humility build happy marriages.
8. Fourth, respect. I have observed that in wonderful, happy marriages, husbands and wives treat each other as equal partners. Practices from any place or any time in which husbands have dominated wives or treated them in any way as second-class partners in marriage are not in keeping with divine law and should be replaced by correct principles and patterns of behavior.

9. Husbands and wives in great marriages make decisions unanimously, with each of them acting as a full participant and entitled to an equal voice and vote. They focus first on the home and on helping each other with their shared responsibilities. Their marriages are based on cooperation, not negotiation. Their dinner hour and the family time that follows become the center of their day and the object of their best efforts. They turn off electronics and forgo personal entertainment in order to help with household duties. To the extent possible, they read with their children every night and both participate in putting the little ones to bed. They retire to their bed together. As their duties and circumstances permit, husbands and wives work side by side in doing the most important work there is—the work we do in our own homes.
10. Where there is respect, there is also transparency, which is a key element of happy marriages. There are no secrets about relevant matters in marriages based on mutual respect and transparency. Husbands and wives make all decisions about finances together, and both have access to all information.
11. Loyalty is a form of respect. Prophets teach that successful marriage partners are “fiercely loyal” to each other. They keep their social media use fully worthy in every way. They permit themselves no secret Internet experiences. They freely share with each other their social network passwords. They do not look at the virtual profiles of anyone in any way that might betray the sacred trust of their spouse. They never do or say anything that approaches the appearance of impropriety, either virtually or physically. Watch and learn: terrific marriages are completely respectful, transparent, and loyal.
12. Fifth, love. The happiest marriages I have seen radiate obedience to one of the happiest commandments—that we “live together in love.” Speaking to husbands, the Lord commanded, “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.” A Church handbook teaches: “The word cleave means to be completely devoted and faithful to someone. Married couples cleave to God and one another by serving and loving each other and by keeping covenants in complete fidelity to one another and to God.” Both the husband and wife “leave behind their single life and establish their marriage as [their] first priority. They allow no other person or interest to have greater priority than keeping the covenants they have made with God and each other.” Watch and learn: successful couples love each other with complete devotion.
13. There are those whose marriages are not as happy as they would wish, as well as those who have never married, are divorced, are single parents, or for various reasons are not in a position to marry. These circumstances can be full of challenge and heartbreak, but they need not be eternal. To those of you in such situations who nevertheless “cheerfully do all things that lie in [your] power” to persevere, may heaven bless you richly. Seek after the ideal of forming an eternal marriage, including by striving or preparing to be a worthy spouse. Keep the commandments, and trust the Lord and His perfect love for you. One day every promised blessing concerning marriage will be yours.
14. One of the sweetest verses in the Book of Mormon states simply, “And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them.” The promises of the Lord are extended to all those who follow the pattern of life that builds happy, holy marriage relationships. Such blessings come as the delightful, predictable consequences of faithfully living the gospel of Jesus Christ.
15. I am grateful for my wonderful wife, Kathy, who is the love of my life.
16. Marriage is a gift from God to us; the quality of our marriages is a gift from us to Him. I bear testimony of the marvelous plan of our loving Heavenly Father, which provides for eternal, wondrous marriage. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Marriage: Watch and Learn

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/04/marriage-watch-and-learn?lang=eng>



Mothers Who Know

Sister Julie B. Beck

General Conference, October 2007



1. In the Book of Mormon we read about 2,000 exemplary young men who were exceedingly valiant, courageous, and strong. “Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him” (Alma 53:21). These faithful young men paid tribute to their mothers. They said, “Our mothers knew it” (Alma 56:48). I would suspect that the mothers of Captain Moroni, Mosiah, Mormon, and other great leaders also knew.
2. The responsibility mothers have today has never required more vigilance. More than at any time in the history of the world, we need mothers who know. Children are being born into a world where they “wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).¹ However, mothers need not fear. When mothers know who they are and who God is and have made covenants with Him, they will have great power and influence for good on their children.

Mothers Who Know Bear Children

3. Mothers who know desire to bear children. Whereas in many cultures in the world children are “becoming less valued,”² in the culture of the gospel we still believe in having children. Prophets, seers, and revelators who were sustained at this conference have declared that “God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force.”³ President Ezra Taft Benson taught that young couples should not postpone having children and that “in the eternal perspective, children—not possessions, not position, not prestige—are our greatest jewels.”⁴
4. Faithful daughters of God desire children. In the scriptures we read of Eve (see Moses 4:26), Sarah (see Genesis 17:16), Rebekah (see Genesis 24:60), and Mary (see 1 Nephi 11:13–20), who were foreordained to be mothers before children were born to them. Some women are not given the responsibility of bearing children in mortality, but just as Hannah of the Old

Testament prayed fervently for her child (see 1 Samuel 1:11), the value women place on motherhood in this life and the attributes of motherhood they attain here will rise with them in the Resurrection (see D&C 130:18). Women who desire and work toward that blessing in this life are promised they will receive it for all eternity, and eternity is much, much longer than mortality. There is eternal influence and power in motherhood.

Mothers Who Know Honor Sacred Ordinances and Covenants

5. Mothers who know honor sacred ordinances and covenants. I have visited sacrament meetings in some of the poorest places on the earth where mothers have dressed with great care in their Sunday best despite walking for miles on dusty streets and using worn-out public transportation. They bring daughters in clean and ironed dresses with hair brushed to perfection; their sons wear white shirts and ties and have missionary haircuts. These mothers know they are going to sacrament meeting, where covenants are renewed. These mothers have made and honor temple covenants. They know that if they are not pointing their children to the temple, they are not pointing them toward desired eternal goals. These mothers have influence and power.

Mothers Who Know Are Nurturers

6. Mothers who know are nurturers. This is their special assignment and role under the plan of happiness.⁵ To nurture means to cultivate, care for, and make grow. Therefore, mothers who know create a climate for spiritual and temporal growth in their homes. Another word for nurturing is homemaking. Homemaking includes cooking, washing clothes and dishes, and keeping an orderly home. Home is where women have the most power and influence; therefore, Latter-day Saint women should be the best homemakers in the world. Working beside children in homemaking tasks creates opportunities to teach and model qualities children should emulate. Nurturing mothers are knowledgeable, but all the education women attain will avail them nothing if they do not have the skill to make a home that creates a climate for spiritual

growth. Growth happens best in a “house of order,” and women should pattern their homes after the Lord’s house (see D&C 109). Nurturing requires organization, patience, love, and work. Helping growth occur through nurturing is truly a powerful and influential role bestowed on women.

Mothers Who Know Are Leaders

7. Mothers who know are leaders. In equal partnership with their husbands, they lead a great and eternal organization. These mothers plan for the future of their organization. They plan for missions, temple marriages, and education. They plan for prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. Mothers who know build children into future leaders and are the primary examples of what leaders look like. They do not abandon their plan by succumbing to social pressure and worldly models of parenting. These wise mothers who know are selective about their own activities and involvement to conserve their limited strength in order to maximize their influence where it matters most.

Mothers Who Know Are Teachers

8. Mothers who know are always teachers. Since they are not babysitters, they are never off duty. A well-taught friend told me that he did not learn anything at church that he had not already learned at home. His parents used family scripture study, prayer, family home evening, mealtimes, and other gatherings to teach. Think of the power of our future missionary force if mothers considered their homes as a pre-missionary training center. Then the doctrines of the gospel taught in the MTC would be a review and not a revelation. That is influence; that is power.

Mothers Who Know Do Less

9. Mothers who know do less. They permit less of what will not bear good fruit eternally. They allow less media in their homes, less distraction, less activity that draws their children away from their home. Mothers who know are willing to live on less and consume less of the world’s goods in order to spend more time with their children—more time eating together, more time working together, more time reading together, more time talking, laughing, singing, and exemplifying. These mothers choose carefully and do not try to choose it all. Their goal is to prepare a rising generation of children who will take the gospel of Jesus Christ into the entire world. Their goal is to prepare future fathers and mothers who will be builders of the Lord’s kingdom for the next 50 years. That is influence; that is power.

Mothers Who Know Stand Strong and Immovable

10. Who will prepare this righteous generation of sons and daughters? Latter-day Saint women will do this—women who know and love the Lord and bear testimony of Him, women who are strong and immovable and who do not give up during difficult and discouraging times. We are led by an inspired prophet of God who has called upon the women of the Church to “stand strong and immovable for that which is correct and proper under the plan of the Lord.”⁶ He has asked us to “begin in [our] own homes”⁷ to teach children the ways of truth. Latter-day Saint women should be the very best in the world at upholding, nurturing, and protecting families. I have every confidence that our women will do this and will come to be known as mothers who “knew” (Alma 56:48). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Standing Strong and Immovable,” Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, Jan. 10, 2004, 21.
2. James E. Faust, “Challenges Facing the Family,” Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, Jan. 10, 2004.
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Liahona, Oct. 2004, 49; Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102.
4. To the Mothers in Zion (pamphlet, 1987), 3.
5. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, Jan. 10, 2004, 20.
7. Gordon B. Hinckley, Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, Jan. 10, 2004, 20.
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Mothers Who Know

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2007/10/mothers-who-know?lang=eng&query=Mothers+Who+Know#watch=video>



Fathers

Elder D. Todd Christofferson
Ensign, May 2016



1. I speak today of fathers. Fathers are fundamental in the divine plan of happiness, and I want to raise a voice of encouragement for those who are striving to fill well that calling. To praise and encourage fatherhood and fathers is not to shame or discount anyone. I simply focus today on the good that men can do in the highest of masculine roles—husband and father.
2. David Blankenhorn, the author of *Fatherless America*, has observed: “Today, American society is fundamentally divided and ambivalent about the fatherhood idea. Some people do not even remember it. Others are offended by it. Others, including more than a few family scholars, neglect it or disdain it. Many others are not especially opposed to it, nor are they especially committed to it. Many people wish we could act on it, but believe that our society simply no longer can or will.”
3. As a Church, we believe in fathers. We believe in “the ideal of the man who puts his family first.” We believe that “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.” We believe that in their complementary family duties, “fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.” We believe that far from being superfluous, fathers are unique and irreplaceable.
4. Some see the good of fatherhood in social terms, as something that obligates men to their offspring, impelling them to be good citizens and to think about the needs of others, supplementing “maternal investment in children with paternal investment in children. ... In short, the key for men is to be fathers. The key for children is to have fathers. The key for society is to create fathers.” While these considerations are certainly true and important, we know that fatherhood is much more than a social construct or the product of evolution. The role of father is of divine origin, beginning with a Father in Heaven and, in this mortal sphere, with Father Adam.
5. The perfect, divine expression of fatherhood is our Heavenly Father. His character and attributes include abundant goodness and perfect love. His work and glory are the development, happiness, and eternal life of His children. Fathers in this fallen world can claim nothing comparable to the Majesty on High, but at their best, they are striving to emulate Him, and they indeed labor in His work. They are honored with a remarkable and sobering trust.
6. For men, fatherhood exposes us to our own weaknesses and our need to improve. Fatherhood requires sacrifice, but it is a source of incomparable satisfaction, even joy. Again, the ultimate model is our Heavenly Father, who so loved us, His spirit children, that He gave us His Only Begotten Son for our salvation and exaltation. Jesus said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Fathers manifest that love as they lay down their lives day by day, laboring in the service and support of their families.
7. Perhaps the most essential of a father’s work is to turn the hearts of his children to their Heavenly Father. If by his example as well as his words a father can demonstrate what fidelity to God looks like in day-to-day living, that father will have given his children the key to peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come. A father who reads scripture to and with his children acquaints them with the voice of the Lord.
8. We find in the scriptures a repeated emphasis on the parental obligation to teach one’s children:
9. “And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. ...
“And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.”
10. In 1833, the Lord reprimanded members of the First Presidency for inadequate attention to the duty of

teaching their children. To one He said specifically, “You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your affliction.”

11. Fathers are to teach God’s law and works anew to each generation.
12. As the Psalmist declared:
13. “For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:
14. “That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should [then] arise and declare them to their children:
15. “That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.”
16. Certainly teaching the gospel is a shared duty between fathers and mothers, but the Lord is clear that He expects fathers to lead out in making it a high priority. (And let’s remember that informal conversations, working and playing together, and listening are important elements of teaching.) The Lord expects fathers to help shape their children, and children want and need a model.
17. I myself was blessed with an exemplary father. I recall that when I was a boy of about 12, my father became a candidate for the city council in our rather small community. He did not mount an extensive election campaign—all I remember was that Dad had my brothers and me distribute copies of a flyer door to door, urging people to vote for Paul Christofferson. There were a number of adults that I handed a flyer to who remarked that Paul was a good and honest man and that they would have no problem voting for him. My young boy heart swelled with pride in my father. It gave me confidence and a desire to follow in his footsteps. He was not perfect—no one is—but he was upright and good and an aspirational example for a son.
18. Discipline and correction are part of teaching. As Paul said, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” But in discipline a father must exercise particular care, lest there be anything even approaching abuse, which is never justified. When a father provides correction, his motivation must be love and his guide the Holy Spirit:
19. “Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;
20. “That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.”
21. Discipline in the divine pattern is not so much about punishing as it is about helping a loved one along the path of self-mastery.
22. The Lord has said that “all children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age.” Breadwinning is a consecrated activity. Providing for one’s family, although it generally requires time away from the family, is not inconsistent with fatherhood—it is the essence of being a good father. “Work and family are overlapping domains.” This, of course, does not justify a man who neglects his family for his career or, at the other extreme, one who will not exert himself and is content to shift his responsibility to others. In the words of King Benjamin:
23. “Ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another. ...
24. “But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another.” We recognize the agony of men who are unable to find ways and means adequately to sustain their families. There is no shame for those who, at a given moment, despite their best efforts, cannot fulfill all the duties and functions of fathers. “Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.”
25. Loving the mother of his children—and showing that love—are two of the best things a father can do for his children. This reaffirms and strengthens the marriage that is the foundation of their family life and security.
26. Some men are single fathers, foster fathers, or stepfathers. Many of them strive mightily and do their very best in an often difficult role. We honor those who do all that can be done in love, patience, and self-sacrifice to meet individual and family needs. It should be noted that God Himself entrusted His Only Begotten Son to a foster father. Surely some of the credit goes to Joseph for the fact that as Jesus grew, He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”
27. Regrettably, due to death, abandonment, or divorce, some children don’t have fathers living with them. Some may have fathers who are physically present but emotionally absent or in other ways inattentive or nonsupportive. We call on all fathers to do better and to be better. We call on media and entertainment outlets

to portray devoted and capable fathers who truly love their wives and intelligently guide their children, instead of the bumbler and buffoon or “the guys who cause problems,” as fathers are all too frequently depicted.

