

ETERNAL MARRIAGE

STUDENT MANUAL

Religion 234 and 235



The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

MARRIAGE

C E R T I F I C A T E

This certifies that _____

and _____

were joined in the holy bonds of matrimony, for the duration of their lives, according to the ordinance of God and the laws of the land, on the _____ day

in the _____ Temple of The

of Latter-day Saints at _____



The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Member Number _____



ETERNAL MARRIAGE STUDENT MANUAL

Preparing for an Eternal Marriage, Religion 234

Building an Eternal Marriage, Religion 235

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PREFACE

*I teach them correct principles, and
they govern themselves.*

—The Prophet Joseph Smith

USING THE STUDENT MANUAL

This manual is a collection of student readings for two institute of religion courses:

- Religion 234, “Preparing for an Eternal Marriage”
- Religion 235, “Building an Eternal Marriage”

PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL

The student readings are a collection of teachings about dating and marriage, as taught by past and present prophets, leaders of the Church, and the scriptures. This manual gives students the opportunity to read the assigned talks before each class period so they can prepare to better participate in and contribute to classroom discussions and activities.

Through understanding and living by the teachings of prophets about dating, marriage, and family life, students will be better prepared to govern their lives with correct principles and follow the Lord’s great plan of happiness. The guiding principle for selecting teachings for this manual came from “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” The proclamation states: “Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

ORGANIZATION OF THE MANUAL

The student manual is organized topically in alphabetical order, similar to an encyclopedia. It contains an index that cross-references articles that cover more than one topic.

Several types of quotations are listed under the topical headings. The first is “Selected Teachings,” portions of talks or quotations that relate to that topic. These quotations are often presented under subheadings that relate to the main topic.

The second type of quotation is a complete talk about the chosen topic. Most topics have selected teachings and one or more complete talks. This type of organization emphasizes to the reader the power of the law of witnesses. Elder Henry B. Eyring, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught the importance of the law of witnesses:

“In our own time, we have been warned with counsel on 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 Corinthians 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.

“Looking for the path to safety in the counsel of prophets makes sense to those with strong faith” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 32; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 25).

LIVING BY GOSPEL PRINCIPLES

Governing Our Lives with Principles

President Ezra Taft Benson counseled: “One of the most important things you can do . . . is to immerse yourselves in the scriptures. Search them diligently. Feast upon the words of Christ. Learn the doctrine. Master the principles that are found therein” (“The Power of the Word,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 81). Knowing and living by correct principles is essential to a happy life.

Elder Richard G. Scott, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, stated: “As you seek spiritual knowledge, search for principles. Carefully separate them from the detail used to explain them. Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application to a wide variety of circumstances. A true principle makes decisions clear even under the

most confusing and compelling circumstances. It is worth great effort to organize the truth we gather to simple statements of principle” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 117; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 86).

When the Prophet Joseph Smith was asked how he governed his people, he replied, “I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves” (in John Taylor, “The Organization of the Church,” *Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1851, 339).

The first step in living by correct principles is knowing what a principle is and how to use it. Gospel principles include doctrine, commandments, ordinances, and precepts. In this manual, however, the term *principle* refers to a gospel truth that gives us counsel and guidance for conduct.

General principles extracted from counsel that applies to everyday life are useful because they can be applied to a wide variety of situations not specifically mentioned in the scriptures. Understanding principles helps us obey the scriptural counsel, “For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward” (D&C 58:26).

The scriptures cannot tell us everything to do or not to do in every situation (see Mosiah 4:29–30). We are required to ponder the principles behind the scriptures and “liken” them to our individual situations, as Nephi did: “For I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23).

Principles Should Govern Our Conduct

Elder Boyd K. Packer explained, “From doctrine, we learn principles of conduct, how to respond to problems of everyday living, even to failures, for they too are provided for in the doctrines” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 26; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 20).

Unlike the theories of men that are continually changing, gospel principles of conduct are unchanging and eternally true. You will never go wrong basing your conduct on true principles.

Principles of conduct help us keep sacred covenants and give us access to the Lord’s power and blessings. Doctrine and Covenants 84:20–21 states that the power of God is given to us through the ordinances of the gospel. During such ordinances as baptism,

endowment, and sealing, we make covenants with the Lord. When we keep these covenants it is possible for the full power of the Atonement to have its effect upon us.

We Must Do Our Part

Principles can often be divided into two main parts: *if* and *then*. The *if* part is a statement of general counsel from the Lord. The *then* part is the promised results of obeying or disobeying that counsel. *If* we keep the commandments, *then* we shall prosper in the land (see 1 Nephi 4:14).

The Lord keeps His promises: “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10). We should remember that God determines the *then* part according to His wisdom and not according to our expectations.

God called the Word of Wisdom “a principle with promise” (D&C 89:3). The *if* part refers to the counsel to keep our bodies physically and spiritually pure. The *then* part promises health, wisdom, strength, and other blessings.

Principles are not always taught or written in the *if-then* format. For example, General Authorities do not always say “*if* you have faith, *then* you will have the Lord’s power in your life.” Instead, they may tell stories that illustrate faith or motivate us to be faithful. Or they may use maxims. *Maxims* are short sayings that relate a familiar truth, a useful thought, or a rule of conduct. Some examples are “a stitch in time saves nine” and “sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven.”

Scriptural principles are often expressed in maxims; for example, “Wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10) and “Repent or suffer” (D&C 19:4).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “Orthodoxy ensures balance between the gospel’s powerful and correct principles. . . . But the gospel’s principles do require synchronization. When pulled apart from each other or isolated, men’s interpretations and implementations of these doctrines may be wild” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 97; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 78). Because principles are presented in many different ways, extracting them may require much labor and meditation. All principles are conditioned on our faithfulness and are eternal, consistent, and true.

Principles Are Universal

Correct principles are universal—they are true in all situations in all cultures at all times. All the gospel principles that were true for Adam will still be true in the Millennium.

Principles are general and abstract—they do not refer to specifics. Principles relate to the “big picture.” For example, the many do’s and don’ts in the Word of Wisdom are not the principle. The principle is *if we keep our bodies pure, then we will be healthy and receptive to the Spirit.*

Understanding the nature of principles can help us identify them to help solve our daily trials. Without principles we are left with only our experience and the advice of others to help us through life. Understanding eternal principles opens our minds to many possible solutions to our challenges.

Principles of Conduct and Doctrine

Gospel principles come from gospel doctrine. “The word ‘doctrine’ . . . means ‘a teaching.’ . . . Most often in the Church it refers to the teachings . . . of Jesus Christ, understood in a rather specific sense. Scripturally, . . . the term ‘doctrine’ means the core message of Jesus Christ—that Jesus is the Messiah, the Redeemer. All other teachings are subordinate to those by which all people ‘know how to come unto Christ and be saved’—that is, to the ‘points of doctrine,’ such as faith, repentance, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . .

“ . . . The ‘doctrine’ of Jesus Christ is the foundation upon which all other teachings, principles, and practices rest” (in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:393–94).

Living by Principles

Gospel principles of conduct are discovered in the doctrine outlined by the scriptures and by living prophets. Principles teach us how to apply doctrine in our daily decisions. Principles don’t tell us specifically what to do; they just tell us what can happen if we do certain things. Principles help us keep the commandments by showing us how to apply them to a wide variety of situations.

Living by principles means using them to make decisions in the situations we encounter. This is different from living by specific rules that dictate every detail of our actions, as Israel did under the law of Moses (see D&C 58:26). Principles help us use our agency to bring to pass righteousness, without being told everything we must do. Bishop Glenn L. Pace warned of becoming too rigid when applying the programs of the Church: “Programs blindly followed bring us to a discipline of doing good, but principles properly understood and practiced bring us to a disposition to do good” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 29; or Ensign, May, 1986, 24). C. S. Lewis wrote of the danger of being dependent on specific rules: “We might think that God wanted simply obedience to a set of rules: whereas He really wants people of a particular sort” (*Mere Christianity*, 77).

Summary

A principle is an enduring truth, a law, a rule you can adopt to guide you in making decisions. Principles help us apply the doctrines of the gospel to everyday living and give us a light to illuminate the path before us in this ever-darkening world.

ABORTION

Abortion is an evil, stark and real and repugnant, which is sweeping over the earth.

—President Gordon B. Hinckley

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Abortion is a growing evil that we speak against. Certainly the terrible sin of premeditated abortion would be hard to justify. It is almost inconceivable that an abortion would ever be committed to save face or embarrassment, to save trouble or inconvenience, or to escape responsibility. How could one submit to such an operation or be party in any way by financing or encouraging? If special rare cases could be justified, certainly they would be rare indeed. We place it high on the list of sins against which we strongly warn the people.

“‘Abortion must be considered one of the most revolting and sinful practices in this day, when we are witnessing the frightful evidence of permissiveness leading to sexual immorality.’ (*Priesthood Bulletin*, February 1973, p. 1.)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1974, 7).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Question 3: What is your position on abortion?”

“According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were more than 1,200,000 abortions performed in 1995 in the United States alone. What has happened to our regard for human life? How can women, and men, deny the great and precious gift of life, which is divine in its origin and nature?

“How wonderful a thing is a child. How beautiful is a newborn babe. There is no greater miracle than the creation of human life.

“Abortion is an ugly thing, a debasing thing, a thing which inevitably brings remorse and sorrow and regret.

“While we denounce it, we make allowance in such circumstances as when pregnancy is the result of

incest or rape, when the life or health of the mother is judged by competent medical authority to be in serious jeopardy, or when the fetus is known by competent medical authority to have serious defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth.

“But such instances are rare, and there is only a negligible probability of their occurring. In these circumstances, those who face the question are asked to consult with their local ecclesiastical leaders and to pray in great earnestness, receiving a confirmation through prayer before proceeding.

“There is a far better way.

“If there is no prospect of marriage to the man involved, leaving the mother alone, there remains the very welcome option of placing the child for adoption by parents who will love it and care for it. There are many such couples in good homes who long for a child and cannot have one” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 91–92; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 71).

“You who are wives and mothers are the anchors of the family. You bear the children. What an enormous and sacred responsibility that is. I am told that between 1972 and 1990 there were 27 million abortions in the United States alone. What is happening to our appreciation of the sanctity of human life? Abortion is an evil, stark and real and repugnant, which is sweeping over the earth. I plead with the women of this Church to shun it, to stand above it, to stay away from those compromising situations which make it appear desirable. There may be some few circumstances under which it can occur, but they are extremely limited and for the most part improbable. You are the mothers of the sons and daughters of God, whose lives are sacred. Safeguarding them is a divinely given responsibility which cannot be lightly brushed aside” (“Walking in the Light of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 99).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“Whatever the laws of man may come to tolerate, the misuse of the power of procreation, the destroying of innocent life through abortion, and the abuse of little children are transgressions of enormous proportion. For cradled therein rests the destiny of innocent, helpless children” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 21; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 18).

“Nowhere is the right of choice defended with more vigor than with abortion. Having chosen to act, and a conception having occurred, it cannot then

be unchosen. But there are still choices; always a best one.

“Sometimes the covenant of marriage has been broken; more often none was made. In or out of marriage, abortion is not an individual choice. At a minimum, three lives are involved.

“The scriptures tell us, ‘Thou shalt not . . . kill, nor do *anything* like unto it’ (D&C 59:6; italics added).

“Except where the wicked crime of incest or rape was involved, or where competent medical authorities certify that the life of the mother is in jeopardy, or that a severely defective fetus cannot survive birth, abortion is clearly a ‘thou shalt not.’ Even in these very exceptional cases, much sober prayer is required to make the right choice.

“We face such sobering choices because we are the children of God” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 108; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 85).

“I know of no sins connected with the moral standard for which we cannot be forgiven. I do not exempt abortion” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 68).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Abortion, which has increased enormously, causes one to ask, ‘Have we strayed so far from God’s second great commandment—love thy neighbor—that a baby in a womb no longer qualifies to be loved—at least as a mother’s neighbor?’ Even so, violence to an unborn child does not justify other violence!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 94–95; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 76).

Elder Russell M. Nelson

“Regrettable as is the loss of loved ones from war, these figures are dwarfed by the toll of a new war that *annually* claims more casualties than the total number of fatalities from all the wars of this nation.

“It is a war on the defenseless—and the voiceless. It is a war on the unborn.

“This war, labeled ‘abortion,’ is of epidemic proportion and is waged globally. Over 55 million abortions were reported worldwide in the year 1974 alone. Sixty-four percent of the world’s population now live in countries that legally sanction this practice. In the United States of America, over 1.5 million abortions are performed annually. About 25 to 30 percent of all pregnancies now end in abortion. In some metropolitan areas, there are more abortions performed than live births. Comparable data also come from other nations” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 13; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 11).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“The ultimate act of destruction is to take a life. That is why abortion is such a serious sin. Our attitude toward abortion is not based on revealed knowledge of when mortal life begins for legal purposes. It is fixed by our knowledge that according to an eternal plan, all of the spirit children of God must come to this earth for a glorious purpose, and that individual identity began long before conception and will continue for all the eternities to come. We rely on the prophets of God, who have told us that while there may be ‘rare’ exceptions, ‘the practice of elective abortion is fundamentally contrary to the Lord’s injunction, “Thou shalt not . . . kill, nor do anything like unto it” (Doctrine and Covenants 59:6)’ (1991 *Supplement to the 1989 General Handbook of Instructions*, p. 1).

“Our knowledge of the great plan of happiness also gives us a unique perspective on the subject of marriage and the bearing of children. In this we also run counter to some strong current forces in custom, law, and economics” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 99–100; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 74).

ABUSE

Abuse is the physical, emotional, sexual, or spiritual mistreatment of others.

—*Responding to Abuse*

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Abuse Defined

“Abuse is the physical, emotional, sexual, or spiritual mistreatment of others. It may not only harm the body, but it can deeply affect the mind and spirit, destroying faith and causing confusion, doubt, mistrust, guilt, and fear” (*Responding to Abuse: Helps for Ecclesiastical Leaders*, 1).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“I have in my office a file of letters received from women who cry out over the treatment they receive from their husbands in their homes. They tell of the activity of some of these men in Church responsibilities. They even speak of men holding temple recommends. And they speak of abuse, both subtle and open. They tell of husbands who lose their tempers and shout at their wives and children. They tell of men who demand offensive intimate relations. They tell of men who demean them and put them down and of fathers who seem to know little of the meaning of patience and forbearance with reference to their children” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 68; or *Ensign*, May 1990, 52).

Elder James E. Faust

“Any form of physical or mental abuse to any woman is not worthy of any priesthood holder. . . . This, of course, means verbal as well as physical abuse” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 44; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 37).

Policy toward Abuse

President Ezra Taft Benson

“A priesthood holder who would curse his wife, abuse her with words or actions, or do the same to one of his own children is guilty of grievous sin.

“‘Can ye be angry, and not sin?’ asked the Apostle Paul (Joseph Smith Translation, Ephesians 4:26)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 61–62; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 42).

“If a man does not control his temper, it is a sad admission that he is not in control of his thoughts. He then becomes a victim of his own passions and emotions, which lead him to actions that are totally unfit for civilized behavior, let alone behavior for a priesthood holder” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 62; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 47).

“What does it mean to love someone with all our hearts? It means with all our emotional feelings and our devotion. Surely when you love your wife with all your heart, you cannot demean her, criticize her, find fault with her, nor abuse her by words, sullen behavior, or actions” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 63; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 43).

President Howard W. Hunter

“Any man who abuses or demeans his wife physically or spiritually is guilty of grievous sin and in need of sincere and serious repentance” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 64; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 51).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Question 6: What about spouse and child abuse? . . .

“We are doing all we know how to do to stamp out this terrible evil. When there is recognition of equality between the husband and the wife, when there is acknowledgment that each child born into the world is a child of God, then there will follow a greater sense of responsibility to nurture, to help, to love with an enduring love those for whom we are responsible.

“No man who abuses his wife or children is worthy to hold the priesthood of God. No man who abuses his wife or children is worthy to be a member in good standing in this Church. The abuse of one’s spouse and children is a most serious offense before God, and any who indulge in it may expect to be disciplined by the Church” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 92–93; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 72).

Causes of Abuse

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Another face of pride is contention. Arguments, fights, unrighteous dominion, generation gaps, divorces, spouse abuse, riots, and disturbances all

fall into this category of pride” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 5; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 6).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“I am glad that there is a growing public awareness of this insidious evil. The exploitation of children, or the abuse of one’s spouse, for the satisfaction of sadistic desires is sin of the darkest hue” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 51).

Avoiding Abuse

President Ezra Taft Benson

“To our temperance we are to add *patience*. A priesthood holder is to be *patient*. Patience is another form of self-control. It is the ability to postpone gratification and to bridle one’s passions. In his relationships with loved ones, a patient man does not engage in impetuous behavior that he will later regret. Patience is composure under stress. A patient man is understanding of others’ faults” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 62; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 47).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“There must be self-discipline that constrains against abuse of wife and children and self. There must be the Spirit of God, invited and worked for, nurtured and strengthened. There must be recognition of the fact that each is a child of God—father, mother, son, and daughter, each with a divine birthright—and also recognition of the fact that when we offend one of these, we offend our Father in Heaven” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 97; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 74).

“Question: ‘What are you doing to reduce [child abuse]?’

“Response: ‘We are doing everything we know how to reduce it. We are teaching our people. We are talking about it. We have set up a course of instruction for our bishops all across the nation. All last year we carried on an educational program. We have set up a help-line for them where they can get professional counseling and help with these problems. We have issued a journal dealing with child abuse, spouse abuse, abuse of the elderly, the whole problem of abuse. We are concerned about it. I am deeply concerned about the victims. My heart reaches out to them. I want to do everything we can to ease the pain, to preclude the happening of this evil and wicked thing. . . . I know of no other organization in this world that has taken more exhaustive measures,

tried harder, done more to tackle this problem, to work with it, to do something to make a change. We recognize the terrible nature of it, and we want to help our people, reach out to them, assist them” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 51).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Familial patterns of abuse and unrighteous parental dominion obviously affect us profoundly. But these need not enslave future generations. Deprivation does not mean automatic and perpetual ruination. Emancipation is possible. God can heal us, if we will submit to him. This is not to diminish the degree of difficulty encountered in bringing about desired change, but in that very difficulty lies the need for faith and patience” (*Not My Will, But Thine*, 62–63).

Elder H. Burke Peterson

“*The Man of Power* is one who presides—

“*By persuasion*. He uses no demeaning words or behavior, does not manipulate others, appeals to the best in everyone, and respects the dignity and agency of all humankind—men, women, boys, and girls.

“*By long-suffering*. He waits when necessary and listens to the humblest or youngest person. He is tolerant of the ideas of others and avoids quick judgments and anger.

“*By gentleness*. He uses a smile more often than a frown. He is not gruff or loud or frightening; he does not discipline in anger.

“*By meekness*. He is not puffed up, does not dominate conversations, and is willing to conform his will to the will of God.

“*By love unfeigned*. He does not pretend. He is sincere, giving honest love without reservation even when others are unlovable.

“*By kindness*. He practices courtesy and thoughtfulness in little things as well as in the more obvious things.

“*By pure knowledge*. He avoids half-truths and seeks to be empathetic.

“*Without hypocrisy*. He practices the principles he teaches. He knows he is not always right and is willing to admit his mistakes and say ‘I’m sorry.’

“*Without guile*. He is not sly or crafty in his dealings with others, but is honest and authentic when describing his feelings. . . .

“Each husband, each father, should ask some questions of himself to see if he may be on the borderline of unrighteous dominion:

- “1. Do I criticize family members more than I compliment them?
- “2. Do I insist that family members obey me because I am the father or husband and hold the priesthood?
- “3. Do I seek happiness more at work or somewhere other than in my home?
- “4. Do my children seem reluctant to talk to me about some of their feelings and concerns?
- “5. Do I attempt to guarantee my place of authority by physical discipline or punishment?
- “6. Do I find myself setting and enforcing numerous rules to control family members?
- “7. Do family members appear to be fearful of me?
- “8. Do I feel threatened by the notion of sharing with other family members the power and responsibility for decision making in the family?
- “9. Is my wife highly dependent on me and unable to make decisions for herself?
- “10. Does my wife complain that she has insufficient funds to manage the household because I control all the money?
- “11. Do I insist on being the main source of inspiration for each individual family member rather than teaching each child to listen to the Spirit?
- “12. Do I often feel angry and critical toward family members?