28. To children whose family situation is troubled, we say, you yourself are no less for that. Challenges are at times an indication of the Lord’s trust in you. He can help you, directly and through others, to deal with what you face. You can become the generation, perhaps the first in your family, where the divine patterns that God has ordained for families truly take shape and bless all the generations after you.
29. To young men, recognizing the role you will have as provider and protector, we say, prepare now by being diligent in school and planning for postsecondary training. Education, whether in a university, technical school, apprenticeship, or similar program, is key to developing the skills and capabilities you will need. Take advantage of opportunities to associate with people of all ages, including children, and learn how to establish healthy and rewarding relationships. That typically means talking face to face with people and sometimes doing things together, not just perfecting your texting skills. Live your life so that as a man you will bring purity to your marriage and to your children.
30. To all the rising generation, we say, wherever you rank your own father on the scale of good-better-best (and I predict that ranking will go higher as you grow older and wiser), make up your mind to honor him and your mother by your own life. Remember the yearning hope of a father as expressed by John: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” Your righteousness is the greatest honor any father can receive.
31. To my brethren, the fathers in this Church, I say, I know you wish you were a more perfect father. I know I wish I were. Even so, despite our limitations, let us press on. Let us lay aside the exaggerated notions of individualism and autonomy in today’s culture and think first of the happiness and well-being of others. Surely, despite our inadequacies, our Heavenly Father will magnify us and cause our simple efforts to bear fruit. 32. I am encouraged by a story that appeared in the New Era some years ago. The author recounted the following:
33. “When I was young, our little family lived in a one-bedroom apartment on the second floor. I slept on the couch in the living room. ...
34. “My dad, a steelworker, left home very early for work each day. Every morning he would ... tuck the covers around me and stop for a minute. I would be half-

dreaming when I could sense my dad standing beside the couch, looking at me. As I slowly awoke, I became embarrassed to have him there. I tried to pretend I was still asleep. ... I became aware that as he stood beside my bed he was praying with all his attention, energy, and focus—for me.

35. “Each morning my dad prayed for me. He prayed that I would have a good day, that I would be safe, that I would learn and prepare for the future. And since he could not be with me until evening, he prayed for the teachers and my friends that I would be with that day. ...
36. “At first, I didn’t really understand what my dad was doing those mornings when he prayed for me. But as I got older, I came to sense his love and interest in me and everything I was doing. It is one of my favorite memories. It wasn’t until years later, after I was married, had children of my own, and would go into their rooms while they were asleep and pray for them that I understood completely how my father felt about me.”
37. Alma testified to his son:
38. “Behold, I say unto you, that it is [Christ] that surely shall come ... ; yea he cometh to declare glad tidings of salvation unto his people.
39. “And now, my son, this was the ministry unto which ye were called, to declare these glad tidings unto this people, to prepare their minds; or rather ... that they may prepare the minds of their children to hear the word at the time of his coming.”
40. That is the ministry of fathers today. God bless and make them equal to it, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Fathers

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2016/04/fathers?lang=eng>



A Prayer for the Children

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
Ensign, May 2003



1. At the close of His first day teaching among the Nephite faithful, the resurrected Jesus turned His attention to a special audience which often stands just below the level of our gaze, sometimes nearly out of sight.
2. The sacred record says: “He commanded that their little children should be brought [forward]. ...
3. “And ... when they had knelt upon the ground, ... he himself also knelt ... ; and behold he prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed cannot be written, ... so great and marvelous [were the] things ... [He did] speak unto the Father. ...
4. “... When Jesus had made an end of praying ... , he arose; ... and ... wept, ... and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and [again] prayed unto the Father for them.
5. “And when he had done this he wept again; ... [saying] unto the multitude, ... Behold your little ones.”
6. We cannot know exactly what the Savior was feeling in such a poignant moment, but we do know that He was “troubled” and that He “groaned within himself” over the destructive influences always swirling around the innocent. We know He felt a great need to pray for and bless the children. In such times as we are in, whether the threats be global or local or in individual lives, I too pray for the children. Some days it seems that a sea of temptation and transgression inundates them, simply washes over them before they can successfully withstand it, before they should have to face it. And often at least some of the forces at work seem beyond our personal control.
7. Well, some of them may be beyond our control, but I testify with faith in the living God that they are not beyond His. He lives, and priesthood power is at work on both sides of the veil. We are not alone, and we do not tremble as if abandoned. In doing our part, we can live the gospel and defend its principles. We can declare to others the sure Way, the saving Truth, the joyful Life. We can personally repent in any way we need to repent, and when we have done all, we can pray. In all these ways we can bless one another and especially those who need our protection the most—the children. As parents we can hold life together the way it is always held together—with love and faith, passed on to the next generation, one child at a time.
8. In offering such a prayer for the young, may I address a rather specific aspect of their safety? In this I speak carefully and lovingly to any of the adults of the Church, parents or otherwise, who may be given to cynicism or skepticism, who in matters of whole-souled devotion always seem to hang back a little, who at the Church’s doctrinal campsite always like to pitch their tents out on the periphery of religious faith. To all such—whom we do love and wish were more comfortable camping nearer to us—I say, please be aware that the full price to be paid for such a stance does not always come due in your lifetime. No, sadly, some elements of this can be a kind of profligate national debt, with payments coming out of your children’s and grandchildren’s pockets in far more expensive ways than you ever intended it to be.
9. In this Church there is an enormous amount of room—and scriptural commandment—for studying and learning, for comparing and considering, for discussion and awaiting further revelation. We all learn “line upon line, precept upon precept,” with the goal being authentic religious faith informing genuine Christlike living. In this there is no place for coercion or manipulation, no place for intimidation or hypocrisy. But no child in this Church should be left with uncertainty about his or her parents’ devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Restoration of His Church, and the reality of living prophets and apostles who, now as in earlier days, lead that Church according to “the will of the Lord, ... the mind of the Lord, ... the word of the Lord, ... and the power of God unto salvation.” In such basic matters of faith, prophets do not apologize for requesting unity, indeed conformity, in the eloquent sense that the Prophet Joseph Smith used that latter word. In any case, as Elder Neal Maxwell once said to me in a hallway conversation, “There didn’t seem to be any problem with conformity the day the Red Sea opened.”
10. Parents simply cannot flirt with skepticism or cynicism,

then be surprised when their children expand that flirtation into full-blown romance. If in matters of faith and belief children are at risk of being swept downstream by this intellectual current or that cultural rapid, we as their parents must be more certain than ever to hold to anchored, unmistakable moorings clearly recognizable to those of our own household. It won't help anyone if we go over the edge with them, explaining through the roar of the falls all the way down that we really did know the Church was true and that the keys of the priesthood really were lodged there but we just didn't want to stifle anyone's freedom to think otherwise. No, we can hardly expect the children to get to shore safely if the parents don't seem to know where to anchor their own boat. Isaiah once used a variation on such imagery when he said of unbelievers, "[Their] tacklings are loosed; they could not ... strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail."

11. I think some parents may not understand that even when they feel secure in their own minds regarding matters of personal testimony, they can nevertheless make that faith too difficult for their children to detect. We can be reasonably active, meeting-going Latter-day Saints, but if we do not live lives of gospel integrity and convey to our children powerful heartfelt convictions regarding the truthfulness of the Restoration and the divine guidance of the Church from the First Vision to this very hour, then those children may, to our regret but not surprise, turn out not to be visibly active, meeting-going Latter-day Saints or sometimes anything close to it.
12. Not long ago Sister Holland and I met a fine young man who came in contact with us after he had been roaming around through the occult and sorting through a variety of Eastern religions, all in an attempt to find religious faith. His father, he admitted, believed in nothing whatsoever. But his grandfather, he said, was actually a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "But he didn't do much with it," the young man said. "He was always pretty cynical about the Church." From a grandfather who is cynical to a son who is agnostic to a grandson who is now looking desperately for what God had already once given his family! What a classic example of the warning Elder Richard L. Evans once gave.
Said he: "Sometimes some parents mistakenly feel that they can relax a little as to conduct and conformity or take perhaps a so called liberal view of basic and fundamental things—thinking that a little laxness or indulgence won't matter—or they may fail to teach or to attend Church, or may voice critical views. Some parents ... seem to feel that they can ease up a little on the fundamentals without affecting their family or their family's future. But," he observed, "if a parent goes a little off course, the children are likely to exceed the parent's

example."

13. To lead a child (or anyone else!), even inadvertently, away from faithfulness, away from loyalty and bedrock belief simply because we want to be clever or independent is license no parent nor any other person has ever been given. In matters of religion a skeptical mind is not a higher manifestation of virtue than is a believing heart, and analytical deconstruction in the field of, say, literary fiction can be just plain old-fashioned destruction when transferred to families yearning for faith at home. And such a deviation from the true course can be deceptively slow and subtle in its impact. As one observer said, "[If you raise the temperature of my] bath water ... only 1 degree every 10 minutes, how [will I] know when to scream?"
14. When erecting their sacred tabernacle in the wilderness of Sinai, the ancient children of Israel were commanded to make firm their supporting cords and strengthen the stakes which held them. The reason? Storms arise in life—regularly. So fix it, fasten it, then fix and fasten it again. Even then we know that some children will make choices that break their parents' hearts. Moms and dads can do everything right and yet have children who stray. Moral agency still obtains. But even in such painful hours it will be comforting for you to know that your children knew of your abiding faith in Christ, in His true Church, in the keys of the priesthood and in those who hold them. It will be comforting then for you to know that if your children choose to leave the straight and narrow way, they leave it very conscious that their parents were firmly in it.
15. Furthermore, they will be much more likely to return to that path when they come to themselves and recall the loving example and gentle teachings you offered them there.
16. Live the gospel as conspicuously as you can. Keep the covenants your children know you have made. Give priesthood blessings. And bear your testimony! Don't just assume your children will somehow get the drift of your beliefs on their own. The prophet Nephi said near the end of his life that they had written their record of Christ and preserved their convictions regarding His gospel in order "to persuade our children ... that our children may know ... [and believe] the right way."
17. Nephi-like, might we ask ourselves what our children know? From us? Personally? Do our children know that we love the scriptures? Do they see us reading them and marking them and clinging to them in daily life? Have our children ever unexpectedly opened a closed door and found us on our knees in prayer? Have they heard us not only pray with them but also pray for them out of nothing more than sheer parental love? Do our children

know we believe in fasting as something more than an obligatory first-Sunday-of-the-month hardship? Do they know that we have fasted for them and for their future on days about which they knew nothing? Do they know we love being in the temple, not least because it provides a bond to them that neither death nor the legions of hell can break? Do they know we love and sustain local and general leaders, imperfect as they are, for their willingness to accept callings they did not seek in order to preserve a standard of righteousness they did not create? Do those children know that we love God with all our heart and that we long to see the face—and fall at the feet—of His Only Begotten Son? I pray that they know this.

18. Brothers and sisters, our children take their flight into the future with our thrust and with our aim. And even as we anxiously watch that arrow in flight and know all the evils that can deflect its course after it has left our hand, nevertheless we take courage in remembering that the most important mortal factor in determining that arrow's destination will be the stability, strength, and unwavering certainty of the holder of the bow.
19. Carl Sandburg once said, "A baby is God's opinion that life should go on." For that baby's future as well as your own, be strong. Be believing. Keep loving and keep testifying. Keep praying. Those prayers will be heard and answered in the most unexpected hour. God will send aid to no one more readily than He will send it to a child—and to the parent of a child. "And [Jesus] said unto them: Behold your little ones.
20. "And ... they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending ... as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them." May it always be so, I earnestly pray—for the children—in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

A Prayer for the Children

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2003/04/a-prayer-for-the-children?lang=eng>



Good, Better, Best

Elder Dallin H. Oaks
Ensign, Nov 2007, 104–8



1. Most of us have more things expected of us than we can possibly do. As breadwinners, as parents, as Church workers and members, we face many choices on what we will do with our time and other resources.
2. We should begin by recognizing the reality that just because something is good is not a sufficient reason for doing it. The number of good things we can do far exceeds the time available to accomplish them. Some things are better than good, and these are the things that should command priority attention in our lives.
3. Jesus taught this principle in the home of Martha. While she was “cumbered about much serving” (Luke 10:40), her sister, Mary, “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word” (v. 39). When Martha complained that her sister had left her to serve alone, Jesus commended Martha for what she was doing (v. 41) but taught her that “one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (v. 42). It was praiseworthy for Martha to be “careful and troubled about many things” (v. 41), but learning the gospel from the Master Teacher was more “needful.” The scriptures contain other teachings that some things are more blessed than others (see Acts 20:35; Alma 32:14–15).
4. A childhood experience introduced me to the idea that some choices are good but others are better. I lived for two years on a farm. We rarely went to town. Our Christmas shopping was done in the Sears, Roebuck catalog. I spent hours poring over its pages. For the rural families of that day, catalog pages were like the shopping mall or the Internet of our time.
5. Something about some displays of merchandise in the catalog fixed itself in my mind. There were three degrees of quality: good, better, and best. For example, some men’s shoes were labeled good (\$1.84), some better (\$2.98), and some best (\$3.45).¹
6. As we consider various choices, we should remember that it is not enough that something is good. Other choices are better, and still others are best. Even though a particular choice is more costly, its far greater value may make it the best choice of all.
7. Consider how we use our time in the choices we make in viewing television, playing video games, surfing the Internet, or reading books or magazines. Of course it is good to view wholesome entertainment or to obtain interesting information. But not everything of that sort is worth the portion of our life we give to obtain it. Some things are better, and others are best. When the Lord told us to seek learning, He said, “Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom” (D&C 88:118; emphasis added).
8. Some of our most important choices concern family activities. Many breadwinners worry that their occupations leave too little time for their families. There is no easy formula for that contest of priorities. However, I have never known of a man who looked back on his working life and said, “I just didn’t spend enough time with my job.”
9. In choosing how we spend time as a family, we should be careful not to exhaust our available time on things that are merely good and leave little time for that which is better or best. A friend took his young family on a series of summer vacation trips, including visits to memorable historic sites. At the end of the summer he asked his teenage son which of these good summer activities he enjoyed most. The father learned from the reply, and so did those he told of it. “The thing I liked best this summer,” the boy replied, “was the night you and I laid on the lawn and looked at the stars and talked.” Super family activities may be good for children, but they are not always better than one-on-one time with a loving parent.
10. The amount of children-and-parent time absorbed in the good activities of private lessons, team sports, and other school and club activities also needs to be carefully regulated. Otherwise, children will be overscheduled, and parents will be frazzled and frustrated. Parents should act to preserve time for family prayer, family scripture study, family home evening, and the other precious togetherness and individual one-on-one time that binds a family together and fixes children’s values on things of eternal worth. Parents should teach gospel

priorities through what they do with their children.

11. Family experts have warned against what they call “the overscheduling of children.” In the last generation children are far busier and families spend far less time together. Among many measures of this disturbing trend are the reports that structured sports time has doubled, but children’s free time has declined by 12 hours per week, and unstructured outdoor activities have fallen by 50 percent.²
12. The number of those who report that their “whole family usually eats dinner together” has declined 33 percent. This is most concerning because the time a family spends together “eating meals at home [is] the strongest predictor of children’s academic achievement and psychological adjustment.”³ Family mealtimes have also been shown to be a strong bulwark against children’s smoking, drinking, or using drugs.⁴ There is inspired wisdom in this advice to parents: What your children really want for dinner is you.
13. President Gordon B. Hinckley has pleaded that we “work at our responsibility as parents as if everything in life counted on it, because in fact everything in life does count on it.”
14. He continued: “I ask you men, particularly, to pause and take stock of yourselves as husbands and fathers and heads of households. Pray for guidance, for help, for direction, and then follow the whisperings of the Spirit to guide you in the most serious of all responsibilities, for the consequences of your leadership in your home will be eternal and everlasting.”⁵
15. The First Presidency has called on parents “to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles. . . . The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place . . . in . . . this God-given responsibility.” The First Presidency has declared that “however worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform.”⁶
16. Church leaders should be aware that Church meetings and activities can become too complex and burdensome if a ward or a stake tries to have the membership do everything that is good and possible in our numerous Church programs. Priorities are needed there also.
17. Members of the Quorum of the Twelve have stressed the importance of exercising inspired judgment in Church programs and activities. Elder L. Tom Perry taught this principle in our first worldwide leadership training meeting in 2003. Counseling the same leaders in 2004, Elder Richard G. Scott said: “Adjust your activities to be consistent with your local conditions and resources. . . . Make sure that the essential needs are met, but do not go overboard in creating so many good things to do that the essential ones are not accomplished. . . . Remember, don’t magnify the work to be done—simplify it.”⁷
18. In general conference last year, Elder M. Russell Ballard warned against the deterioration of family relationships that can result when we spend excess time on ineffective activities that yield little spiritual sustenance. He cautioned against complicating our Church service “with needless frills and embellishments that occupy too much time, cost too much money, and sap too much energy. . . . The instruction to magnify our callings is not a command to embellish and complicate them. To innovate does not necessarily mean to expand; very often it means to simplify. . . . What is most important in our Church responsibilities,” he said, “is not the statistics that are reported or the meetings that are held but whether or not individual people—ministered to one at a time just as the Savior did—have been lifted and encouraged and ultimately changed.”⁸
19. Stake presidencies and bishoprics need to exercise their authority to weed out the excessive and ineffective busyness that is sometimes required of the members of their stakes or wards. Church programs should focus on what is best (most effective) in achieving their assigned purposes without unduly infringing on the time families need for their “divinely appointed duties.”
20. But here is a caution for families. Suppose Church leaders reduce the time required by Church meetings and activities in order to increase the time available for families to be together. This will not achieve its intended purpose unless individual family members—especially parents—vigorously act to increase family togetherness and one-on-one time. Team sports and technology toys like video games and the Internet are already winning away the time of our children and youth. Surfing the Internet is not better than serving the Lord or strengthening the family. Some young men and women are skipping Church youth activities or cutting family time in order to participate in soccer leagues or to pursue various entertainments. Some young people are amusing themselves to death—spiritual death.
21. Some uses of individual and family time are better, and others are best. We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best because they develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen our families.
22. Here are some other illustrations of good, better, and best:

23. It is good to belong to our Father in Heaven's true Church and to keep all of His commandments and fulfill all of our duties. But if this is to qualify as "best," it should be done with love and without arrogance. We should, as we sing in a great hymn, "crown [our] good with brotherhood,"⁹ showing love and concern for all whom our lives affect.
24. To our hundreds of thousands of home teachers and visiting teachers, I suggest that it is good to visit our assigned families; it is better to have a brief visit in which we teach doctrine and principle; and it is best of all to make a difference in the lives of some of those we visit. That same challenge applies to the many meetings we hold—good to hold a meeting, better to teach a principle, but best to actually improve lives as a result of the meeting.
25. As we approach 2008 and a new course of study in our Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies, I renew our caution about how we use the Teachings of Presidents of the Church manuals. Many years of inspired work have produced our 2008 volume of the teachings of Joseph Smith, the founding prophet of this dispensation. This is a landmark among Church books. In the past, some teachers have given a chapter of the Teachings manuals no more than a brief mention and then substituted a lesson of their own choice. It may have been a good lesson, but this is not an acceptable practice. A gospel teacher is called to teach the subject specified from the inspired materials provided. The best thing a teacher can do with Teachings: Joseph Smith is to select and quote from the words of the Prophet on principles specially suited to the needs of class members and then direct a class discussion on how to apply those principles in the circumstances of their lives.
26. I testify of our Heavenly Father, whose children we are and whose plan is designed to qualify us for "eternal life . . . the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7; see also D&C 76:51–59). I testify of Jesus Christ, whose Atonement makes it possible. And I testify that we are led by prophets, our President Gordon B. Hinckley and his counselors, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Sears, Roebuck and Co. Catalog, Fall and Winter 1944–45, 316E.
2. Jared R. Anderson and William J. Doherty, "Democratic Community Initiatives: The Case of Overscheduled Children," *Family Relations*, vol. 54 (Dec. 2005): 655.
3. Anderson and Doherty, *Family Relations*, 54:655.
4. See Nancy Gibbs, "The Magic of the Family Meal," *Time*, June 12, 2006, 51–52; see also Sarah Jane Weaver, "Family Dinner," *Church News*, Sept. 8, 2007, 5.
5. "Each a Better Person," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 100.
6. First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999; printed in *Church News*, Feb. 27,

1999, 3.

7. "The Doctrinal Foundation of the Auxiliaries," Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, Jan. 10, 2004, 5, 7–8; see also *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 62, 67.

8. "O Be Wise," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 18–20.

9. "America the Beautiful," Hymns, no. 338.

Good, Better, Best

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2007/10/good-better-best?lang=eng&query=Good+better+best#watch=video>



Agency and Love in Marriage

Elder Lynn G. Robbins
Ensign, October 2000



1. Falling in love is a powerful thing. There have doubtless been more books written, more movies made, more songs sung about love and falling in love than about any other topic. Finding a person to love is the ultimate treasure hunt. Falling in love, one person reflected, is finding “someone just right, someone you loved like the best pal you ever had and the worst crush you ever had.” It can be so consuming that the desire to be with another becomes unrelenting, occupying your every thought, your every desire, your every minute of the day. It’s intense. It’s exhilarating. To fully portray the feeling on paper has always been elusive to even the most adept poets. To comprehend it, love has to be experienced. And oh, what a wonderful experience! He captures her heart, she captures his; there is a mutual victory and surrendering for both.
2. “The Lord has ordained that we should marry,” said President Gordon B. Hinckley, “that we shall live together in love and peace and harmony. . . . The time will come when you will fall in love. It will occupy all of your thoughts and be the stuff of which your dreams are made. . . . You will know no greater happiness than that found in your home. . . . The truest mark of your success in life will be the quality of your marriage. . . . This choice [of a companion] will be the most important of all the choices you make in your life.”
3. Somewhere in the history of the English language the expression “fall in love” began to be used to describe the sublime experience of finding someone to love. While it is a beautiful idiom, there was inherent risk involved in selecting the verb fall because it mostly means accidental, involuntary, with no choice involved. And subtly, it has also led to the use of its distressing corollary, “We fell out of love,” an all-too-common phrase heard nowadays as an excuse for a failed marriage. “Falling in love” and “falling out of love” sound as if love were something that cannot be controlled.
4. Many who feel they are falling out of love with their spouse throw their hands up in resignation as if they were victims of an outside influence that controls them. They begin to wonder, “Do I really want to be married to this man (or woman) for eternity?” Having fallen out

of love, as they suppose, they begin to drift apart, often saying things to hurt one another. “I don’t love you anymore” is a common assertion. They tolerate one another for the children’s sake, resenting one another; or they separate, believing their differences to be irreconcilable. The result is a damaged or destroyed family, another casualty of Satan’s assault. How could something so glorious and beautiful as falling in love end up in misery for so many marriages? What goes wrong?

A Love That Lasts

5. For some people, falling in love is a magical encounter, something that seems to happen at first sight. For others, it is a growing affinity and attraction toward another, like budding blossoms that flower into a beautiful bouquet. Though the first type of love may also bloom like the second, it is often merely glandular, a cotton candy kind of love that has no substance. While it may begin with warm cuddles in moonlit glades, it can soon grow cold as honeymoon memories fade and familiarity turns to faultfinding.
6. On the other hand, “divine” love, as President Spencer W. Kimball called it, “is not like that association of the world which is misnamed love, but which is mostly physical attraction. When marriage is based on this only, the parties soon tire of each other. There is a break and a divorce, and a new, fresher physical attraction comes with another marriage, which in turn may last only until it too becomes stale. The love of which the Lord speaks is not only physical attraction, but also faith, confidence, understanding, and partnership. It is devotion and companionship, parenthood, common ideals and standards. It is cleanliness of life and sacrifice and unselfishness. This kind of love never tires nor wanes. It lives on through sickness and sorrow, through prosperity and privation, through accomplishment and disappointment, through time and eternity.”
7. Many popular songs and films make reference to loving forever or to an everlasting love. For the world, these lyrics are simply poetic; for us, they are genuine expressions of our divine potential. We believe that eternal love, eternal marriage, and eternal families are “cen-

tral to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children." However, every couple will encounter some struggles on their journey toward this glorious destiny. There are no perfect marriages in the world because there are no perfect people. But our doctrine teaches us how to nurture our marriages toward perfection and how to keep the romance in them along the way. No one need ever "fall out of love." Falling out of love is a cunning myth which causes many broken hearts and homes.

8. "The family is falling apart all over the world," President Hinckley said. "The old ties that bound together father and mother and children are breaking everywhere. We must face this in our own midst. There are too many broken homes among our own. ... Can we not do better? Of course we can."

A Conscious Choice

9. We know that any commandment by God involves agency. We can obey or disobey, but there is always a choice. Therefore, in Matthew 22, verses 37 and 39, when the Lord says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," [Matt. 22:37, 39] He is not saying, "I hope you 'fall in love' with your neighbor." The command is a directive, an appeal to the mind to make a conscious choice, involving the mind in reasoning and decision making. The Savior made it clear that love was a command to be obeyed—a command upon which "all the law and the prophets" hang (Matt. 22:40). To achieve a Christlike love we must overcome the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19), control natural impulses, and even love our enemies (see Matt. 5:44). This is a command that requires a decision.
10. Too many believe that love is a condition, a feeling that involves 100 percent of the heart, something that happens to you. They disassociate love from the mind and, therefore, from agency. In commanding us to love, the Lord refers to something much deeper than romance—a love that is the most profound form of loyalty. He is teaching us that love is something more than feelings of the heart; it is also a covenant we keep with soul and mind.
11. As we read his counsel to parents, it is obvious that King Benjamin was also aware that agency had much to do with love. "Ye will teach them [your children] to love one another, and to serve one another" (Mosiah 4:15). How can something be taught that cannot be learned? Once again, the scriptures are teaching us about a love that is to be discovered in the mind.
12. What about love between spouses, which involves the additional elements of romance and intimacy? Does this principle of agency and love, or the command to love, apply to marriage as well?
13. Once again, the Lord uses the command form of the verb love in "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22). It doesn't require any guesswork here to discern that the Lord is giving us a directive with a presupposition of agency.
14. In Matthew, the Lord said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." In His mortal life, He demonstrated a perfect kind of love, then said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34; emphasis added). Loving as He loved is a higher form of love than loving "as thyself." It is a pure love that puts another higher than self. This pure love is the same love that should exist between husbands and wives. In Ephesians 5:25 [Eph. 5:25], the Apostle Paul exhorts, "Husbands, love your wives, [How?] even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." How, then, did Christ love the Church? We have a marvelous definition of this love in 1 Corinthians 13:1–8 [1 Cor. 13:1–8] and Moroni 7:44–47 [Moro. 7:44–47].
15. As we study each attribute, we would be wise to consider how we are doing in our marriage or future marriage.

Love by Decision

16. While it is obvious that agency is a factor in the character traits listed by the Apostle Paul, it will be impossible to develop these attributes without the Lord's help. Therefore, the Lord instructs us through Mormon to "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ" (Moro. 7:48).
17. This is the love that is to be applied in marriages, in families, and with our fellowmen. A marriage based on this kind of love becomes the most romantic of all, generating eternal tender feelings between a husband and a wife. It should also be obvious that the heartache leading to divorce can be caused by the negative traits identified in the chart. These traits should be eliminated from our lives and homes.
18. Thus we have seen that while a person may "fall in love" with a spouse by emotion, the husband or wife progresses and blossoms in love by decision.
19. It is almost humorous to observe a young unmarried couple in love. After spending an entire day together, they are back together again on the phone that same

night. It's sheer torture for them to be separated. Even in their thoughts they can hardly focus on anything else. Love begins to disrupt their studies or work. Everything else in life becomes a nuisance and an interruption that keeps them apart until they can be together again. In their minds there was never, in the history of the world, a truer love than theirs. We call this level of premarriage intensity "infatuation."