“If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then we may need to evaluate our relationship with our family members. For one who holds the priesthood, the best test as to whether he is trying to control the lives of family members can be found by examining his relationship with the Lord. If a man feels a reduction or withdrawal of the Holy Ghost (manifested by contention, disunity, or rebellion), he may know that he is exercising unrighteous dominion” (“Unrighteous Dominion,” *Ensign*, July 1989, 10–11).

Sister Aileen H. Clyde

“If charity is not always quick to our understanding, it may occasionally be quick to our misunderstanding. It is not charity or kindness to endure any type of abuse or unrighteousness that may be inflicted on us by others. God’s commandment that as we love

him we must respect ourselves suggests we must not accept disrespect from others. It is not charity to let another repeatedly deny our divine nature and agency. It is not charity to bow down in despair and helplessness. That kind of suffering should be ended, and that is very difficult to do alone. There are priesthood leaders and other loving servants who will give aid and strength when they *know* of the need. We must be willing to let others help us” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 107; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 77).

HEALING THE TRAGIC SCARS OF ABUSE



Elder Richard G. Scott

*Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

*In Conference Report, Apr.
1992, 43–46; or Ensign,
May 1992, 31–33*

The Tragic Scars of Abuse

I speak from the depths of my heart to each one of you who have been scarred by the ugly sin of abuse, whether you are a member or nonmember of the Church. I would prefer a private setting to discuss this sensitive subject and ask that the Holy Spirit help us both that you may receive the relief of the Lord from the cruelty that has scarred your life.

Unless healed by the Lord, mental, physical, or sexual abuse can cause you serious, enduring consequences. As a victim you have experienced some of them. They include fear, depression, guilt, self-hatred, destruction of self-esteem, and alienation from normal human relationships. When aggravated by continued abuse, powerful emotions of rebellion, anger, and hatred are generated. These feelings often are focused against oneself, others, life itself, and even Heavenly Father. Frustrated efforts to fight back can degenerate into drug abuse, immorality, abandonment of home, and, tragically in extreme cases, suicide. Unless corrected, these feelings lead to despondent lives, discordant marriages, and even the transition from victim to abuser. One awful result is a deepening lack of trust in others, which becomes a barrier to healing.

Scars Need Not Be Permanent

To be helped, you must understand some things about eternal law. Your abuse results from another's unrighteous attack on your freedom. Since all of Father in Heaven's children enjoy agency, there can be some who choose willfully to violate the commandments and harm you. Such acts temporarily restrict your freedom. In justice, and to compensate, the Lord has provided a way for you to overcome the destructive results of others' acts against your will. That relief comes by applying eternal truths with priesthood assistance.

Know that the wicked choice of others cannot completely destroy your agency unless you permit it. Their acts may cause pain, anguish, even physical harm, but they cannot destroy your eternal possibilities in this brief but crucial life on earth. You must understand that *you are free to determine to overcome the harmful results of abuse*. Your attitude can control the change for good in your life. It allows you to have the help the Lord intends you to receive. No one can take away your ultimate opportunities when you understand and live eternal law. The laws of your Heavenly Father and the atonement of the Lord have made it possible that you will not be robbed of the opportunities which come to the children of God.

You may feel threatened by one who is in a position of power or control over you. You may feel trapped and see no escape. Please believe that *your Heavenly Father does not want you to be held captive by unrighteous influence, by threats of reprisal, or by fear of repercussion to the family member who abuses you*. Trust that the Lord will lead you to a solution. Ask in faith, nothing doubting (see James 1:6; Enos 1:15; Moroni 7:26; D&C 8:10; 18:18).

I solemnly testify that when another's acts of violence, perversion, or incest hurt you terribly, against your will, you are not responsible and you must not feel guilty. You may be left scarred by abuse, but those scars need not be permanent. In the eternal plan, in the Lord's timetable, those injuries can be made right as you do your part. Here is what you can do now.

Seek Help

If you are now or have in the past been abused, seek help now. Perhaps you distrust others and feel

that there is no reliable help anywhere. Begin with your Eternal Father and his beloved Son, your Savior. Strive to comprehend their commandments and follow them. They will lead you to others who will strengthen and encourage you. There is available to you a priesthood leader, normally a bishop, at times a member of the stake presidency. He can build a bridge to greater understanding and healing. Joseph Smith taught, "A man can do nothing for himself unless God direct him in the right way; and the Priesthood is for that purpose" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 364).

Talk to your bishop in confidence. His calling allows him to act as an instrument of the Lord in your behalf. He can provide a doctrinal foundation to guide you to recovery. An understanding and application of eternal law will provide the healing you require. He has the right to be inspired of the Lord in your behalf. He can use the priesthood to bless you.

Your bishop can help you identify trustworthy friends to support you. He will help you regain self-confidence and self-esteem to begin the process of renewal. When abuse is extreme, he can help you identify appropriate protection and professional treatment consistent with the teachings of the Savior.

Principles of Healing

These are some of the principles of healing you will come to understand more fully:

Recognize that you are a beloved child of your Heavenly Father. He loves you perfectly and can help you as no earthly parent, spouse, or devoted friend can. His Son gave his life so that by faith in him and obedience to his teachings you can be made whole. He is the consummate healer.

Gain trust in the love and compassion of your elder brother, Jesus Christ, by pondering the scriptures. As with the Nephites, he tells *you*: "I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy. . . . I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you" (3 Nephi 17:7-8).

Healing best begins with your sincere prayer asking your Father in Heaven for help. That use of your agency allows divine intervention. When you permit it, the love of the Savior will soften your heart and break the cycle of abuse that can transform a victim into an aggressor. Adversity, even when caused

You may be left scarred by abuse, but those scars need not be permanent.

willfully by others' unrestrained appetite, can be a source of growth when viewed from the perspective of eternal principle (see D&C 122:7).

The victim must do all in his or her power to stop the abuse. Most often the victim is innocent because of being disabled by fear or the power or authority of the offender. At some point in time, however, the Lord may prompt a victim to recognize a degree of responsibility for abuse. Your priesthood leader will help assess your responsibility so that, if needed, it can be addressed. Otherwise the seeds of guilt will remain and sprout into bitter fruit. Yet no matter what degree of responsibility, from absolutely none to increasing consent, the healing power of the atonement of Jesus Christ can provide a complete cure (see D&C 138:1–4). Forgiveness can be obtained for all involved in abuse (see Articles of Faith 1:3). Then comes a restoration of self-respect, self-worth, and a renewal of life.

As a victim, do not waste effort in revenge or retribution against your aggressor. Focus on your responsibility to do what is in your power to correct. Leave the handling of the offender to civil and Church authorities. Whatever they do, eventually the guilty will face the Perfect Judge. Ultimately the unrepentant abuser will be punished by a just God. The purveyors of filth and harmful substances who knowingly incite others to acts of violence and deprecation and those who promote a climate of permissiveness and corruption will be sentenced. Predators who victimize the innocent and justify their own corrupted life by enticing others to adopt their depraved ways will be held accountable. Of such the Master warned,

“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

Understand that healing can take considerable time. Recovery generally comes in steps. It is accelerated when gratitude is expressed to the Lord for every degree of improvement noted.

Forgiveness Helps Heal

During prolonged recovery from massive surgery, a patient anticipates complete healing in patience, trusting in others' care. He does not always understand the importance of the treatment prescribed, but his obedience speeds recovery. So it is with you struggling to heal the scars of abuse.

Forgiveness, for example, can be hard to understand, even more difficult to give. *Begin by withholding judgment.* You don't know what abusers may have suffered as victims when innocent. The way to repentance must be kept open for them. Leave the handling of aggressors to others. As you experience an easing of your own pain, full forgiveness will come more easily.

You cannot erase what has been done, but you can forgive (see D&C 64:10). Forgiveness heals terrible, tragic wounds, for it allows the love of God to purge your heart and mind of the poison of hate. It cleanses your consciousness of the desire for revenge. It makes place for the purifying, healing, restoring love of the Lord.

The Master counseled, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them *who despitefully use you and persecute you*” (3 Nephi 12:44; italics added).

Bitterness and hatred are harmful. They produce much that is destructive. They postpone the relief and healing you yearn for. Through rationalization and self-pity, they can transform a victim into an abuser. Let God be the judge—you cannot do it as well as he can.

To be counseled to just forget abuse is not helpful. You need to understand the principles which will bring healing. I repeat, most often that comes through an understanding priesthood leader who has inspiration and the power of the priesthood to bless you.

Cautions in Repairing Damage

I caution you not to participate in two improper therapeutic practices that may cause you more harm than good. They are (1) excessive probing into every minute detail of your past experiences, particularly when this involves penetrating dialogue in group discussion; and (2) blaming the abuser for every difficulty in your life.

While some discovery is vital to the healing process, the almost morbid probing into details of past acts, long buried and mercifully forgotten, can be shattering. There is no need to pick at healing wounds to open them and cause them to fester. The Lord and his teachings can help you without destroying self-respect.

There is another danger. Detailed leading questions that probe your past may unwittingly trigger thoughts that are more imagination or fantasy than reality.

They could lead to condemnation of another for acts that were not committed. I know of cases, likely few in number, where such therapy has caused great injustice to the innocent from unwittingly stimulated accusations that were later proven false. Memory, particularly adult memory of childhood experiences, is fallible. Remember, false accusation is also a sin.

Stated more simply, if someone intentionally poured a bucket of filth on your carpet, would you invite the neighbors to determine each ingredient that contributed to the ugly stain? Of course not. With the help of an expert, you would privately restore its cleanliness.

Likewise the repair of damage inflicted by abuse should be done privately, confidentially, with a trusted priesthood leader and, where needed, the qualified professional he recommends. There must be sufficient discussion of the general nature of abuse to allow you to be given appropriate counsel and to prevent the aggressor from committing more violence. Then, with the help of the Lord, you can bury the past.

I humbly testify that what I have told you is true. It is based upon eternal principles I have seen the

Lord use to give a fulness of life to those scarred by wicked abuse.

The Savior's Healing Power

If you feel there is only a thin thread of hope, believe me, it is not a thread. It can be the unbreakable connecting link to the Lord which puts a life preserver around you. He will heal you as you cease to fear and place your trust in him by striving to live his teachings.