20. After they marry, this intensity tapers off. Living under the same roof, they each begin to discover a few peculiar idiosyncrasies in the other that they had not seen before. Some of these are irritating. The infatuation begins to fade. Those who have confused infatuation for love begin to worry and wonder if they are falling out of love. "Where is that level of passion, the fire I had during courtship?" they may ask themselves. Their relationship is passing through a common stage and is at an important crossroad. If they believe they have fallen out of love, they may begin to drift apart.
21. This is when a dose of true love is needed to rekindle a relationship that is being tested. True love may not restore the same emotional intensity of early courtship, but it will help love remain alive and blooming. Forty years later, Grandpa can go fishing, love Grandma dearly, but more easily endure a short absence from her than he could at a youthful age when smitten with infatuation. Their love is stronger, more mature, and still blossoming.
22. If a husband and wife are willing to apply the scriptural definition of love to their relationship, even a stale marriage and romance can be revived. Stephen R. Covey relates the following experience:
23. "At one seminar, after I'd spoken on the importance of demonstrating character within the family, a man came up and said, 'I like what you're saying, but my wife and I just don't have the same feelings for each other that we used to. I guess we don't love each other anymore. What can I do?'"
24. "'Love her,' I replied.
25. "He looked puzzled. 'How do you love when you don't feel love?'"
26. "'My friend,' I responded, 'love is a verb. The feeling of love is the fruit of love. So love your wife. You did it once, you can do it again. Listen. Empathize. Appreciate. It's your choice. Are you willing to do that?'" "Of course, I was asking this man if he was willing to search within himself for the character required to make his marriage work. All our relationships follow the contours of life; they have ups and downs. This is why our families provide a critical measure of our character—and the

opportunity, again and again to nurture it."

"I Love You": A Commitment

27. Because love is as much a verb as it is a noun, the phrase "I love you" is much more a promise of behavior and commitment than it is an expression of feeling. "I love you" is a phrase we should be using in our homes much more than we do. If we don't teach our children to use this phrase, they'll be very uncomfortable with it throughout their lives and may not use it very much in their own marriage or with their own children. In my family, as we conclude our family prayer and scripture study in the morning, everyone gives one another a hug and each says, "I love you," brothers to sisters, sisters to brothers, parents to children, and my wife and I to one another. It is a wonderful way to start the day and a good way to fulfill King Benjamin's advice to teach our children to love (see Mosiah 4:15).
28. Scripturally, the Lord is very clear with us on this doctrine—you can't "fall out of love," because love is something you decide. Agency plays a fundamental role in our relationships with one another. This being true, we must make the conscious decision that we will love our spouse and family with all our heart, soul, and mind; that we will build, not "fall into," strong, loving marriages and families. "Don't just pray to marry the one you love. Instead, pray to love the one you marry."
29. Let us hearken to President Hinckley's counsel: "I lift a warning voice to our people. We have moved too far toward the mainstream of society in this matter. Now, of course, there are good families. There are good families everywhere. But there are too many who are in trouble. This is a malady with a cure. The prescription is simple and wonderfully effective. It is love. It is plain, simple, everyday love and respect. It is a tender plant that needs nurturing. But it is worth all of the effort we can put into it." It is only by our constant, committed effort that we will make the love we share with our spouse a constant for eternity.

Agency and Love in Marriage

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/2000/10/agency-and-love-in-marriage?lang=eng>



Repentance and Forgiveness in Marriage

Richard B. Miller

Brigham Young University Devotional, January 2010



1. When couples get married, they joyfully anticipate the prospect of spending eternity together. They often enjoy having long conversations, going for walks, and spending time together. It is wonderful to be with someone you love so deeply.
2. Unfortunately, for some couples the bliss of deep love and immensely satisfying companionship does not last. Long talks are replaced by frequent arguments or angry silence.
3. Many of these couples divorce. Others withdraw emotionally from the relationship. The spouses become distant from each other, and they keep their interaction to a minimum.
4. How do these couples go from ecstatic levels of love and happiness to frequent conflict, bitterness, and in many cases, divorce? Researchers have identified a number of reasons, but in my professional experience, I have found that most of these explanations boil down to two fundamental factors: a lack of repentance and a lack of forgiveness.

Repenting

5. In most cases, we are married only for a short time before we hurt our spouse's feelings. Whether our mistakes are intentional or inadvertent, we all end up doing things that hurt our spouse. Elder Joe J. Christensen, an emeritus member of the Quorum of the Seventy, said, "To develop a solid marriage, we must be able to admit we are sorry for mistakes we make. ... When conflicts in marriage arise, we should be swift to apologize and ask for forgiveness, even though we may not be totally at fault. True love is developed by those who are willing to readily admit personal mistakes and offenses."

Apologizing Sincerely

6. In order to be effective, an apology must be sincere and heartfelt. There needs to be evidence that you are truly sorry that you have hurt or offended your spouse and that you take responsibility for your mistake or offense.

A simple "sorry" or the slightly more eloquent "sorry about that" rarely provides the necessary evidence that you feel remorseful and take responsibility for your actions. A thoughtful apology might sound something like: "I'm sorry that I didn't do the dishes last night like I had agreed to. It wasn't right, and I apologize." Such an open and honest apology can do wonders for healing wounded hearts.

7. Sometimes it is necessary to apologize more than once, especially if the offense is particularly hurtful. I have learned over the years that it sometimes takes several apologies before the sincerity of the apology is able to penetrate the wounded heart of an offended spouse.

Striving to Improve

8. Besides a sincere apology, repentance includes striving to forsake our shortcomings and weaknesses. For example, we keep our promises to do the dishes. We focus on not being grumpy or short-tempered. We try to become better listeners.
9. As we repent, we continually improve ourselves. We overcome our weaknesses and develop more Christlike qualities. By so doing, we become better people and better spouses.

Overcoming Pride

10. Repenting requires us to look inward, be humble, and take responsibility for our mistakes and weaknesses. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught: "Think of the repentance that could take place with lives changed, marriages preserved, and homes strengthened, if pride did not keep us from confessing our sins and forsaking them. ..."
11. "The antidote for pride is humility—meekness, submissiveness. ... It is the broken heart and contrite spirit. ..."
12. "We can choose to humble ourselves by receiving counsel and chastisement. ..."

13. “We can choose to humble ourselves by confessing and forsaking our sins and being born of God. ...
14. “Let us choose to be humble.”
15. The essence of repentance is trying to change ourselves in ways that will make us better people. On the other hand, the foundation of pride is the desire to cover up our own weaknesses and focus on changing our spouse’s behavior. As we humble ourselves, we desire to improve our lives and take responsibility for our weaknesses. We are willing to apologize and become better people, which is at the core of repentance.

Forgiving

16. In order for a marriage to be successful, there also needs to be forgiveness. Repentance and forgiveness are complementary gospel principles, and both are necessary in order for us to progress spiritually.
17. Resentment is one of the worst poisons in marriage. It doesn’t ruin a marriage overnight. Rather, it is like decay that gradually and silently damages your teeth. Forgetting to brush your teeth once doesn’t ruin your teeth; however, numerous instances of neglect over many years will. Similarly, resentment accumulates gradually, often without us even noticing it. If left untreated, it builds up over a number of years to the point where it destroys love.
18. Just as our sins and weaknesses are washed away through repentance, forgiveness washes away the hurts and emotional injuries that must be anticipated in being married to someone who is imperfect.

Letting Go of Hurt

19. Forgiveness is the perfect antidote for the poison of resentment. It neutralizes our hurt feelings and makes room in our hearts for love to flourish and grow. President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:
20. “All of us carry excess baggage around from time to time, but the wisest ones among us don’t carry it for very long. They get rid of it. ... Often ... the things we carry are petty, even stupid. ... If you resent someone for something he has done—or failed to do—forget it. We call that forgiveness. It is powerful, spiritual medicine.”
21. These same principles apply within a marriage, and perhaps more so. The best response to being hurt is, as President Packer implied, to get over it. Marriage is too important for us to clutter our minds and hearts with resentment that is created by dwelling on the faults and weaknesses of our spouse. We need to forgive and move

on.

Relying on the Atonement

22. But what if we can’t simply forgive, forget, and move on? Some serious offenses are difficult to overcome, and some hurts run very deep. Sometimes a spouse has a difficult time forgiving something that others might consider trivial. In other cases, the level of resentment reaches a point where the spouse is unable to forget about it and move on with the relationship.
23. In these situations, we need to rely on the healing power of the Savior’s Atonement. His Atonement not only allows us to repent of our sins; it also heals those who suffer and grieve. Certainly it comforts those who sorrow because they have been hurt by their spouse. During the process of the Atonement, the Savior suffered all of the pain, sorrow, and grief that we will experience in this life. Because of His atoning sacrifice, He shoulders the pain that we experience, which gives us the ability to overcome these hurts and to heal and forgive our spouse.
24. President James E. Faust (1920–2007) said: “Our Redeemer took upon Himself all the sins, pains, infirmities, and sicknesses of all who have ever lived and will ever live. No one has ever suffered in any degree what He did. He knows our mortal trials by firsthand experience. ...
24. “The Atonement not only benefits the sinner but also benefits those sinned against—that is, the victims. By forgiving ‘those who trespass against us’ (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:13), the Atonement brings a measure of peace and comfort to those who have been innocently victimized by the sins of others. The basic source for the healing of the soul is the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”
25. A few years ago, I had the opportunity of serving as the bishop of a married student ward. I had wonderful people come into my office devastated because they had been terribly hurt by the actions of their spouse. Through their tears they would ask, “Bishop, how can I ever forgive my spouse?” We would then talk about the Atonement and its ability to heal broken hearts and to give us the ability to forgive.
26. As a bishop, I saw miracles. I saw individuals repent of their sins and earn back the trust of their spouses. I saw brokenhearted spouses find peace and the ability to forgive. I saw couples that were on the verge of divorce humble themselves, look inward, take responsibility, apologize for mistakes, and forgive each other. Every one of these miracles was made possible by the healing power of the Atonement.

27. Now don't misunderstand. There are situations where forgiveness does not mean staying in a relationship that is abusive or dangerous. There are some scenarios where divorce may be the proper choice. But even in these cases, the Atonement can bring personal healing.
28. May we be willing to take responsibility for our own sins and weaknesses that create stress and pain in our marriages. May we use the power of the Atonement to allow the Savior to heal our hurts and sorrows to help us fully forgive our spouses. I testify that the Savior not only heals broken souls; He also heals broken hearts. If we allow Him to help us sincerely repent and freely forgive, our lives and our marriages will be blessed throughout eternity.
29. Repentance and forgiveness are complementary principles. Both invite the healing power of the Atonement to wash over us so that we can maintain peace and harmony in our marriage. Just as our sins and weaknesses are washed away through repentance, forgiveness washes away the hurts and emotional injuries that must be anticipated in being married to someone who is imperfect.

Repentance and Forgiveness in Marriage

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/2011/09/repentance-and-forgiveness-in-marriage?lang=eng>

Unit 5 Additional Readings

Links and QR Codes



Elder Robert D. Hales, “Strengthening Families”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1999/04/strengthening-families-our-sacred-duty?lang=eng>

Elder David A Bednar, “More Diligent and Concerned at Home”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2009/10/more-diligent-and-concerned-at-home?lang=eng>

President Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Mothers in Zion”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jc-jeLC88xIY>

President Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Fathers in Israel”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=IRBr-rkKIUk&app=desktop>

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “Priesthood Authority in the Family and the Church”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2005/10/priesthood-authority-in-the-family-and-the-church?lang=eng&query=Priesthood+authority+in+the+home+church#watch=video>

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “Keys and Authority of the Priesthood”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2014/04/the-keys-and-authority-of-the-priesthood?lang=eng&query=Keys+authority#watch=video>

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “Love and Law”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2009/10/love-and-law?lang=eng&query=Love+and+law>

FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY
Large Group Study Guide #6
Protect the Family

“Revelation comes as words we feel more than hear.”

President Boyd K. Packer, "Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise," October 1994 General Conference

Name _____ Large Group Instructor _____ Class Time/Day _____

1. What doctrines or principles were you taught that you consider foundational to this Unit?
2. What impressions came to you? What were you taught during this large group session?
3. What questions will you ask in following class periods that will invite increased learning on this topic?

FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY

Unit 6 Scriptures

All mankind will stand before God in judgement and will be held accountable for how they treated their family

Mormon 9:14

14 And then cometh the judgment of the Holy One upon them; and then cometh the time that he that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still; he that is happy shall be happy still; and he that is unhappy shall be unhappy still.

D&C 101:78

78 That every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment.

The disintegration of the family will bring upon the world the calamities foretold by the prophets

2 Timothy 3:1-7

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Moses 7:65-66

65 And it came to pass that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to dwell on the earth in righteousness for the space of a thousand years;

66 But before that day he saw great tribulations among the wicked; and he also saw the sea, that it was troubled, and men's hearts failing them, looking forth with fear for the judgments of the Almighty God, which should come upon the wicked.

D&C 45:26- 27, 31-35

26 And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men's hearts shall fail them, and they shall say that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth.

27 And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound.

31 And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land.

32 But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die.

33 And there shall be earthquakes also in divers places, and many desolations; yet men will harden their hearts against me, and they will take up the sword, one against another, and they will kill one another.

34 And now, when I the Lord had spoken these words unto my disciples, they were troubled.

35 And I said unto them: Be not troubled, for, when all these things shall come to pass, ye may know that the promises which have been made unto you shall be fulfilled.

D&C 97:22-28

22 For behold, and lo, vengeance cometh speedily upon the ungodly as the whirlwind; and who shall escape it?

23 The Lord's scourge shall pass over by night and by day, and the report thereof shall vex all people; yea, it shall not be stayed until the Lord come;

24 For the indignation of the Lord is kindled against their abominations and all their wicked works.

25 Nevertheless, Zion shall escape if she observe to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her.

26 But if she observe not to do whatsoever I have commanded her, I will visit her according to all her works, with sore affliction, with pestilence, with plague, with sword, with vengeance, with devouring fire.

27 Nevertheless, let it be read this once to her ears, that I, the Lord, have accepted of her offering; and if she sin no more none of these things shall come upon her;

28 And I will bless her with blessings, and multiply a multiplicity of blessings upon her, and upon her generations forever and ever, saith the Lord your God. Amen.

D&C 101:44-54, 63-64

44 A certain nobleman had a spot of land, very choice; and he said unto his servants: Go ye unto my vineyard, even upon this very choice piece of land, and plant twelve olive trees;

45 And set watchmen round about them, and build a

tower, that one may overlook the land round about, to be a watchman upon the tower, that mine olive trees may not be broken down when the enemy shall come to spoil and take upon themselves the fruit of my vineyard.

47 And while they were yet laying the foundation thereof, they began to say among themselves: And what need hath my lord of this tower?

48 And consulted for a long time, saying among themselves: What need hath my lord of this tower, seeing this is a time of peace?

49 Might not this money be given to the exchangers? For there is no need of these things.

50 And while they were at variance one with another they became very slothful, and they hearkened not unto the commandments of their lord.

51 And the enemy came by night, and broke down the hedge; and the servants of the nobleman arose and were affrighted, and fled; and the enemy destroyed their works, and broke down the olive trees.

52 Now, behold, the nobleman, the lord of the vineyard, called upon his servants, and said unto them, Why! what is the cause of this great evil?

53 Ought ye not to have done even as I commanded you, and—after ye had planted the vineyard, and built the hedge round about, and set watchmen upon the walls thereof—built the tower also, and set a watchman upon the tower, and watched for my vineyard, and not have fallen asleep, lest the enemy should come upon you?

54 And behold, the watchman upon the tower would have seen the enemy while he was yet afar off; and then ye could have made ready and kept the enemy from breaking down the hedge thereof, and saved my vineyard from the hands of the destroyer.

We should seek to uphold, maintain, and strengthen families everywhere

Alma 46:12-13, 16, 19-20

12 And it came to pass that he rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole.

13 . . . (and he called it the title of liberty) and he bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren, so long as there should a band of Christians remain to possess the land—

16 And therefore, at this time, Moroni prayed that the cause of the Christians, and the freedom of the land might be favored.

19 And when Moroni had said these words, he went forth among the people, waving the rent part of his garment in the air, that all might see the writing which he had written upon the rent part, and crying with a loud voice, saying:

20 Behold, whosoever will maintain this title upon the land, let them come forth in the strength of the Lord, and enter into a covenant that they will maintain their rights, and their religion, that the Lord God may bless them.

Ephesians 6:10-18

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

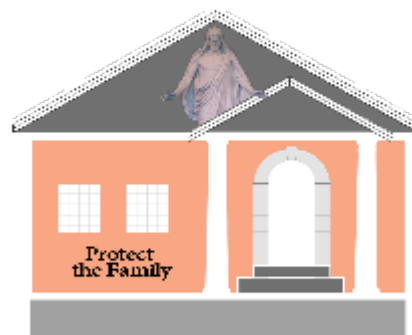
17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;



Christian Courage: The Price of Discipleship

Elder Robert D. Hales
Ensign, Nov. 2008, 72–75



1. We have gathered together as one, we have taken upon us the name of Jesus Christ, and we are Christians. One of the questions we would ask: why then, if we have that love of the Savior, would someone want to be an antagonist or to attack us?
2. Recently a group of bright, faithful young Latter-day Saints wrote down some of the most pressing questions on their minds. One sister asked, “Why doesn’t the Church defend itself more actively when accusations are made against it?”
3. To her inquiry I would say that one of mortality’s great tests comes when our beliefs are questioned or criticized. In such moments, we may want to respond aggressively—to “put up our dukes.” But these are important opportunities to step back, pray, and follow the Savior’s example. Remember that Jesus Himself was despised and rejected by the world. And in Lehi’s dream, those coming to the Savior also endured “mocking and pointing ... fingers” (1 Nephi 8:27). “The world hath hated [my disciples],” Jesus said, “because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). But when we respond to our accusers as the Savior did, we not only become more Christlike, we invite others to feel His love and follow Him as well.
4. To respond in a Christlike way cannot be scripted or based on a formula. The Savior responded differently in every situation. When He was confronted by wicked King Herod, He remained silent. When He stood before Pilate, He bore a simple and powerful testimony of His divinity and purpose. Facing the moneychangers who were defiling the temple, He exercised His divine responsibility to preserve and protect that which was sacred. Lifted up upon a cross, He uttered the incomparable Christian response: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).
5. Some people mistakenly think responses such as silence, meekness, forgiveness, and bearing humble testimony are passive or weak. But to “love [our] enemies, bless them that curse [us], do good to them that hate [us], and pray for them which despitefully use [us], and persecute [us]” (Matthew 5:44) takes faith, strength, and, most of all, Christian courage.
6. The Prophet Joseph Smith demonstrated this courage throughout his life. Though he “suffer[ed] severe persecution at the hands of all classes of men, both religious and irreligious” (Joseph Smith—History 1:27), he did not retaliate or give in to hatred. Like all true disciples of Christ, he stood with the Savior by loving others in a tolerant and compassionate way. That is Christian courage.
7. When we do not retaliate—when we turn the other cheek and resist feelings of anger—we too stand with the Savior. We show forth His love, which is the only power that can subdue the adversary and answer our accusers without accusing them in return. That is not weakness. That is Christian courage.
8. Through the years we learn that challenges to our faith are not new, and they aren’t likely to disappear soon. But true disciples of Christ see opportunity in the midst of opposition.
9. In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Abinadi was bound and brought before the evil King Noah. Although the king vigorously opposed Abinadi and eventually sentenced him to death, Abinadi boldly taught the gospel and bore his testimony anyway. Because Abinadi took advantage of that opportunity, a priest named Alma was converted to the gospel and brought many souls unto Christ. The courage of Abinadi and Alma was Christian courage.
10. Experience shows that seasons of negative publicity about the Church can help accomplish the Lord’s purposes. In 1983 the First Presidency wrote to Church leaders, “Opposition may be in itself an opportunity. Among the continuing challenges faced by our missionaries is a lack of interest in religious matters and in our message. These criticisms create ... interest in the Church. ... This provides an opportunity [for members] to present the truth to those whose attention is thus directed toward us.”¹
11. We can take advantage of such opportunities in many

ways: a kind letter to the editor, a conversation with a friend, a comment on a blog, or a reassuring word to one who has made a disparaging comment. We can answer with love those who have been influenced by misinformation and prejudice—who are “kept from the truth because they know not where to find it” (D&C 123:12). I assure you that to answer our accusers in this way is never weakness. It is Christian courage in action.

12. As we respond to others, each circumstance will be different. Fortunately, the Lord knows the hearts of our accusers and how we can most effectively respond to them. As true disciples seek guidance from the Spirit, they receive inspiration tailored to each encounter. And in every encounter, true disciples respond in ways that invite the Spirit of the Lord.
13. Paul reminded the Corinthians that his preaching was “not with the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4). Because that power resides in the Spirit of the Lord, we must never become contentious when we are discussing our faith. As almost every missionary learns, Bible bashing always drives the Spirit away. The Savior has said, “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me” (3 Nephi 11:29). More regrettable than the Church being accused of not being Christian is when Church members react to such accusations in an un-Christlike way! May our conversations with others always be marked by the fruits of the Spirit—“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23). To be meek, as defined in Webster’s dictionary, is “manifesting patience and longsuffering: enduring injury without resentment.”² Meekness is not weakness. It is a badge of Christian courage.
14. This is especially important in our interactions with members of other Christian denominations. Surely our Heavenly Father is saddened—and the devil laughs—when we contentiously debate doctrinal differences with our Christian neighbors.
15. This is not to suggest that we compromise our principles or dilute our beliefs. We cannot change the doctrines of the restored gospel, even if teaching and obeying them makes us unpopular in the eyes of the world. Yet even as we feel to speak the word of God with boldness, we must pray to be filled with the Holy Ghost (see Acts 4:29, 31). We should never confuse boldness with Satan’s counterfeit: overbearance (see Alma 38:12). True disciples speak with quiet confidence, not boastful pride.
16. As true disciples, our primary concern must be others’ welfare, not personal vindication. Questions and criticisms give us an opportunity to reach out to others and demonstrate that they matter to our Heavenly

Father and to us. Our aim should be to help them understand the truth, not defend our egos or score points in a theological debate. Our heartfelt testimonies are the most powerful answer we can give our accusers. And such testimonies can only be borne in love and meekness. We should be like Edward Partridge, of whom the Lord said, “His heart is pure before me, for he is like unto Nathanael of old, in whom there is no guile” (D&C 41:11). To be guileless is to have a childlike innocence, to be slow to take offense and quick to forgive.

17. These qualities are first learned in the home and family and can be practiced in all our relationships. To be guileless is to look for our own fault first. When accused, we should ask as the Savior’s Apostles did, “Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26:22). If we listen to the answer given by the Spirit, we can, if needed, make corrections, apologize, seek forgiveness, and do better.
18. Without guile, true disciples avoid being unduly judgmental of others’ views. Many of us have cultivated strong friendships with those who are not members of our Church—schoolmates, colleagues at work, and friends and neighbors throughout the world. We need them, and they need us. As President Thomas S. Monson has taught, “Let us learn respect for others. . . . None of us lives alone—in our city, our nation, or our world.”³
19. As the Savior demonstrated with Herod, sometimes true disciples must show Christian courage by saying nothing at all. Once when I was golfing, I barely brushed up against a large cholla cactus, which seems to shoot needles like a porcupine. Thorns from that plant stuck all over my clothing, even though I had barely touched the cactus plant. Some situations are like that plant: they can only injure us. In such instances, we are better off to keep our distance and simply walk away. As we do, some may try to provoke us and engage us in argument. In the Book of Mormon, we read about Lehonti and his men camped upon a mount. The traitorous Amalickiah urged Lehonti to “come down” and meet him in the valley. But when Lehonti left the high ground, he was poisoned “by degrees” until he died, and his army fell into Amalickiah’s hands (see Alma 47). By arguments and accusations, some people bait us to leave the high ground. The high ground is where the light is. It’s where we see the first light of morning and the last light in the evening. It is the safe ground. It is true and where knowledge is. Sometimes others want us to come down off the high ground and join them in a theological scrum in the mud. These few contentious individuals are set on picking religious fights, online or in person. We are always better staying on the higher ground of mutual respect and love.

20. In doing so, we follow the example of the prophet Nehemiah, who built a wall around Jerusalem. Nehemiah's enemies entreated him to meet them on the plain, where "they thought to do [him] mischief." Unlike Leonti, however, Nehemiah wisely refused their offer with this message: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Nehemiah 6:2–3). We too have a great work to do, which will not be accomplished if we allow ourselves to stop and argue and be distracted. Instead we should muster Christian courage and move on. As we read in Psalms, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers" (Psalm 37:1).
21. Evil will always be with us in this world. Part of mortality's great test is to be in the world without becoming like the world. In His Intercessory Prayer, the Savior asked His Heavenly Father, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). But even as the Savior warned of persecution, He promised peace: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). I testify that with the mantle of His peace upon us, the First Presidency's promise will be fulfilled: "The opposition which may seem hard to bear will be a blessing to the kingdom of God upon the earth."⁴
22. To my inquiring sister and all who seek to know how we should respond to our accusers, I reply, we love them. Whatever their race, creed, religion, or political persuasion, if we follow Christ and show forth His courage, we must love them. We do not feel we are better than they are. Rather, we desire with our love to show them a better way—the way of Jesus Christ. His way leads to the gate of baptism, the strait and narrow path of righteous living, and the temple of God. He is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Only through Him can we and all our brothers and sisters inherit the greatest gift we can receive—eternal life and eternal happiness. To help them, to be an example for them, is not for the weak. It is for the strong. It is for you and me, Latter-day Saints who pay the price of discipleship by answering our accusers with Christian courage.
23. I conclude by making the testimony of Mormon my own: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life" (3 Nephi 5:13). I bear my special witness of Him—that our lives can be everlasting because His love is everlasting. That we may share His eternal, unconditional love with our brothers and sisters everywhere, is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. First Presidency letter, Dec. 1, 1983.
2. Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1976), "meek," 1403.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "In Quest of the Abundant Life," Ensign, Mar. 1988, 3.
4. First Presidency letter, Dec. 1, 1983.

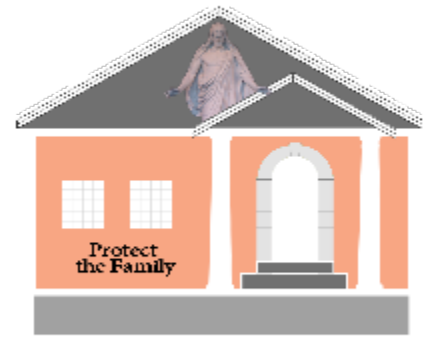
Christian Courage: The Price of Discipleship

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2008/10/christian-courage-the-price-of-discipleship?lang=eng&query=Christian+Courage#watch=video>



The Costs and Blessings of Discipleship

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
Ensign, May 2014



1. With admiration and encouragement for everyone who will need to remain steadfast in these latter days, I say to all and especially the youth of the Church that if you haven't already, you will one day find yourself called upon to defend your faith or perhaps even endure some personal abuse simply because you are a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Such moments will require both courage and courtesy on your part.
2. For example, a sister missionary recently wrote to me: "My companion and I saw a man sitting on a bench in the town square eating his lunch. As we drew near, he looked up and saw our missionary name tags. With a terrible look in his eye, he jumped up and raised his hand to hit me. I ducked just in time, only to have him spit his food all over me and start swearing the most horrible things at us. We walked away saying nothing. I tried to wipe the food off of my face, only to feel a clump of mashed potato hit me in the back of the head. Sometimes it is hard being a missionary because right then I wanted to go back, grab that little man, and say, 'EXCUSE ME!' But I didn't."
3. To this devoted missionary I say, dear child, you have in your own humble way stepped into a circle of very distinguished women and men who have, as the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob said, "view[ed Christ's] death, and suffer[ed] his cross and [borne] the shame of the world."
4. Indeed, of Jesus Himself, Jacob's brother Nephi wrote: "And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men."
5. In keeping with the Savior's own experience, there has been a long history of rejection and a painfully high price paid by prophets and apostles, missionaries and members in every generation—all those who have tried to honor God's call to lift the human family to "a more excellent way."
6. "And what shall I more say [of them]?" the writer of the book of Hebrews asks.
7. "[They] who ... stopped the mouths of lions,
8. "Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, ... waxed valiant in fight, turned [armies] to flight ...
9. "[Saw] their dead raised to life [while] others were tortured, ...
10. "And ... had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, ... of bonds and imprisonment:
11. "They were stoned, ... were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: ... wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, [and] tormented;
12. "([They] of whom the world was not worthy:) ... wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and

in dens and caves of the earth.”