Please, don't suffer more. Ask now for the Lord to help you (see Mormon 9:27; Moroni 7:26, 33). Decide now to talk to your bishop. Don't view all that you experience in life through lenses darkened by the scars of abuse. There is so much in life that is beautiful. Open the windows of your heart and let the love of the Savior in. And should ugly thoughts of past abuse come back, remember his love and his healing power. Your depression will be converted to peace and assurance. You will close an ugly chapter and open volumes of happiness.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

ADJUSTMENTS IN MARRIAGE

The hour has come for understanding hearts, for self-appraisal, and for good common sense, reasoning, and planning.

—President Spencer W. Kimball

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Two people coming from different backgrounds learn soon after the ceremony is performed that stark reality must be faced. There is no longer a life of fantasy or of make-believe; we must come out of the clouds and put our feet firmly on the earth. Responsibility must be assumed and new duties must be accepted. Some personal freedoms must be relinquished, and many adjustments, unselfish adjustments, must be made.

“One comes to realize very soon after marriage that the spouse has weaknesses not previously revealed or discovered. The virtues which were constantly magnified during courtship now grow relatively smaller, and the weaknesses which seemed so small and insignificant during courtship now grow to sizable proportions. The hour has come for understanding hearts, for self-appraisal, and for good common sense, reasoning, and planning. The habits of years now show themselves; the spouse may be stingy or prodigal, lazy or industrious, devout or irreligious; he may be kind and cooperative or petulant and cross, demanding or giving, egotistical or self-effacing. The in-law problem comes closer into focus, and the relationships of the spouse to them is again magnified” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 3).

Elder Harold B. Lee

If young people “would resolve from the moment of their marriage, that from that time forth they would resolve and do everything in their power to

please each other in things that are right, even to the sacrifice of their own pleasures, their own appetites, their own desires, the problem of adjustment in married life would take care of itself, and their home would indeed be a happy home. Great love is built on great sacrifice, and that home where the principle of sacrifice for the welfare of each other is daily expressed is that home where there abides a great love” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1947, 49).

Adjusting to In-Laws

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Couples do well to immediately find their own home, separate and apart from that of the in-laws on either side. The home may be very modest and unpretentious, but still it is an independent domicile. Your married life should become independent of her folks and his folks. You love them more than ever; you cherish their counsel; you appreciate their association; but you live your own lives, being governed by your decisions, by your own prayerful considerations after you have received the counsel from those who should give it. To cleave does not mean merely to occupy the same home; it means to adhere closely, to stick together:

“Wherefore, it is lawful that . . . they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation;

“And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made.’ (D&C 49:16–17.)” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 5).

Financial Adjustments

President Joseph F. Smith

“We are engaged in a temporal as well as in a spiritual labor. You must continue to bear in mind that the temporal and the spiritual are blended. They are not separate. One cannot be carried on without the other, so long as we are here in mortality” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1900, 46).

Adjusting to an Intimate Relationship

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, 739).

Related Scriptures

Marriage requires adjustment, as do all relationships. Skills and attitudes that can aid adjustment include a loving relationship, communication, common goals, sacrifice, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and confidentiality.

Areas of Concern	Reasons Adjustment May Be Needed	Scriptural Counsel
Finances	Improper management, selfishness, debt, inflation, laziness, love of money, greed, envy, failure to communicate about financial goals	Matthew 16:26 D&C 75:28–29 D&C 104:78
Reality and new responsibilities	Physical separation due to school, work, and church Psychological separation due to the return to reality Demands on time	Ephesians 5:25 D&C 42:22
Sexual adjustment, or intimacy	New experience, ignorance, selfishness, lust, lack of self-control, perversions, pregnancy	1 Corinthians 7:3–5 Hebrews 13:4
Extended family	Overdependence, being too close to parents, competition for time, different traditions and lifestyles, demands of grandparents	Mark 10:6–9 3 Nephi 13:24
Children	Not wanting or postponing children, neglecting children, demands of children, adjustment to parenthood	Psalms 127: 3–5 Isaiah 54:13 D&C 68:25–28 Moses 2:27–28

ATONEMENT AND ETERNAL MARRIAGE

*The search for peace
is one of the ultimate quests
of the human soul.*

—Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

“THE PEACEABLE THINGS OF THE KINGDOM”



Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

*Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

*In Conference Report, Oct.
1996, 112–16; or Ensign,
Nov. 1996, 82–84*

Jesus Gives Peace, Strength, and Hope

Peace and good tidings; good tidings and peace. These are among the ultimate blessings that the gospel of Jesus Christ brings a troubled world and the troubled people who live in it—solutions to personal struggles and human sinfulness, a source of strength for days of weariness and hours of genuine despair. This entire general conference and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints which convenes it declare that it is the Only Begotten Son of God Himself who gives us this help and this hope. Such assurance is as “firm as the mountains around us.”³ As the Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi made clear in a slight variation of Isaiah’s exclamation:

“O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people; yea, him who has granted salvation unto his people.”⁴

Ultimately it is Christ who is beautiful upon the mountain. And it is His merciful promise of “peace in this world,” His good tidings of “eternal life in the world to come”⁵ that make us fall at His feet

and call His name blessed and give thanks for the restoration of His true and living Church.

Seeking Peace That Only God Can Bring

The search for peace is one of the ultimate quests of the human soul. We all have highs and lows, but such times come and they usually always go. Kind neighbors assist. Beautiful sunshine brings encouragement. A good night’s sleep usually works wonders. But there are times in all of our lives when deep sorrow or suffering or fear or loneliness makes us cry out for the peace which only God Himself can bring. These are times of piercing spiritual hunger when even the dearest friends cannot fully come to our aid.

Perhaps you know people in the broad congregation of this conference, or in your local ward or stake, or in your own home—courageous people who are carrying heavy burdens and feeling private pain, who are walking through the dark valleys of this world’s tribulation. Some may be desperately worried about a husband or a wife or a child, worried about their health or their happiness or their faithfulness in keeping the commandments. Some are living with physical pain, or emotional pain, or disabilities that come with age. Some are troubled as to how to make ends meet financially, and some ache with the private loneliness of an empty house or an empty room or simply empty arms.

These beloved people seek the Lord and His word with particular urgency, often revealing their true emotions only when the scriptures are opened or when the hymns are sung or when the prayers are offered. Sometimes only then do the rest of us realize they feel near the end of their strength—they are tired in brain and body and heart, they wonder if they can get through another week or another day or sometimes just another hour. They are desperate for the Lord’s help, and they know that in such times of extremity nothing else will do.

Christ, Angels, and Prophets Seek to Help

Well, at least one of the purposes of general conference and the teachings of the prophets down through the ages is to declare to these very people that the Lord is equally fervent in trying to reach them, that when there is trouble, His hopes and His striving and His efforts greatly exceed our own, and it never ceases.

We have been promised, “He that keepeth [us] will not slumber, . . . nor [will he] sleep.”⁶

Christ and His angels and His prophets forever labor to buoy up our spirits, steady our nerves, calm our hearts, send us forth with renewed strength and resolute hope. They wish all to know that “if God be for us, who can be against us?”⁷ In the world we shall have tribulation, but we are to be of good cheer. Christ has overcome the world.⁸ Through His suffering and His obedience He has earned and rightly bears the crown of “Prince of Peace.”

Obedience and Repentance Bring Peace

In that spirit we declare to all the world that for real and abiding peace to come, we must strive to be more like that exemplary Son of God. Many among us are trying to do that. We salute you for your obedience, your forbearance, your waiting faithfully upon the Lord for the strength you seek, which will surely come. Some of us, on the other hand, need to make some changes, need to make greater effort in gospel living. And change we can. The very beauty of the word *repentance* is the promise of escaping old problems and old habits and old sorrows and old sins. It is among the most hopeful and encouraging—and yes, most peaceful—words in the gospel vocabulary. In seeking true peace, some of us need to improve what has to be improved, confess what needs to be confessed, forgive what has to be forgiven, and forget what should be forgotten in order that serenity can come to us. If there is a commandment we are breaking, and as a result it is breaking us and hurting those who love us, let us call down the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to help us, to free us, to lead us through repentance to that peace “which passeth all understanding.”⁹

And when God has forgiven us, which He is so eternally anxious to do, may we have the good sense to walk away from those problems, to leave them alone, to let the past bury the past. If one of you has made a mistake, even a serious mistake, but you have done all you can according to the teachings of the Lord and the governance of the Church to confess it and feel sorrow for it and set it as right as can be, then trust in God, walk into His light, and leave those ashes behind you. Someone once said that repentance is the first pressure we feel when drawn to the bosom of God. For real peace may I recommend an immediate rush to the bosom of God, leaving behind you all that would bring sorrow to your soul or

heartache to those who love you. “Depart from evil,” the scripture says, “and do good.”¹⁰

Forgive Others to Find Peace

Closely related to our own obligation to repent is the generosity of letting others do the same—we are to forgive even as we are forgiven. In this we participate in the very essence of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Surely the most majestic moment of that fateful Friday, when nature convulsed and the veil of the temple was rent, was that unspeakably merciful moment when Christ said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”¹¹ As our advocate with the Father, He is still making that same plea today—in your behalf and in mine.

Here, as in all things, Jesus set the standard for us to follow. Life is too short to be spent nursing animosities or keeping a box score of offenses against us—you know, no runs, no hits, all errors. We don’t want God to remember our sins, so there is something fundamentally wrong in our relentlessly trying to remember those of others.

When we have been hurt, undoubtedly God takes into account what wrongs were done to us and what provocations there are for our resentments, but clearly the more provocation there is and the more excuse we can find for our hurt, all the more reason for us to forgive and be delivered from the destructive hell of such poisonous venom and anger.¹² It is one of those ironies of godhood that in order to find peace, the offended as well as the offender must engage the principle of forgiveness.

Our Trials Have a Purpose

Yes, peace is a very precious commodity, a truly heartfelt need, and there are many things we can do to achieve it. But—for whatever reason—life has its moments when uninterrupted peace may seem to elude us for a season. We may wonder why there are such times in life, particularly when we may be trying harder than we have ever tried to live worthy of God’s blessings and obtain His help. When problems or sorrows or sadness come and they *don’t* seem to be our fault, what are we to make of their unwelcome appearance?

With time and perspective we recognize that such problems in life do come for a purpose, if only to allow the one who faces such despair to be convinced that he really does need divine strength beyond

himself, that she really does need the offer of heaven's hand. Those who feel no need for mercy usually never seek it and almost never bestow it. Those who have never had a heartache or a weakness or felt lonely or forsaken never have had to cry unto heaven for relief of such personal pain. Surely it is better to find the goodness of God and the grace of Christ, even at the price of despair, than to risk living our lives in a moral or material complacency that has never felt any need for faith or forgiveness, any need for redemption or relief.