13. Surely the angels of heaven wept as they recorded this cost of discipleship in a world that is often hostile to the commandments of God. The Savior Himself shed His own tears over those who for hundreds of years had been rejected and slain in His service. And now He was being rejected and about to be slain.
14. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” Jesus cried, “thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”
15. “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”
16. And therein lies a message for every young man and young woman in this Church. You may wonder if it is worth it to take a courageous moral stand in high school or to go on a mission only to have your most cherished beliefs reviled or to strive against much in society that sometimes ridicules a life of religious devotion. Yes, it is worth it, because the alternative is to have our “houses” left unto us “desolate”—desolate individuals, desolate families, desolate neighborhoods, and desolate nations.
17. So here we have the burden of those called to bear the messianic message. In addition to teaching, encouraging, and cheering people on (that is the pleasant part of discipleship), from time to time these same messengers are called upon to worry, to warn, and sometimes just to weep (that is the painful part of discipleship). They know full well that the road leading to the promised land “flowing with milk and honey” of necessity runs by way of Mount Sinai, flowing with “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not.”
18. Unfortunately, messengers of divinely mandated commandments are often no more popular today than they were anciently, as at least two spit-upon, potato-spattered sister missionaries can now attest. Hate is an ugly word, yet there are those today who would say with the corrupt Ahab, “I hate [the prophet Micaiah]; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always [prophesied] evil.” That kind of hate for a prophet’s honesty cost Abinadi his life. As he said to King Noah: “Because I have told you the truth ye are angry with me. ... Because I have spoken the word of God ye have judged me that I am mad” or, we might add, provincial, patriarchal, bigoted, unkind, narrow, outmoded, and elderly.
19. It is as the Lord Himself lamented to the prophet Isaiah:
20. “[These] children ... will not hear the law of the Lord:
21. “[They] say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits:
22. “Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.”
23. Sadly enough, my young friends, it is a characteristic of our age that if people want any gods at all, they want them to be gods who do not demand much, comfortable gods, smooth gods who not only don’t rock the boat but don’t even row it, gods who pat us on the head, make us giggle, then tell us to run along and pick marigolds.
24. Talk about man creating God in his own image! Sometimes—and this seems the greatest irony of all—these folks invoke the name of Jesus as one who was this kind of “comfortable” God. Really? He who said not only should we not break commandments, but we should not even think about breaking them. And if we do think about breaking them, we have already broken them in our heart. Does that sound like “comfortable” doctrine, easy on the ear and popular down at the village love-in?

25. And what of those who just want to look at sin or touch it from a distance? Jesus said with a flash, if your eye offends you, pluck it out. If your hand offends you, cut it off. “I came not to [bring] peace, but a sword,” He warned those who thought He spoke only soothing platitudes. No wonder that, sermon after sermon, the local communities “pray[ed] him to depart out of their coasts.” No wonder, miracle after miracle, His power was attributed not to God but to the devil. It is obvious that the bumper sticker question “What would Jesus do?” will not always bring a popular response.

26. At the zenith of His mortal ministry, Jesus said, “Love one another, as I have loved you.” To make certain they understood exactly what kind of love that was, He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” and “whosoever ... shall break one of [the] least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be ... the least in the kingdom of heaven.” Christlike love is the greatest need we have on this planet in part because righteousness was always supposed to accompany it. So if love is to be our watchword, as it must be, then by the word of Him who is love personified, we must forsake transgression and any hint of advocacy for it in others. Jesus clearly understood what many in our modern culture seem to forget: that there is a crucial difference between the commandment to forgive sin (which He had an infinite capacity to do) and the warning against condoning it (which He never ever did even once).

27. Friends, especially my young friends, take heart. Pure Christlike love flowing from true righteousness can change the world. I testify that the true and living gospel of Jesus Christ is on the earth and you are members of His true and living Church, trying to share it. I bear witness of that gospel and that Church, with a particular witness of restored priesthood keys which unlock the power and efficacy of saving ordinances. I am more certain that those keys have been restored and that those ordinances are once again available through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints than I am

certain I stand before you at this pulpit and you sit before me in this conference.

28. Be strong. Live the gospel faithfully even if others around you don’t live it at all. Defend your beliefs with courtesy and with compassion, but defend them. A long history of inspired voices, including those you will hear in this conference and the voice you just heard in the person of President Thomas S. Monson, point you toward the path of Christian discipleship. It is a strait path, and it is a narrow path without a great deal of latitude at some points, but it can be thrillingly and successfully traveled, “with ... steadfastness in Christ, ... a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.” In courageously pursuing such a course, you will forge unshakable faith, you will find safety against ill winds that blow, even shafts in the whirlwind, and you will feel the rock-like strength of our Redeemer, upon whom if you build your unflagging discipleship, you cannot fall. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Costs and Blessings of Discipleship

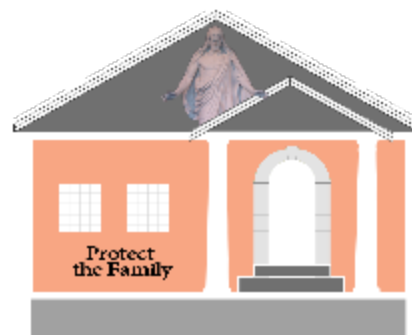
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Defenders of the Family Proclamation

Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson

General Conference, April 2015



1. What a privilege and joy to be a part of this marvelous assembly of girls and women. How blessed we are as women to be joined together this evening in unity and in love.
2. I recently read the story of Marie Madeline Cardon, who, with her family, received the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ from the first missionaries called to serve in Italy in 1850. She was a young woman of 17 or 18 years of age when they were baptized. One Sunday, while the family was holding a worship service in their home high in the Alps of northern Italy, an angry mob of men, including some of the local ministers, gathered around the house and began shouting, yelling, and calling for the missionaries to be brought outside. I don't think they were anxious to be taught the gospel—they intended bodily harm. It was young Marie who marched out of the house to confront the mob.



3. They continued their vicious yells and demands for the missionaries to be brought out. Marie raised her Bible up in her hand and commanded them to depart. She told them that the elders were under her protection and that they could not harm one hair of their heads. Listen to her own words: "All stood aghast. ... God was with me. He placed those words in my mouth, or I could not have spoken them. All was calm, instantly. That strong ferocious body of men stood helpless before a weak, trembling, yet fearless girl." The ministers asked the

mob to leave, which they did quietly in shame, fear, and remorse. The small flock completed their meeting in peace.¹

4. Can't you just picture that brave young woman, the same age as many of you, standing up to a mob and defending her newly found beliefs with courage and conviction?
5. Sisters, few of us will ever have to face an angry mob, but there is a war going on in this world in which our most cherished and basic doctrines are under attack. I am speaking specifically of the doctrine of the family. The sanctity of the home and the essential purposes of the family are being questioned, criticized, and assaulted on every front.
6. When President Gordon B. Hinckley first read "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" 20 years ago this year, we were grateful for and valued the clarity, simplicity, and truth of this revelatory document. Little did we realize then how very desperately we would need these basic declarations in today's world as the criteria by which we could judge each new wind of worldly dogma coming at us from the media, the Internet, scholars, TV and films, and even legislators. The proclamation on the family has become our benchmark for judging the philosophies of the world, and I testify that the principles set forth within this statement are as true today as they were when they were given to us by a prophet of God nearly 20 years ago.
7. May I point out something obvious? Life rarely goes exactly according to plan for anyone, and we are very aware that not all women are experiencing what the proclamation describes. It is still important to understand and teach the Lord's pattern and strive for the realization of that pattern the best we can.
8. Each of us has a part to play in the plan, and each of us is equally valued in the eyes of the Lord. We should remember that a loving Heavenly Father is aware of our righteous desires and will honor His promises that nothing will be withheld from those who faithfully keep their covenants. Heavenly Father has a mission and plan for each of us, but He also has His own timetable. One

of the hardest challenges in this life is to have faith in the Lord's timing. It's a good idea to have an alternative plan in mind, which helps us to be covenant-keeping, charitable, and righteous women who build the kingdom of God no matter which way our lives go. We need to teach our daughters to aim for the ideal but plan for contingencies.

9. During this 20th anniversary year of the family proclamation, I would like to issue a challenge for all of us as women of the Church to be defenders of "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." Just as Marie Madeline Cardon courageously defended the missionaries and her newly found beliefs, we need to boldly defend the Lord's revealed doctrines describing marriage, families, the divine roles of men and women, and the importance of homes as sacred places—even when the world is shouting in our ears that these principles are outdated, limiting, or no longer relevant. Everyone, no matter what their marital circumstance or number of children, can be defenders of the Lord's plan described in the family proclamation. If it is the Lord's plan, it should also be our plan!
10. There are three principles taught in the proclamation which I think are especially in need of steadfast defenders. The first is marriage between a man and a woman. We are taught in the scriptures, "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."² For anyone to attain the fulness of priesthood blessings, there must be a husband and a wife sealed in the house of the Lord, working together in righteousness and remaining faithful to their covenants. This is the Lord's plan for His children, and no amount of public discourse or criticism will change what the Lord has declared. We need to continue to model righteous marriages, seek for that blessing in our lives, and have faith if it is slow in coming. Let us be defenders of marriage as the Lord has ordained it while continuing to show love and compassion for those with differing views.
11. The next principle which calls for our defending voices is elevating the divine roles of mothers and fathers. We eagerly teach our children to aim high in this life. We want to make sure that our daughters know that they have the potential to achieve and be whatever they can imagine. We hope they will love learning, be educated, talented, and maybe even become the next Marie Curie or Eliza R. Snow.
12. Do we also teach our sons and daughters there is no greater honor, no more elevated title, and no more important role in this life than that of mother or father? I would hope that as we encourage our children to reach for the very best in this life that we also teach them to honor and exalt the roles that mothers and fathers play

in Heavenly Father's plan.

13. Our youngest daughter, Abby, saw a unique opportunity to stand as a defender of the role of mother. One day she got a notice from her children's school that they were having Career Day presentations at the school. Parents were invited to send in an application if they wanted to come to school to teach the children about their jobs, and Abby felt impressed to apply to come and speak about motherhood. She didn't hear back from the school, and when Career Day was getting close, she finally called the school, thinking they may have lost her application. The organizers scrambled around and found two teachers who agreed to have Abby come talk to their classes at the end of Career Day.
14. In her very fun presentation to the children, Abby taught them, among other things, that as a mother she needed to be somewhat of an expert in medicine, psychology, religion, teaching, music, literature, art, finance, decorating, hair styling, chauffeuring, sports, culinary arts, and so much more. The children were impressed. She finished by having the children remember their mothers by writing thank-you notes expressing gratitude for the many loving acts of service they received daily. Abby felt that the children saw their mothers in a whole new light and that being a mother or father was something of great worth. She applied to share again this year at Career Day and was invited to present to six classes.



15. Abby has said of her experience: "I feel like it could be easy in this world for a child to get the sense that being a parent is a secondary job or even sometimes a necessary inconvenience. I want every child to feel like they are the most important priority to their parent, and maybe telling them how important being a parent is to me will help them realize all that their parents do for them and why."
16. Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, is a wonderful example of honoring women and motherhood, especially his own mother. In reference to our

earthly mothers, he has said: “May each of us treasure this truth; one cannot forget mother and remember God. One cannot remember mother and forget God. Why? Because these two sacred persons, God and [our earthly] mother, partners in creation, in love, in sacrifice, in service, are as one.”³

17. The last principle we need to stand and defend is the sanctity of the home. We need to take a term which is sometimes spoken of with derision and elevate it. It is the term homemaker. All of us—women, men, youth, and children, single or married—can work at being homemakers. We should “make our homes” places of order, refuge, holiness, and safety. Our homes should be places where the Spirit of the Lord is felt in rich abundance and where the scriptures and the gospel are studied, taught, and lived. What a difference it would make in the world if all people would see themselves as makers of righteous homes. Let us defend the home as a place which is second only to the temple in holiness.
18. Sisters, I am grateful to be a woman in these latter days. We have opportunities and possibilities which no other generation of women has had in the world. Let us help build the kingdom of God by standing up boldly and being defenders of marriage, parenthood, and the home. The Lord needs us to be brave, steadfast, and immovable warriors who will defend His plan and teach the upcoming generations His truths.
19. I bear witness that Heavenly Father lives and loves each of us. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Marie Madeline Cardon Guild, “Marie Madeline Cardon Guild: An Autobiography,” cardonfamilies.org/Histories/MarieMadelineCardonGuild.html; see also Marie C. Guild autobiography, circa 1909, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

2. 1 Corinthians 11:11.

3. Thomas S. Monson, “Behold Thy Mother,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 32.

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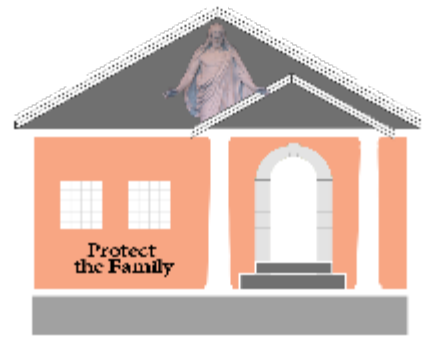
Defenders of the Family Proclamation

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/04/defenders-of-the-family-proclamation?lang=eng>



To Heal the Shattering Consequences of Abuse

Elder Richard G. Scott
Ensign, May 2008



1. Some matters are so sensitive and intensely personal and can awaken such disturbing feelings that they are seldom mentioned publicly. Yet, if tenderly and compassionately treated in the light of truth, discussion of these matters can bring greater understanding, with the easing of pain, the blessing of healing, and even the avoidance of further tragedy.
2. It is with a deep desire to define a path to relief that I speak to you who suffer the shattering consequences of mental, verbal, physical, and especially sexual abuse. I speak also to those of you who cause it. I will focus on sexual abuse, although the counsel given should help the victims of other mistreatment. My intent is to act as a mirror so that divine, healing light can illuminate the dark clouds of distress caused by others' unrighteous acts. May I be aided to communicate understandably, to provide help, and not further complicate a damaged life. It is also likely that greater understanding, awareness, and sensitivity may permit some of the rest of us to help resolve or prevent the tragedy of abuse in additional victims.
3. The rising tide of this vicious, abominable sin may not have touched your life personally. Yet it is pervasive enough in the world that it may have touched someone you love. It frequently causes such profound suffering—that can be overcome—that I want to speak of how healing can be attained. It will be done reverently, for my objective is to help heal and not aggravate painful memories.