A life without problems or limitations or challenges—life without “opposition in all things,”¹³ as Lehi phrased it—would paradoxically but in very fact be less rewarding and less ennobling than one which confronts—even frequently confronts—difficulty and disappointment and sorrow. As beloved Eve said, were it not for the difficulties faced in a fallen world, neither she nor Adam nor any of the rest of us ever would have known “the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.”¹⁴

“The Better Angels of Our Nature”

So life has its oppositions and its conflicts, and the gospel of Jesus Christ has answers and assurances. In a time of terrible civil warfare, one of the most gifted leaders ever to strive to hold a nation together said what could be said of marriages and families and friendships. Praying for peace, pleading for peace, seeking peace in any way that would not compromise union, Abraham Lincoln said in those dark, dark days of his First Inaugural: “Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory,” he said, “will yet swell . . . when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”¹⁵

The better angels of our nature. That is much of what the Church and general conference and the gospel of Jesus Christ are about—the appeal today and tomorrow and forever to be better, to be cleaner, to be kinder, to be holier; to seek peace and always be believing.

God's Gift of Sanctifying Renewal

I have personally known in my own life the realization of the promise “that the everlasting God, . . . the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is [he] weary.” I am a witness that “he

giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.”¹⁶

I know that in times of fear or fatigue, “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”¹⁷

We receive the gift of such majestic might and sanctifying renewal through the redeeming grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has overcome the world, and if we will take upon us His name and “walk in His paths” and keep our covenants with Him, we shall, ere long, have peace. Such a reward is not only possible; it is certain.

“For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”¹⁸

Of Him and His good tidings, of the publication of His peace in this conference and in this His true Church, and of His living prophet who is about to speak to us, I bear grateful and joyful witness in the merciful name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes . . .

3. “Carry On,” *Hymns*, no. 255.
4. Mosiah 15:18; italics added.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
6. Psalm 121:3–4.
7. Romans 8:31.
8. See John 16:33.
9. Philippians 4:7.
10. Psalm 34:14.
11. Luke 23:34.
12. Adapted from George MacDonald.
13. 2 Nephi 2:11.
14. Moses 5:11.
15. Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural Address, 4 Mar. 1861.
16. Isaiah 40:28–29.
17. Isaiah 40:31.
18. 3 Nephi 22:10.

BIRTH CONTROL

The ultimate treasures on earth and in heaven are our children and our posterity.

—Elder Dallin H. Oaks

SELECTED TEACHINGS

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

“We declare that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

First Presidency—Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark Jr., David O. McKay

“By virtue of the authority in us vested as the First Presidency of the Church, we warn our people. . . .

“Amongst His earliest commands to Adam and Eve, the Lord said: ‘Multiply and replenish the earth.’ He has repeated that command in our day. He has again revealed in this, the last dispensation, the principle of the eternity of the marriage covenant. . . .

“The Lord has told us that it is the duty of every husband and wife to obey the command given to Adam to multiply and replenish the earth, so that the legions of choice spirits waiting for their tabernacles of flesh may come here and move forward under God’s great design to become perfect souls, for without these fleshly tabernacles they cannot progress to their God-planned destiny. Thus, every husband and wife should become a father and a mother in Israel to children born under the holy, eternal covenant” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1942, 11–12).

First Presidency—David O. McKay, Hugh B. Brown, N. Eldon Tanner

“We seriously regret that there should exist a sentiment or feeling among any members of the Church to curtail the birth of their children. We have been commanded to multiply and replenish the earth that we may have joy and rejoicing in our posterity.

“Where husband and wife enjoy health and vigor and are free from impurities that would be entailed upon their posterity, it is contrary to the teachings

of the Church artificially to curtail or prevent the birth of children. . . .

“However, we feel that men must be considerate of their wives who bear the greater responsibility not only of bearing children, but of caring for them through childhood. To this end the mother’s health and strength should be conserved and the husband’s consideration for his wife is his first duty, and self-control a dominant factor in all their relationships” (letter to stake presidents, bishops, and mission presidents, 14 Apr. 1969).

President Joseph F. Smith

“Motherhood lies at the foundation of happiness in the home, and of prosperity in the nation. God has laid upon men and women very sacred obligations with respect to motherhood, and they are obligations that cannot be disregarded without invoking divine displeasure. In 1 Timothy 2:13–15, we are told that ‘Adam was first formed, then Eve. . . .’ Can she be saved without child-bearing? She indeed takes an awful risk if she wilfully disregards what is a pronounced requirement of God” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 288–89).

President David O. McKay

“Love realizes his sweetest happiness and his most divine consummation in the home where the coming of children is not restricted, where they are made most welcome, and where the duties of parenthood are accepted as a co-partnership with the eternal Creator.

“In all this, however, the mother’s health should be guarded. In the realm of wifehood, the woman should reign supreme” (*Gospel Ideals*, 469).

President Joseph Fielding Smith

“The family is the most important organization in time or in eternity. Our purpose in life is to create for ourselves eternal family units. There is nothing that will ever come into your family life that is as important as the sealing blessings of the temple and then keeping the covenants made in connection with this order of celestial marriage” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1972, 13; or *Ensign*, July 1972, 27).

“The covenant given to Adam to multiply was renewed after the flood with Noah and his children after him. The Lord said to Noah: ‘And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein. And God spake unto

Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you.' [Gen. 9:7–9.]

"This covenant is still binding, although mankind has departed from the way of eternal life and has rejected the covenant of marriage which the Lord revealed.

"Birth Control Is Wickedness. The abuse of this holy covenant has been the primary cause for the downfall of nations. When the sacred vows of marriage are broken and the real purpose of marriage abused, as we find it so prevalent in the world today, then destruction is inevitable.

"No nation can endure for any length of time, if the marriage covenants are abused and treated with contempt. The anger of the Almighty was kindled against ancient nations for their immorality. There is nothing that should be held in greater sacredness than this covenant by which the spirits of men are clothed with mortal tabernacles" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:86–87).

President Spencer W. Kimball

"Tomorrow when I repeat the phrases that will bind you for eternity, I shall say the same impressive words that the Lord said to that handsome youth and his lovely bride in the Garden of Eden: 'Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.' . . .

". . . You came to get for yourself a mortal body that could become perfected, immortalized, and you understood that you were to act in partnership with God in providing bodies for other spirits. . . . And so you will not postpone parenthood. There will be rationalists who will name to you numerous reasons for postponement. Of course, it will be harder to get your college degrees or your financial start with a family, but strength like yours will be undaunted in the face of difficult obstacles. Have your family as the Lord intended. Of course it is expensive, but you will find a way, and besides, it is often those children who grow up with responsibility and hardships who carry on the world's work" ("John and Mary, Beginning Life Together," *New Era*, June 1975, 8).

"After marriage young wives should be occupied in bearing and rearing children. I know of no scriptures or authorities which authorize young wives to delay their families or to go to work to put their husbands through college. Young married couples can make their way and reach their educational heights, if

they are determined" ("The Marriage Decision," *Ensign*, Feb. 1975, 4).

"Supreme happiness in marriage is governed considerably by a primary factor—that of the bearing and rearing of children. Too many young people set their minds, determining they will not marry or have children until they are more secure, until the military service period is over; until the college degree is secured; until the occupation is more well-defined; until the debts are paid; or until it is more convenient. They have forgotten that the first commandment is to 'be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.' (Genesis 1:28.) And so brides continue their employment and husbands encourage it, and contraceptives are used to prevent conception. Relatives and friends and even mothers sometimes encourage birth control for their young newlyweds. But the excuses are many, mostly weak. The wife is not robust; the family budget will not feed extra mouths; or the expense of the doctor, hospital, and other incidentals is too great; it will disturb social life; it would prevent two salaries; and so abnormal living prevents the birth of children. The Church cannot approve nor condone the measures which so greatly limit the family" (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 328–29).

President Howard W. Hunter

"Honor your wife's unique and divinely appointed role as a mother in Israel and her special capacity to bear and nurture children. We are under divine commandment to multiply and replenish the earth and to bring up our children and grandchildren in light and truth (see Moses 2:28; D&C 93:40). You share, as a loving partner, the care of the children. Help her to manage and keep up your home. Help teach, train, and discipline your children" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

"I am offended by the sophistry that the only lot of the Latter-day Saint woman is to be barefoot and pregnant. It's a clever phrase, but it's false. Of course we believe in children. The Lord has told us to multiply and replenish the earth that we might have joy in our posterity, and there is no greater joy than the joy that comes of happy children in good families. But he did not designate the number, nor has the

Church. That is a sacred matter left to the couple and the Lord. The official statement of the Church includes this language: ‘Husbands must be considerate of their wives, who have the greater responsibility not only of bearing children but of caring for them through childhood, and should help them conserve their health and strength. Married couples should exercise self-control in all of their relationships. They should seek inspiration from the Lord in meeting their marital challenges and rearing their children according to the teachings of the gospel’ (*General Handbook of Instructions* [1983], p. 77)” (*Cornerstones of a Happy Home*, 6).

Elder Melvin J. Ballard

“There is a passage in our Scriptures which the Latter-day Saints accept as divine: ‘This is the glory of God—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man’ [see Moses 1:39]. Likewise we could say that this is the glory of men and women—to bring to pass the mortality of the sons and daughters of God, to give earth-life to the waiting children of our Father. . . . The greatest mission of woman is to give life, earth-life, through honorable marriage, to the waiting spirits, our Father’s spirit children who anxiously desire to come to dwell here in this mortal state. All the honor and glory that can come to men or women by the development of their talents, the homage and the praise they may receive from an applauding world, worshipping at their shrine of genius, is but a dim thing whose luster shall fade in comparison to the high honor, the eternal glory, the ever-enduring happiness that shall come to the woman who fulfils the first great duty and mission that devolves upon her to become the mother of the sons and daughters of God” (Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin Joseph Ballard*, 203–4).