Agency

4. Moral agency is a vital element in our Father in Heaven's plan of happiness. He understood that some of His spirit children would use that agency improperly, causing serious problems to others. Some would even violate sacred trust, such as a father or family member abusing an innocent child. Since our Heavenly Father is completely just, there has to be a way of overcoming the tragic consequences of such damaging use of agency for both the victim and the perpetrator. That secure healing comes through the power of the Atonement of His

Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to rectify that which is unjust. Faith in Jesus Christ and in His power to heal provides the abused with the means to overcome the terrible consequences of another's unrighteous acts. When combined with complete repentance, the Atonement also affords the perpetrator a way to avoid the severe punishment the Lord has decreed for such acts.

To the Victim

5. I testify that I know victims of serious abuse who have successfully made the difficult journey to full healing through the power of the Atonement. After her own concerns were resolved by her faith in the healing power of the Atonement, one young woman who had been severely abused by her father requested another interview with me. She returned with an older couple. I could sense that she loved the two very deeply. Her face radiated happiness. She began, "Elder Scott, this is my father. I love him. He's concerned about some things that happened in my early childhood. They are no longer a problem for me. Could you help him?" What a powerful confirmation of the Savior's capacity to heal! She no longer suffered from the consequences of abuse, because she had adequate understanding of His Atonement, sufficient faith, and was obedient to His law. As you conscientiously study the Atonement and exercise your faith that Jesus Christ has the power to heal, you can receive the same blessed relief. During your journey of recovery, accept His invitation to let Him share your burden until you have sufficient time and strength to be healed.
6. To find relief from the consequences of abuse, it is helpful to understand their source. Satan is the author of all of the destructive outcomes of abuse. He has extraordinary capacity to lead an individual into blind alleys where the solution to extremely challenging problems cannot be found. His strategy is to separate the suffering soul from the healing attainable from a compassionate Heavenly Father and a loving Redeemer.
7. If you have been abused, Satan will strive to convince you that there is no solution. Yet he knows perfectly

well that there is. Satan recognizes that healing comes through the unwavering love of Heavenly Father for each of His children. He also understands that the power of healing is inherent in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Therefore, his strategy is to do all possible to separate you from your Father and His Son. Do not let Satan convince you that you are beyond help.

8. Satan uses your abuse to undermine your self-confidence, destroy trust in authority, create fear, and generate feelings of despair. Abuse can damage your ability to form healthy human relationships. You must have faith that all of these negative consequences can be resolved; otherwise they will keep you from full recovery. While these outcomes have powerful influence in your life, they do not define the real you.
9. Satan will strive to alienate you from your Father in Heaven with the thought that if He loved you He would have prevented the tragedy. Do not be kept from the very source of true healing by the craftiness of the prince of evil and his wicked lies. Recognize that if you have feelings that you are not loved by your Father in Heaven, you are being manipulated by Satan. Even when it may seem very difficult to pray, kneel and ask Father in Heaven to give you the capacity to trust Him and to feel His love for you. Ask to come to know that His Son can heal you through His merciful Atonement.
10. It was Satan's proposal that Father's children be forced to obey, that there be no moral agency and therefore no personal growth. To preserve moral agency, the Lord does not restrain individuals from improper use of that agency. However, He will punish them for such acts unless there is full repentance. Through the Holy Ghost, He sends warning promptings to the abuser, but often that individual's degrading appetite is so powerful that it blocks out that spiritual guidance. That is why our Father provided a way to heal the consequences of acts that, through force, misuse of authority, or fear of another, temporarily take away the agency of the abused.
11. The beginning of healing requires childlike faith in the unalterable fact that Father in Heaven loves you and has supplied a way to heal. His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, laid down His life to provide that healing. But there is no magic solution, no simple balm to provide healing, nor is there an easy path to the complete remedy. The cure requires profound faith in Jesus Christ and in His infinite capacity to heal. It is rooted in an understanding of doctrine and a resolute determination to follow it.
12. Healing may begin with a thoughtful bishop or stake president or a wise professional counselor. If you had a broken leg, you wouldn't decide to fix it yourself. Serious abuse can also benefit from professional help. There are many ways to begin healing, but remember that a full cure comes through the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Master and Redeemer. Have faith that with effort His perfect, eternal, infinite Atonement can heal your suffering from the consequences of abuse.
13. As impossible as it may seem to you now, in time the healing you can receive from the Savior will allow you to truly forgive the abuser and even have feelings of sorrow for him or her. When you can forgive the offense, you will be relieved of the pain and heartache that Satan wants in your life by encouraging you to hate the abuser. As a result, you will enjoy greater peace. While an important part of healing, if the thought of forgiveness causes you yet more pain, set that step aside until you have more experience with the Savior's healing power in your own life.
14. If you are currently being abused or have been in the past, find the courage to seek help. You may have been severely threatened or caused to fear so that you would not reveal the abuse. Have the courage to act now. Seek the support of someone you can trust. Your bishop or stake president can give you valuable counsel and help you with the civil authorities. Explain how you have been abused and identify who has done it. Ask for protection. Your action may help others avoid becoming innocent victims, with the consequent suffering. Get help now. Do not fear—for fear is a tool Satan will use to keep you suffering. The Lord will help you, but you must reach out for that help.
15. Do not be discouraged if initially a bishop hesitates when you identify an abuser. Remember that predators are skillful at cultivating a public appearance of piety to mask their despicable acts. Pray to be guided in your efforts to receive help. That support will come. Rest assured that the Perfect Judge, Jesus the Christ, with a perfect knowledge of the details, will hold all abusers accountable for every unrighteous act. In time He will fully apply the required demands of justice unless there is complete repentance. Your preoccupation with a need for justice only slows your healing and allows the perpetrator to continue his abusive control. Therefore you should leave punishment for the diabolic acts of abuse to civil and Church authorities.
16. Now, to the perpetrator who has shattered the life of another by abuse: Recognize that you need help with your addiction or it will destroy you. You will not overcome it by yourself. You likely need specialized professional help. I plead with you to seek to be rescued now. You likely have deceived yourself in the false, temporary security that you have successfully hidden your transgression from the civil or Church authorities. But know that the Lord Jesus Christ is completely aware of your sins. He has warned: "Whoso shall offend

To the Perpetrator

16. Now, to the perpetrator who has shattered the life of another by abuse: Recognize that you need help with your addiction or it will destroy you. You will not overcome it by yourself. You likely need specialized professional help. I plead with you to seek to be rescued now. You likely have deceived yourself in the false, temporary security that you have successfully hidden your transgression from the civil or Church authorities. But know that the Lord Jesus Christ is completely aware of your sins. He has warned: "Whoso shall offend

one of these little ones . . . , it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” Know that even without action by a victim, your act of abuse will be publicly known, for Satan will expose you, then abandon you.

17. Simplify your life by taking steps now to cleanse your soul from such sin and resolve the penalties they evoke. Show your desire to heal the anguish that you have caused others. Talk to your bishop or stake president. The seriousness of your acts may require you to face civil and Church discipline. But full repentance will bring the sweet relief of forgiveness, peace of conscience, and a renewed life. It will also bring relief to the abused and their families. You will be free of the weight of remorse and the accusing thoughts of what you have caused in grief and anguish in another’s life. Recognize that it is much easier to repent in this life than it will be in the next, so repent now. You will be helped when you decide to be freed from your addiction through repentance and the support of others. Be grateful that you didn’t live anciently when abusers were stoned to death without the opportunity for repentance.

To Parents

18. Parents, in appropriate, sensitive ways, teach your children of the potential danger of abuse and how to avoid it. Be aware of warning signs, such as an abrupt change in a child’s behavior, that may signal a problem. Be alert to a child’s unsettled feelings and identify their origin.

To Judges in Israel

19. To you who hold the keys of a judge in Israel, painstakingly assure that every individual that is suffering from abuse receives appropriate help. The Church handbook and the help line listed there are valuable resources to guide your ecclesiastical action and coordination with civil authorities.⁴ Carefully supervise the participation of any individual who may have had past offenses. Recognize that it is very unlikely that a perpetrator will confess his depraved acts. Seek the guidance of the Spirit when you feel that something may be amiss. Enlist the help of ward and stake leaders to avoid potential dangers.
20. I pray that you, as one abused or one who has caused it, will act now to avail yourself of the healing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I testify that your faith and obedience will assure that He will help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

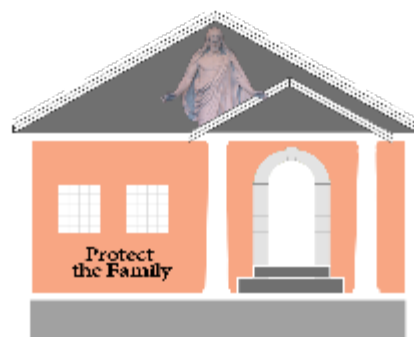
To Heal the Shattering Consequences of Abuse

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What Matters Most is What Lasts Longest

Elder M. Russell Ballard
Ensign, November 2005



1. Several of the Brethren and I recently visited a few of the refugee centers in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas where devastated and displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina were staying as they began to try to put their lives back together. Their stories and situations are tragic and poignant in many ways, but in all that I heard, what touched me the most was the crying out for family: “Where is my mother?” “I can’t find my son.” “I’ve lost a sister.” These were hungry, frightened people who had lost everything and needed food, medical attention, and help of all kinds, but what they wanted and needed most was their families.
2. Crisis or transition of any kind reminds us of what matters most. In the routine of life, we often take our families—our parents and children and siblings—for granted. But in times of danger and need and change, there is no question that what we care about most is our families! It will be even more so when we leave this life and enter into the spirit world. Surely the first people we will seek to find there will be father, mother, spouse, children, and siblings.
3. I believe the mission statement for mortality might be “to build an eternal family.” Here on this earth we strive to become part of extended families with the ability to create and form our own part of those families. That is one of the reasons our Heavenly Father sent us here. Not everyone will find a companion and have a family in mortality, but everyone, regardless of individual circumstances, is a precious member of God’s family.
4. Brothers and sisters, this year marks the 10th anniversary of the proclamation to the world on the family, which was issued by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1995 (see “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Liahona, Oct. 2004, 49; Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102). It was then and is now a clarion call to protect and strengthen families and a stern warning in a world where declining values and misplaced priorities threaten to destroy society by undermining its basic unit.
5. The proclamation is a prophetic document, not only because it was issued by prophets but because it was ahead of its time. It warns against many of the very things that have threatened and undermined families during the last decade and calls for the priority and the emphasis families need if they are to survive in an environment that seems ever more toxic to traditional marriage and to parent-child relationships.
6. The proclamation’s clear and simple language stands in stark contrast to the confused and convoluted notions of a society that cannot even agree on a definition of family, let alone supply the help and support parents and families need. You are familiar with such words from the proclamation as these:
 7. “Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God.”
 8. “Gender is an essential characteristic of individual pre-mortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”
 9. “Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children.”
 10. “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.”
 11. “The disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.”
 12. And the last words of the proclamation express the simple truth that the family is “the fundamental unit of society.”
 13. Today I call upon members of the Church and on committed parents, grandparents, and extended family members everywhere to hold fast to this great proclamation, to make it a banner not unlike General Moroni’s “title of liberty,” and to commit ourselves to live by its precepts. As we are all part of a family, the proclamation applies to everyone.
14. Public opinion surveys indicate that people everywhere in the world generally consider the family as the highest

priority; yet in recent years the broader culture seems to ignore or misdefine the family. Consider some of the changes of the past decade:

15. Many larger national and international institutions that used to support and strengthen families now try to supplant and even sabotage the very families they were created to serve.
16. In the name of “tolerance,” the definition of family has been expanded beyond recognition to the point that “family” can be any individuals of any gender who live together with or without commitment or children or attention to consequence.
17. Rampant materialism and selfishness delude many into thinking that families, and especially children, are a burden and a financial millstone that will hold them back rather than a sacred privilege that will teach them to become more like God.
18. And yet most parents throughout the world continue to know both the importance and the joy that are attached to natural families. Friends of mine who just returned from speaking to families and parents on several continents reported to me that the hopes and concerns of parents are remarkably similar throughout the earth.
19. In India a concerned Hindu mother said, “All I want is to be a bigger influence on my children than the media and the peer group.” And a Buddhist mother in Malaysia said, “I’d like my boys to be able to operate in the world, but I don’t want them to be of the world.” Parents from all different cultures and faiths are saying and feeling the same things we are as parents in the Church.
20. The world needs to know what the proclamation teaches, because the family is the basic unit of society, of the economy, of our culture, and of our government. And as Latter-day Saints know, the family will also be the basic unit in the celestial kingdom.
21. In the Church, our belief in the overriding importance of families is rooted in restored doctrine. We know of the sanctity of families in both directions of our eternal existence. We know that before this life we lived with our Heavenly Father as part of His family, and we know that family relationships can endure beyond death.
22. If we live and act upon this knowledge, we will attract the world to us. Parents who place a high priority on their families will gravitate to the Church because it offers the family structure, values, doctrine, and eternal perspective that they seek and cannot find elsewhere.
23. Our family-centered perspective should make Latter-day Saints strive to be the best parents in the world.

It should give us enormous respect for our children, who truly are our spiritual siblings, and it should cause us to devote whatever time is necessary to strengthen our families. Indeed, nothing is more critically connected to happiness—both our own and that of our children—than how well we love and support one another within the family.

24. President Harold B. Lee spoke of the Church as a crucial “scaffolding” that helps build the individual and the family (see Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 107). The Church is the kingdom of God on earth, but in the kingdom of heaven, families will be both the source of our eternal progress and joy and the order of our Heavenly Father. As we are often reminded, we will be released one day from our Church callings; but if we are worthy, we will never be released from our family relationships.
25. Joseph F. Smith said: “There can be no genuine happiness separate and apart from the home, and every effort made to sanctify and preserve its influence is uplifting to those who toil and sacrifice for its establishment. Men and women often seek to substitute some other life for that of the home; they would make themselves believe that the home means restraint; that the highest liberty is the fullest opportunity to move about at will. There is no happiness without service, and there is no service greater than that which converts the home into a divine institution, and which promotes and preserves family life” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith [1998], 382).
26. Now, one may ask, how do we protect and preserve and strengthen our homes and families in a world pulling so hard in opposite directions? Let me make three simple suggestions:
27. 1. Be consistent in holding daily family prayer and weekly family home evenings. Both of these invite the Lord’s Spirit, which provides the help and power we need as parents and family leaders. The Church curriculum and magazines have many good ideas for family home evening. Also consider holding a family testimony meeting where parents and children can express their beliefs and feelings to each other in a private and personal setting.
28. 2. Teach the gospel and basic values in your home. Establish a love for reading the scriptures together. Too many of our parents are abdicating this responsibility to the Church. While seminary, auxiliaries, and priesthood quorums are important as a supplement to parental gospel instruction, the main responsibility rests in the home. You might want to choose one gospel subject or a family value and then watch for opportunities to teach it. Be wise and do not involve children or yourselves in so many activities out of the home that you are so busy

that the Spirit of the Lord cannot be recognized or felt in giving you the promised guidance for yourself and your family.