Elder Ezra Taft Benson

“The world teaches birth control. Tragically, many of our sisters subscribe to its pills and practices when they could easily provide earthly tabernacles for more of our Father’s children. We know that every spirit assigned to this earth will come, whether through us or someone else. There are couples in the Church who think they are getting along just fine with their limited families but who will someday suffer the pains of remorse when they meet the spirits

that might have been part of their posterity. The first commandment given to man was to multiply and replenish the earth with children. That commandment has never been altered, modified, or cancelled. The Lord did not say to multiply and replenish the earth if it is convenient, or if you are wealthy, or after you have gotten your schooling, or when there is peace on earth, or until you have four children. The Bible says, ‘Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: . . . Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them. . . .’ (Ps. 127:3, 5.) We believe God is glorified by having numerous children and a program of perfection for them. So also will God glorify that husband and wife who have a large posterity and who have tried to raise them up in righteousness” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 12).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“To the first man and woman on earth, the Lord said, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply’ (Moses 2:28; Genesis 1:28; see also Abraham 4:28). This commandment was first in sequence and first in importance. It was essential that God’s spirit children have mortal birth and an opportunity to progress toward eternal life. Consequently, all things related to procreation are prime targets for the adversary’s efforts to thwart the plan of God. . . .

“Knowledge of the great plan of happiness also gives Latter-day Saints a distinctive attitude toward the bearing and nurturing of children.

“In some times and places, children have been regarded as no more than laborers in a family economic enterprise or as insurers of support for their parents. Though repelled by these repressions, some persons in our day have no compunctions against similar attitudes that subordinate the welfare of a spirit child of God to the comfort or convenience of parents.

“The Savior taught that we should not lay up treasures on earth but should lay up treasures in heaven (see Matthew 6:19–21). In light of the ultimate purpose of the great plan of happiness, I believe that the ultimate treasures on earth and in heaven are our children and our posterity” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 97, 100–101; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 72, 75).

I HAVE A QUESTION

Dr. Homer Ellsworth

Ensign, Aug. 1979, 23–24

Is it our understanding that we are to propagate children as long and as frequently as the human body will permit? Is there not any kind of “gospel family-planning,” for lack of a better way to say it?

I hear this type of question frequently from active and committed Latter-day Saint women who often ask questions that are outside my professional responsibilities. Here are some of the principles and attitudes I believe apply to this fundamental question, a question most couples ask themselves many times during their child-bearing years.

I rejoice in our basic understanding of the plan of salvation, which teaches us that we come to earth for growth and maturity, and for testing. In that process we may marry and provide temporal bodies for our Heavenly Father’s spirit children. That’s basic, it seems to me. In contemplating this truth, I also take great delight in the Church’s affirmative position that it is our blessing and joy, and our spiritual obligation, to bear children and to have a family. It impresses me that the positive is stressed as our goal.

I rejoice in our understanding that one of the most fundamental principles in the plan of salvation is free agency. The opportunity to make free agency choices is so important that our Heavenly Father was willing to withhold additional opportunities from a third of his children rather than deprive them of their right of choice. This principle of free agency is vital to the success of our probation. Many of the decisions we make involve the application of principles where precise yes-and-no answers are just not available in Church handbooks, meetings, or even the scriptures.

Our growth process, then, results from weighing the alternatives, studying the matter carefully, and seeking inspiration from the Lord. This, it seems to me, is at the heart of the gospel plan. It has always given me great joy and confidence to observe that in their administration of God’s teachings, our inspired prophets do not seek to violate this general plan of individual agency, but operate within broad guidelines that provide considerable individual flexibility.

I recall a President of the Church, now deceased, who visited his daughter in the hospital following a miscarriage.

She was the mother of eight children and was in her early forties. She asked, “Father, may I quit now?” His response was, “Don’t ask me. That decision is between you, your husband, and your Father in Heaven. If you two can face him with a good conscience and can say you have done the best you could, that you have really tried, then you may quit. But, that is between you and him. I have enough problems of my own to talk over with him when we meet!” So it is clear to me that the decisions regarding our children, when to have them, their number, and all related matters and questions can only be made after real discussion between the marriage partners and after prayer.

In this process of learning what is right for you at any particular time, I have always found it helpful to use a basic measuring stick: *Is it selfish?* I have concluded that most of our sins are really sins of selfishness. If you don’t pay your tithing, selfishness is at the heart of it. If you commit adultery, selfishness is at the heart of it. If you are dishonest, selfishness is at the heart of it. I have noted that many times in the scriptures we observe the Lord chastising people because of their selfishness.

Thus, on the family questions, if we limit our families because we are self-centered or materialistic, we will surely develop a character based on selfishness. As the scriptures make clear, that is not a description of a celestial character. I have found that we really have to analyze ourselves to discover our motives. Sometimes superficial motivations and excuses show up when we do that.

But, on the other hand, we need not be afraid of studying the question from important angles—the physical or mental health of the mother and father, the parents’ capacity to provide basic necessities, and so on. If for certain personal reasons a couple prayerfully decides that having another child immediately is unwise, the method of spacing children—discounting possible medical or physical effects—makes little difference. Abstinence, of course, is also a form of contraception, and like any other method it has side effects, some of which are harmful to the marriage relationship.

As a physician I am often required to treat social-emotional symptoms related to various aspects of living. In doing so I have always been impressed that our prophets past and present have never stipulated

that bearing children was the sole function of the marriage relationship. Prophets have taught that physical intimacy is a strong force in strengthening the love bond in marriage, enhancing and reinforcing marital unity. Indeed, it is the rightful gift of God to the married. As the Apostle Paul says,

“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.” Paul continues, “Depart ye not one from 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.” (1 Cor. 7:4–5, Joseph Smith Translation). Abstinence in marriage, Paul says, can cause unnecessary temptations and tensions, which are certainly harmful side effects.

So, as to the number and spacing of children, and other related questions on this subject, such decisions are to be made by husband and wife righteously and empathetically communicating together and seeking the inspiration of the Lord. I believe that the prophets have given wise counsel when they advise couples to be considerate and plan carefully so that the mother’s health will not be impaired. When this recommendation of the First Presidency is ignored or unknown or misinterpreted, heartache can result.

I know a couple who had seven children. The wife, who was afflicted with high blood pressure, had been advised by her physician that additional pregnancy was fraught with grave danger and should not be attempted. But the couple interpreted the teachings of their local priesthood leaders to mean that they should consider no contraceptive measures under any circumstances. She died from a stroke during the delivery of her eighth child.

As I meet other people and learn of their circumstances, I am continually inspired by the counsel of the First Presidency in the *General Handbook of Instructions* that the health of the mother and the well-being of the family should be considered. Thirty-four years as a practicing gynecologist and as an observer of Latter-day Saint families have taught me that not only the physical well-being but the emotional well-being must also be considered. Some parents are less subject to mood swings and depression and can more easily cope with the pressures of many children. Some parents have more help from their families and friends. Some are more effective parents than others, even when their desire and motivation are the same. In addition, parents do owe their children the necessities of life. The desire for luxuries, of course, would not be an appropriate determinant of family size; luxuries are just not a legitimate consideration. I think every inspired human heart can quickly determine what is luxury and what is not.

In summary, it is clear to me that couples should not let the things that matter most be at the mercy of those that matter least. In searching for what is most important, I believe that we are accountable not only for what we do but for why we do it. Thus, regarding family size, spacing of children, and attendant questions, we should desire to multiply and replenish the earth as the Lord commands us. In that process, Heavenly Father intends that we use the free agency he has given in charting a wise course for ourselves and our families. We gain the wisdom to chart that wise course through study, prayer, and listening to the still small voice within us.

CHARITY

*Charity is more than love,
far more; it is everlasting love,
perfect love, the pure love of
Christ which endureth forever.*

—Elder Bruce R. McConkie

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Bible Dictionary

“Charity. The highest, noblest, strongest kind of love, not merely affection; the pure love of Christ. It is never used to denote alms or deeds or benevolence, although it may be a prompting motive (1 Cor. 8:1; 13:1–4, 8; 13; 14:1. Cf. Moro. 7:47)” (p. 632).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“The process of adding one godly attribute to another, as described by Peter [in 2 Peter 1], becomes the key to gaining this knowledge that leads to eternal life” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 63; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 48).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

“Real charity is not something you give away; it is something that you acquire and make a part of yourself. And when the virtue of charity becomes implanted in your heart, you are never the same again. It makes the thought of being [critical or verbally abusive] repulsive.

“Perhaps the greatest charity comes when we are kind to each other, when we don’t judge or categorize someone else, when we simply give each other the benefit of the doubt or remain quiet. Charity is accepting someone’s differences, weaknesses, and shortcomings; having patience with someone who has let us down; or resisting the impulse to become offended when someone doesn’t handle something the way we might have hoped. Charity is refusing to take advantage of another’s weakness and being willing to forgive someone who has hurt us. Charity is expecting the best of each other” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 24; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 18–19).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“Above all the attributes of godliness and perfection, *charity* is the one most devoutly to be desired. Charity is more than love, far more; it is everlasting love, perfect love, the pure love of Christ which endureth forever. It is love so centered in righteousness that the possessor has no aim or desire except for the eternal welfare of his own soul and for the souls of those around him. (2 Ne. 26:30; Moro. 7:47; 8:25–26.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 121).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

“Stated simply, charity means subordinating our interests and needs to those of others, as the Savior has done for all of us. The Apostle Paul wrote that of faith, hope, and charity, ‘the greatest of these is charity’ (1 Corinthians 13:13), and Moroni wrote that ‘except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God’ (Moroni 10:21). I believe that selfless service is a distinctive part of the gospel” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 16).

Related Scriptures

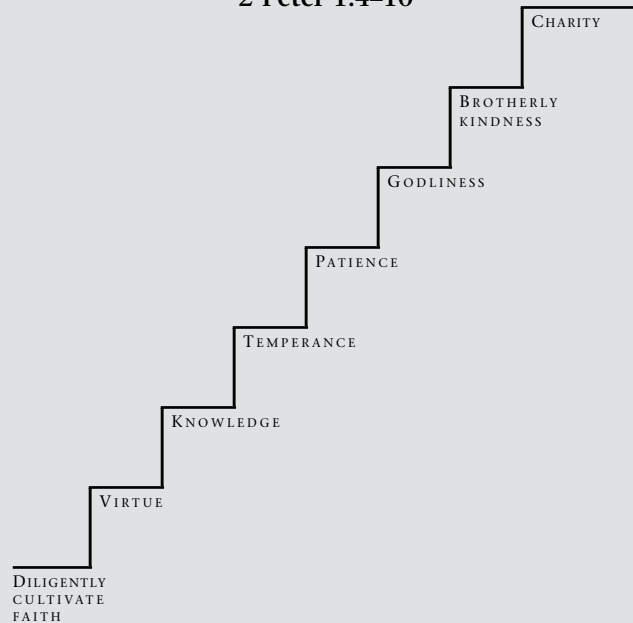
See Matthew 5:46; 1 Corinthians 13:13; Colossians 3:12–15; 1 Peter 4:8; 2 Nephi 26:30; Alma 7:24; 34:29; Ether 10:32; 12:34; Doctrine and Covenants 18:19; 31:9.

Consider the following attributes of charity listed in Moroni 7:45–47:

- Suffereth long
- Is kind
- Envieth not
- Is not puffed up
- Doth not behave itself unseemly
- Seeketh not her own
- Is not easily provoked
- Thinketh no evil
- Rejoiceth in truth
- Beareth all things
- Believeth all things
- Hopeth all things
- Endureth all things
- Endureth forever

Becoming Partakers of the Divine Nature

2 Peter 1:4–10



Peter described the process for becoming partakers of the divine nature.

COMMITMENT

*A beginning is a secure marriage,
where there is a commitment to
make the personal adjustments to
live together forever.*

—President Spencer W. Kimball

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Spencer W. Kimball

“A beginning [to influencing our children for good] is a secure marriage, where there is a commitment to make the personal adjustments to live together forever” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, 161; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 112).

President Howard W. Hunter

“Please permit me to close by stressing one place in society where that strength and commitment must be shown if we are to survive as a nation, as a people, or even as a fully successful church. We simply must have love and integrity and strong principles in our homes. We must have an abiding commitment to marriage and children and morality. We must succeed where success counts most for the next generation” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 77; or *Ensign*, May 1990, 61).

President James E. Faust

“Spiritual peace is not to be found in race or culture or nationality but rather through our commitment to God and to the covenants and ordinances of the gospel” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 83; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 63).

Elder James E. Faust

“I wonder if it is possible for one marriage partner to jettison the other and become completely whole. Either partner who diminishes the divine role of the other in the presence of the children demeans the budding femininity within the daughters and the emerging manhood of the sons. I suppose there are always some honest differences between husband and wife, but let them be settled in private.

“The importance of this subject emboldens me to say a word about covenant breaking. It must be recognized that some marriages just fail. To those in that circumstance, I extend understanding because every divorce carries heartache with it. I hope what I say will not be disturbing. In my opinion, any promise between a man and a woman incident to a marriage ceremony rises to the dignity of a covenant. The family relationship of father, mother, and child is the oldest and most enduring institution in the world. It has survived vast differences of geography and culture. This is because marriage between man and woman is a natural state and is ordained of God. It is a moral imperative. Those marriages performed in our temples, meant to be eternal relationships, then, become the most sacred covenants we can make. The sealing power given by God through Elijah is thus invoked, and God becomes a party to the promises.

“What, then, might be ‘just cause’ for breaking the covenants of marriage? Over a lifetime of dealing with human problems, I have struggled to understand what might be considered ‘just cause’ for breaking of covenants. I confess I do not claim the wisdom or authority to definitively state what is ‘just cause.’ Only the parties to the marriage can determine this. They must bear the responsibility for the train of consequences which inevitably follows if these covenants are not honored. In my opinion, ‘just cause’ should be nothing less serious than a prolonged and apparently irredeemable relationship which is destructive of a person’s dignity as a human being.

“At the same time, I have strong feelings about what is not provocation for breaking the sacred covenants of marriage. Surely it is not simply ‘mental distress’ or ‘personality differences’ or having ‘grown apart’ or having ‘fallen out of love.’ This is especially so where there are children. Enduring divine counsel comes from Paul:

“‘Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it’ (Ephesians 5:25).

“‘That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, [and] to love their children’ (Titus 2:4).

“In my opinion, members of the Church have the most effective cure for our decaying family life. It is for men, women, and children to honor and respect the divine roles of both fathers and mothers in the home. In so doing, mutual respect and appreciation among the members of the Church will be fostered

by the righteousness found there. In this way the great sealing keys restored by Elijah, spoken of by Malachi, might operate ‘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’ (D&C 110:15; see also Malachi 4:6)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 46–47; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 36–37).

Elder Russell M. Nelson

“Keeping the garden of marriage well cultivated and free from weeds of neglect requires the time and commitment of love. It is not only a pleasant privilege, it is a scriptural requirement with promise of eternal glory” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 28; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 23).

Elder Joe J. Christensen

“*Keep your courtship alive.* Make time to do things together—just the two of you. As important as it is to be with the children as a family, you need regular weekly time alone together. Scheduling it will let your children know that you feel that your marriage is so important that you need to nurture it. That takes commitment, planning, and scheduling” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 86; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 65).

Sister Ardeth G. Kapp

“It is our faith in the importance of making covenants with God and coming to understand our immense possibilities that the temple, the house of the Lord, becomes the focus for all that really matters. In the temple we participate in ordinances and covenants that span the distance between heaven and earth. They prepare us to one day return to God’s presence and enjoy the blessings of eternal families and eternal life.

“I have heard young women around the world repeat in many languages their commitment: ‘We will be prepared to make and keep sacred covenants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation’ (*Young Women Handbook*, p. 3). Those blessings can be available to all of us—to all our Father’s children. When our faith is centered in Jesus Christ, our Savior, we begin to understand our identity and our tender relationship to Him. . . .

“It is through the ordinances and covenants available in the temple that our Father in Heaven has provided the way for us to return to Him rejoicing. To these eternal truths I bear my testimony in the name of

Jesus Christ, amen” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 110–11; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 79).

OUR SOLEMN RESPONSIBILITIES



President Gordon B. Hinckley

*First Counselor
in the First Presidency*

*In Conference Report, Oct. 1991,
68–73; or Ensign, Nov. 1991,
49–52 (priesthood session)*

Brethren, we have had an excellent meeting. Much has been spoken worthy of remembrance and application in our lives. I endorse and commend to you what the Brethren have said. I hope that every man and boy, wherever you may be, may leave this meeting tonight with a greater desire and a stronger resolution to live more worthy of the divine priesthood which each of us holds. . . .

Experience with Sorrow

. . . during these ten years that I have served in the Presidency, I have also experienced much of sorrow. It is out of this experience that I wish to speak a little further. For a full decade now I have participated in the task of sitting in judgment on the worthiness of those who plead to come back into the Church after having been excommunicated. In every case there had been a serious violation of Church standards of conduct. In most cases there had been adultery, and in the majority of cases, husbands were the offenders. Disciplinary action had been taken against them. As months passed they longed for what they previously had. A spirit of repentance came into their hearts.

As one of these men said to me, “I really never understood nor appreciated the gift of the Holy Ghost until it was taken from me.”

Unhappiness of Women

I have spoken on three or four occasions to the women of the Church during the past ten years. I have received in response to these various talks a substantial number of letters. I have kept some of them in a file marked “Unhappy Women.”

These letters have come from many areas. But they are all written in the same tone. I wish to read you a portion of one of them which was received only

last week. The writer has granted me permission to do so. I will not disclose any names.

Said she: “I met my husband when he was a freshman. He was from a very active family with many years of service in the Church. He was so enthused about serving a mission. I thought we shared the gospel as our most important value in this life. We both enjoyed music and nature and had a high priority on gaining knowledge. We dated a few months, easily fell in love, and wrote to one another while he served an honorable mission. When he came back home, he got back into school and we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. We followed the counsel of Church leaders and began our family. I had been attending [the university] on an Honors at Entrance scholarship, but I became pregnant and sick and left school to devote my time and energy to my husband and infant son.

“For the next eighteen years I supported my husband while he finished school, got some work experience, and started his own business. We both served in leadership positions in the Church and community. We had five wonderful children. I taught the children the gospel, how to work, how to serve, how to communicate, and how to play the piano. I baked bread; canned peaches, apples, tomatoes; sewed dresses and quilts; cleaned house; and tended my flowers and vegetables. In many ways it seemed that we were an ideal family. Our relationship was sometimes sweet and sometimes difficult. Things were never perfect because I am not a perfect woman and he is not a perfect man, but many things were good. I did not expect perfection; I just kept trying.

“Then came the crash. About a year ago he decided that he never loved me and that our marriage was a mistake from the beginning. He was convinced that there was nothing in our relationship for him. He filed for divorce and moved out. ‘Wait,’ I kept saying. ‘Oh, no. Stop! Don’t do this. Why are you leaving? What is wrong? Please, talk to me. Look at our children. What of all our dreams? Remember our covenants. No, no! Divorce is not the answer.’ He would not hear me. I thought I would die.

“Now I am a single parent. What an enormous load of heartache, pain, and loneliness is behind that statement. It explains so much trauma and so much anger from my teenage sons. It explains so many tears from my little girls. It explains so many sleepless nights, so many family demands and needs. Why am I in this mess? What did I choose wrong? How

will I ever get through school? How will I get through this week? Where is my husband? Where is the father of my children? I join the ranks of tired women whose husbands leave them. I have no money, no job. I have children to care for, bills to pay, and not much hope.”

I do not know if her former husband may be in this audience somewhere. If he is listening, I may receive from him a letter justifying what he has done. I know there are two sides to every issue. But somehow, I cannot understand how a man who holds the holy priesthood and who has entered into sacred and binding covenants before the Lord could justify abandoning his responsibilities for his wife of eighteen years and the five children who exist because of him and of whose flesh and blood and heritage they have partaken.

The problem is not new. I suppose it is as old as the human race. Certainly it existed among the Nephites. Jacob, brother of Nephi, speaking as a prophet to his people, declared:

“For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands.

“. . . Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you” (Jacob 2:31, 35).

Discipline a Violent Temper

Permit me to read from another letter. Said the writer: “My husband is a good man with many outstanding qualities and character traits, but underneath it all there is a strong streak of authoritarianism. . . . His volatile temper flares up often enough to remind me of all the potential ugliness of which he is capable.

“President Hinckley, . . . please remind the brethren that the physical and verbal abuse of women is inexcusable, never acceptable, and a cowardly way of dealing with differences, especially and particularly despicable if the abuser is a priesthood holder.”