29. 3. Create meaningful family bonds that give your children an identity stronger than what they can find with their peer group or at school or anyplace else. This can be done through family traditions for birthdays, for holidays, for dinnertime, and for Sundays. It can also be done through family policies and rules with natural and well-understood consequences. Have a simple family economy where children have specific chores or household duties and receive praise or other rewards commensurate to how well they do. Teach them the importance of avoiding debt and of earning, saving, and wisely spending money. Help them learn responsibility for their own temporal and spiritual self-reliance.
30. In today's world, where Satan's aggression against the family is so prevalent, parents must do all they can to fortify and defend their families. But their efforts may not be enough. Our most basic institution of family desperately needs help and support from the extended family and the public institutions that surround us. Brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandparents and cousins can make a powerful difference in the lives of children. Remember that the expression of love and encouragement from an extended family member will often provide the right influence and help a child at a critical time.
31. The Church itself will continue to be the first and foremost institution—the "scaffolding," as it were—to help build strong families. I can assure you that those who lead the Church have great concern about the well-being of your families, and thus you will see increasing efforts to prioritize and to focus on family needs. But as your leaders, we call upon members of the Church everywhere to put family first and to identify specific ways to strengthen their individual families.
32. Further, we call upon all public institutions to examine themselves and to do less that might harm families and more that will help them.
33. We call upon the media to offer more that promotes traditional family values and is uplifting and supportive of families and less that popularizes immorality and materialism.
34. We call upon government and political leaders to put the needs of children and parents first and to think in terms of family impact in all legislation and policy making.
35. We call upon Internet providers and Web site creators to become more responsible regarding their potential for influence and to adopt the conscious objective of protecting children from violence, pornography, filth, and sleaze.
36. We call upon educational entities to teach universal values and family and parenting skills, supporting parents in their responsibility to raise children to become the leaders of families in generations yet to come.
37. We call upon our own Church members to reach out in love to neighbors and friends of other faiths and include them in the use of the many resources the Church has to help families. Our communities and neighborhoods will be safer and stronger as people of all faiths work together to strengthen families.
38. It is important to remember that all larger units of society depend on the smallest and most fundamental unit, the family. No matter who or what we are, we help ourselves when we help families.
39. Brothers and sisters, as we hold up like a banner the proclamation to the world on the family and as we live and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will fulfill the measure of our creation here on earth. We will find peace and happiness here and in the world to come. We should not need a hurricane or other crisis to remind us of what matters most. The gospel and the Lord's plan of happiness and salvation should remind us. What matters most is what lasts longest, and our families are for eternity. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

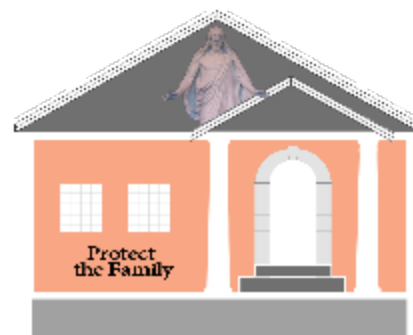
What Matters Most is What Lasts Longest

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2005/10/what-matters-most-is-what-lasts-longest?lang=eng>



The Challenge to Become

Elder Dallin H. Oaks
General Conference, October 2000



1. The Apostle Paul taught that the Lord's teachings and teachers were given that we may all attain "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). This process requires far more than acquiring knowledge. It is not even enough for us to be convinced of the gospel; we must act and think so that we are converted by it. In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to know something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to become something.
2. Many Bible and modern scriptures speak of a final judgment at which all persons will be rewarded according to their deeds or works or the desires of their hearts. But other scriptures enlarge upon this by referring to our being judged by the condition we have achieved.
3. The prophet Nephi describes the Final Judgment in terms of what we have become: "And if their works have been filthiness they must needs be filthy; and if they be filthy it must needs be that they cannot dwell in the kingdom of God" (1 Ne. 15:33; emphasis added). Moroni declares, "He that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still" (Morm. 9:14; emphasis added; see also Rev. 22:11-12; 2 Ne. 9:16; D&C 88:35). The same would be true of "selfish" or "disobedient" or any other personal attribute inconsistent with the requirements of God. Referring to the "state" of the wicked in the Final Judgment, Alma explains that if we are condemned by our words, our works, and our thoughts, "we shall not be found spotless; . . . and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God" (Alma 12:14).
4. From such teachings we conclude that the Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts--what we have done. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts--what we have become. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.
5. A parable illustrates this understanding. A wealthy father knew that if he were to bestow his wealth upon a child who had not yet developed the needed wisdom and stature, the inheritance would probably be wasted. The father said to his child:
 6. "All that I have I desire to give you--not only my wealth, but also my position and standing among men. That which I have I can easily give you, but that which I am you must obtain for yourself. You will qualify for your inheritance by learning what I have learned and by living as I have lived. I will give you the laws and principles by which I have acquired my wisdom and stature. Follow my example, mastering as I have mastered, and you will become as I am, and all that I have will be yours."
 7. This parable parallels the pattern of heaven. The gospel of Jesus Christ promises the incomparable inheritance of eternal life, the fulness of the Father, and reveals the laws and principles by which it can be obtained.
 8. We qualify for eternal life through a process of conversion. As used here, this word of many meanings signifies not just a convincing but a profound change of nature. Jesus used this meaning when he taught His chief Apostle the difference between a testimony and a conversion. Jesus asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matt. 16:13). Next He asked, "But whom say ye that I am?"
 9. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
 10. "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:15-17).
 11. Peter had a testimony. He knew that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, and he declared it. To testify is to know and to declare.
 12. Later on, Jesus taught these same men about conversion, which is far more than testimony. When the disciples asked who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the

midst of them,

13. “And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.
14. “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:2-4; emphasis added).
15. Later, the Savior confirmed the importance of being converted, even for those with a testimony of the truth. In the sublime instructions given at the Last Supper, He told Simon Peter, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32).
16. In order to strengthen his brethren--to nourish and lead the flock of God--this man who had followed Jesus for three years, who had been given the authority of the holy apostleship, who had been a valiant teacher and testifier of the Christian gospel, and whose testimony had caused the Master to declare him blessed still had to be “converted.”
17. Jesus’ challenge shows that the conversion He required for those who would enter the kingdom of heaven (see Matt. 18:3) was far more than just being converted to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel. To testify is to know and to declare. The gospel challenges us to be “converted,” which requires us to do and to become. If any of us relies solely upon our knowledge and testimony of the gospel, we are in the same position as the blessed but still unfinished Apostles whom Jesus challenged to be “converted.” We all know someone who has a strong testimony but does not act upon it so as to be converted. For example, returned missionaries, are you still seeking to be converted, or are you caught up in the ways of the world?
18. The needed conversion by the gospel begins with the introductory experience the scriptures call being “born again” (e.g., Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49; John 3:7; 1 Pet. 1:23). In the waters of baptism and by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, we become the spiritual “sons and daughters” of Jesus Christ, “new creatures” who can “inherit the kingdom of God” (Mosiah 27:25-26).
19. In teaching the Nephites, the Savior referred to what they must become. He challenged them to repent and be baptized and be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, “that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day” (3 Ne. 27:20). He concluded: “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Ne. 27:27).
20. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the plan by which we can become what children of God are supposed to become. This spotless and perfected state will result from a steady succession of covenants, ordinances, and actions, an accumulation of right choices, and from continuing repentance. “This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God” (Alma 34:32).
21. Now is the time for each of us to work toward our personal conversion, toward becoming what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. As we do so, we should remember that our family relationships--even more than our Church callings--are the setting in which the most important part of that development can occur. The conversion we must achieve requires us to be a good husband and father or a good wife and mother. Being a successful Church leader is not enough. Exaltation is an eternal family experience, and it is our mortal family experiences that are best suited to prepare us for it.
22. The Apostle John spoke of what we are challenged to become when he said: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn. 3:2; see also Moro. 7:48).
23. I hope the importance of conversion and becoming will cause our local leaders to reduce their concentration on statistical measures of actions and to focus more on what our brothers and sisters are and what they are striving to become.
24. Our needed conversions are often achieved more readily by suffering and adversity than by comfort and tranquility, as Elder Hales taught us so beautifully this morning. Father Lehi promised his son Jacob that God would “consecrate [his] afflictions for [his] gain” (2 Ne. 2:2). The Prophet Joseph was promised that “thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high” (D&C 121:7-8).
25. Most of us experience some measure of what the scriptures call “the furnace of affliction” (Isa. 48:10; 1 Ne. 20:10). Some are submerged in service to a disadvantaged family member. Others suffer the death of a loved one or the loss or postponement of a righteous goal like marriage or childbearing. Still others struggle with personal impairments or with feelings of rejection, inadequacy, or depression. Through the justice and mercy of a loving Father in Heaven, the refinement and sanctification possible through such experiences can help us achieve what God desires us to become.
26. We are challenged to move through a process of conversion toward that status and condition called eternal life. This is achieved not just by doing what is right, but by

doing it for the right reason--for the pure love of Christ. The Apostle Paul illustrated this in his famous teaching about the importance of charity (see 1 Cor. 13). The reason charity never fails and the reason charity is greater than even the most significant acts of goodness he cited is that charity, "the pure love of Christ" (Moro. 7:47), is not an act but a condition or state of being. Charity is attained through a succession of acts that result in a conversion. Charity is something one becomes. Thus, as Moroni declared, "except men shall have charity they cannot inherit" the place prepared for them in the mansions of the Father (Ether 12:34; emphasis added).

27. All of this helps us understand an important meaning of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, which the Savior gave to explain what the kingdom of heaven is like. As you remember, the owner of the vineyard hired laborers at different times of the day. Some he sent into the vineyard early in the morning, others about the third hour, and others in the sixth and ninth hours. Finally, in the eleventh hour he sent others into the vineyard, promising that he would also pay them "whatsoever is right" (Matt. 20:7).
28. At the end of the day the owner of the vineyard gave the same wage to every worker, even to those who had come in the eleventh hour. When those who had worked the entire day saw this, "they murmured against the goodman of the house" (Matt. 20:11). The owner did not yield but merely pointed out that he had done no one any wrong, since he had paid each man the agreed amount.
29. Like other parables, this one can teach several different and valuable principles. For present purposes its lesson is that the Master's reward in the Final Judgment will not be based on how long we have labored in the vineyard. We do not obtain our heavenly reward by punching a time clock. What is essential is that our labors in the workplace of the Lord have caused us to become something. For some of us, this requires a longer time than for others. What is important in the end is what we have become by our labors. Many who come in the eleventh hour have been refined and prepared by the Lord in ways other than formal employment in the vineyard. These workers are like the prepared dry mix to which it is only necessary to "add water"--the perfecting ordinance of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. With that addition--even in the eleventh hour--these workers are in the same state of development and qualified to receive the same reward as those who have labored long in the vineyard.
30. This parable teaches us that we should never give up hope and loving associations with family members and friends whose fine qualities (see Moro. 7:5-14) evidence their progress toward what a loving Father would have

them become. Similarly, the power of the Atonement and the principle of repentance show that we should never give up on loved ones who now seem to be making many wrong choices.

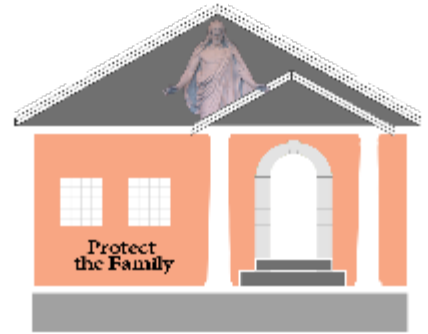
31. Instead of being judgmental about others, we should be concerned about ourselves. We must not give up hope. We must not stop striving. We are children of God, and it is possible for us to become what our Heavenly Father would have us become.
32. How can we measure our progress? The scriptures suggest various ways. I will mention only two.
33. After King Benjamin's great sermon, many of his hearers cried out that the Spirit of the Lord "has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). If we are losing our desire to do evil, we are progressing toward our heavenly goal.
34. The Apostle Paul said that persons who have received the Spirit of God "have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). I understand this to mean that persons who are proceeding toward the needed conversion are beginning to see things as our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, see them. They are hearing His voice instead of the voice of the world, and they are doing things in His way instead of by the ways of the world.
35. I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, whose Church this is. I testify with gratitude of the plan of the Father under which, through the Resurrection and Atonement of our Savior, we have the assurance of immortality and the opportunity to become what is necessary for eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Challenge to Become

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2000/10/the-challenge-to-become?lang=eng&query=Challenge+to+become#watch=video>

Unit 6 Additional Readings

Links



Elder Quentin L. Cook, “Let There Be Light”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2010/10/let-there-be-light?lang=eng>

Elder M. Russell Ballard, “Let Our Voices Be Heard”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2003/10/let-our-voices-be-heard?lang=eng>

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “Religious Freedom”

https://video.byui.edu/media/Dallin+H.+Oaks+%22Religious+Freedom%22/0_v3nsl8on

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland “Isreal, Isreal, God Is Calling

<https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/article/ces-devotionals/2012/01/israel-israel-god-is-calling?lang=eng&query=%22Israel,+Israel+-god+is+calling%22+Jeffrey+Holland>

Elder Dallin H. Oaks “Protect The Children”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2012/10/protect-the-children?lang=eng#watch=video>

Elder Dallin H. Oaks “Truth and Tolerance”

<https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/article/ces-devotionals/2011/01/truth-and-tolerance?lang=eng&query=Truth+and+tolerance+oaks>

Elder Robert D. Hales “Preserving Agency, Protecting Religious Freedom”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/04/preserving-agency-protecting-religious-freedom?lang=eng>