Now, I believe that most marriages in the Church are happy, that both husbands and wives in those marriages experience a sense of security and love, of mutual dependence, and an equal sharing of burdens. I am confident that the children in those homes, at

least in the vast majority of them, are growing up with a sense of peace and security, knowing that they are appreciated and loved by both of their parents, who, they feel, love one another. But I am confident, my brethren, that there is enough of the opposite to justify what I am saying.

Who can calculate the wounds inflicted, their depth and pain, by harsh and mean words spoken in anger? How pitiful a sight is a man who is strong in many ways but who loses all control of himself when some little thing, usually of no significant consequence, disturbs his equanimity. In every marriage there are, of course, occasional differences. But I find no justification for tempers that explode on the slightest provocation.

Said the writer of Proverbs, "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous" (Proverbs 27:4).

A violent temper is such a terrible, corrosive thing. And the tragedy is that it accomplishes no good; it only feeds evil with resentment and rebellion and pain. To any man or boy within the sound of my voice who has trouble controlling his tongue, may I suggest that you plead with the Lord for the strength to overcome your weakness, that you apologize to those you have offended, and that you marshal within yourselves the power to discipline your tongue.

To the boys who are here, may I suggest that you watch your temper now, in these formative years of your life. As Brother [David B.] Haight has reminded you, this is the season to develop the power and capacity to discipline yourselves. You may think it is the macho thing to flare up in anger and swear and profane the name of the Lord. It is not the macho thing. It is an indication of weakness. Anger is not an expression of strength. It is an indication of one's inability to control his thoughts, words, his emotions. Of course it is easy to get angry. When the weakness of anger takes over, the strength of reason leaves. Cultivate within yourselves the mighty power of self-discipline.

Sacredness of Marriage Covenants

Now I move to another corrosive element that afflicts all too many marriages. It is interesting to me that two of the Ten Commandments deal with this: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" and "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:14, 17). Ted Koppel, moderator of ABC's "Nightline" program, is reported as saying the following to a group of students at Duke

University concerning slogans that were proposed to reduce drugs and immorality:

"We have actually convinced ourselves that slogans will save us. . . . But the answer is *NO!* Not because it isn't cool or smart or because you might end up in jail or dying in an AIDS ward, but *NO* because it is wrong, because we have spent 5,000 years as a race of rational human beings, trying to drag ourselves out of the primeval slime by searching for truth and moral absolutes. In its purest form, truth is not a polite tap on the shoulder. It is a howling reproach. What Moses brought down from Mount Sinai were not *The Ten Suggestions*" (address given at Duke University, 10 May 1987).

Think about that for a moment. What Moses brought down were Ten Commandments, written by the finger of Jehovah on tablets of stone for the salvation and safety, for the security and happiness of the children of Israel and for all of the generations which were to come after them.

Altogether too many men, leaving their wives at home in the morning and going to work, where they find attractively dressed and attractively made-up young women, regard themselves as young and handsome and as an irresistible catch. They complain that their wives do not look the same as they did twenty years ago when they married them. To which I say, "Who would, after living with you for twenty years?"

The tragedy is that some men are ensnared by their own foolishness and their own weakness. They throw to the wind the most sacred and solemn of covenants, entered into in the house of the Lord and sealed under the authority of the holy priesthood. They set aside their wives who have been faithful, who have loved and cared for them, who have struggled with them in times of poverty only to be discarded in times of affluence. They have left their children fatherless. They have avoided with every kind of artifice the payment of court-mandated alimony and child support.

Do I sound harsh and negative? Yes, I feel that way as I deal with case after case and have done so over a period of time. Wrote Paul, "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 Timothy 5:8). In that same epistle, he said to Timothy, "Keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22).

Now I recognize that there may be some few cases where conditions of the marriage are totally intolerable. But these cases are in the minority. And even in these cases, where a marriage has been undertaken and children are brought into the world, there is a responsibility, binding and with accountability before God, to provide care for those for whose lives the father is responsible.

The complaint of a husband, after eighteen years of marriage and five children, that he no longer loves his wife is, in my judgment, a feeble excuse for the violation of covenants made before God and also the evasion of the responsibilities that are the very strength of the society of which we are a part. The finding of fault with consequent divorce is usually preceded by a long period in which little mistakes are spoken of in harsh and angry language, where tiny molehills of difference grow into great mountains of conflict. I am satisfied that the more unkindly a wife is treated, the less attractive she becomes. She loses pride in herself. She develops a feeling of worthlessness. Of course it shows.

A husband who domineers his wife, who demeans and humiliates her, and who makes officious demands upon her not only injures her, but he also belittles himself. And in many cases, he plants a pattern of future similar behavior in his sons.

No Enduring Happiness without Women

My brethren, you who have had conferred upon you the priesthood of God, you know, as I know, that there is no enduring happiness, that there is no lasting peace in the heart, no tranquillity in the home without the companionship of a good woman. Our wives are not our inferiors.

Some men who are evidently unable to gain respect by the goodness of their lives use as justification for their actions the statement that Eve was told that Adam should rule over her. How much sadness, how much tragedy, how much heartbreak has been caused through centuries of time by weak men who have used that as a scriptural warrant for atrocious behavior! They do not recognize that the same account indicates that Eve was given as a helpmeet to Adam. The facts are that they stood side by side in the garden. They were expelled from the garden

together, and they worked together side by side in gaining their bread by the sweat of their brows.

Now, brethren, I know I have spoken of a minority. But the depth of the tragedy which afflicts that minority, and particularly the victims of that minority, has impelled me to say what I have said. There is an old adage that says, "If the shoe fits, wear it."

Where a marriage has been undertaken and children are brought into the world, there is a responsibility, binding and with accountability before God.

What I have spoken I have said with a desire to be helpful and, in some cases, in the spirit of a rebuke followed by an increase of love toward those whom I may have rebuked.

Beauty of Happy Marriage

How beautiful is the marriage of a young man and a young woman who begin their lives together kneeling at the altar in the house of the Lord, pledging their love and loyalty one to

another for time and all eternity. When children come into that home, they are nurtured and cared for, loved and blessed with the feeling that their father loves their mother. In that environment they find peace and strength and security. Watching their father, they develop respect for women. They are taught self-control and self-discipline, which bring the strength to avoid later tragedy.

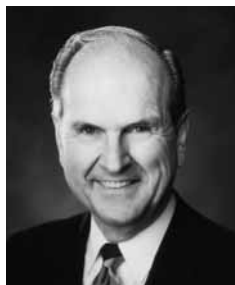
The years pass. The children eventually leave the home, one by one. And the father and the mother are again alone. But they have each other to talk with, to depend on, to nurture, to encourage, and to bless. There comes the autumn of life and a looking back with satisfaction and gladness. Through all of the years there has been loyalty, one to the other. There has been deference and courtesy. Now there is a certain mellowness, a softening, an effect that partakes of a hallowed relationship. They realize that death may come anytime, usually to one first with a separation of a season brief or lengthy. But they know also that because their companionship was sealed under the authority of the eternal priesthood and they have lived worthy of the blessings, there will be a reunion sweet and certain.

Brethren, this is the way our Father in Heaven would have it. This is the Lord's way. He has so indicated. His prophets have spoken of it.

It takes effort. It takes self-control. It takes unselfishness. It requires the true essence of love,

which is an anxious concern for the well-being and happiness of one's companion. I could wish nothing better for all of you than this, and I pray that this may be your individual blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

ENDURE AND BE LIFTED UP



Elder Russell M. Nelson

*Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

*In Conference Report,
Apr. 1997, 96–101;
or Ensign, May 1997, 70–73*

Stay “on the Boat”

Early in our married life when Sister Nelson and I lived in Minneapolis, we decided to enjoy a free afternoon with our two-year-old daughter. We went to one of Minnesota's many beautiful lakes and rented a small boat. After rowing far from shore, we stopped to relax and enjoy the tranquil scene. Suddenly, our little toddler lifted one leg out of the boat and started to go overboard, exclaiming, “Time to get out, Daddy!”

Quickly we caught her and explained, “No, dear, it's not time to get out; we must stay in the boat until it brings us safely back to land.” Only with considerable persuasion did we succeed in convincing her that leaving the boat early would have led to disaster.

Children are prone to do such dangerous things simply because they have not acquired the wisdom their parents have. Similarly, we as children of our Heavenly Father may foolishly want to get “out of the boat” before we arrive at destinations He would like us to reach. The Lord teaches over and over that we are to endure¹ to the end.² This is a dominant theme of the scriptures. One example may serve to represent many passages that convey a similar message:

“Blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion . . . , for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb.”³

Blessings bestowed by God are always predicated upon obedience to law.⁴ Applied to my analogy, we

are first to get “on the boat” with Him. Then we are to *stay* with Him. And if we don't get “out of the boat” before we should, we shall reach His kingdom, where we will be lifted up to eternal life.

If We Endure, We Will Be Lifted Up

The term *lifted up* relates to a physical law that can be illustrated by a simple demonstration.⁵ I will use a spool of thread and blow into the axial hole of the spool. The force of my breath will move a piece of tissue paper away from me. Next I will take an ordinary card and a straight pin. I will place the pin through the card. With the pin in the hole of the spool, I will hold the card close to the spool. I will again blow into the hole of the spool. As I blow, I will let go of the card so that it can respond to physical forces. Before I proceed, would you like to predict what will happen? Will I blow the card away from me, or will the card be lifted up toward me? Are you ready? [Elder Nelson demonstrates that blowing down the axial hole of the spool lifts the card up toward the spool.]

Did you notice? As long as I had sufficient breath, the card was lifted up. But when I could endure no longer, the card fell. When my breath gave out, the opposing force of gravity prevailed. If my energy could have endured, the card would have been lifted up indefinitely.⁶

***The Lord teaches
over and over that
we are to endure to
the end.***

Energy is always required to provide lift over opposing forces. These same laws apply in our personal lives. Whenever an undertaking is begun, both the energy and the will to endure are essential. The winner of a five-kilometer race is declared at the end of *five* kilometers, not at one or two. If you board a bus to Boston, you don't get off at Burlington. If you want to gain an education, you don't drop out along the way—just as you don't pay to dine at an elegant restaurant only to walk away after sampling the salad.

Whatever your work may be, endure at the beginning, endure through opposing forces along the way, and endure to the end. Any job must be completed before you can enjoy the result for which you are working. So wrote the poet:

*Stick to your task till it sticks to you;
Beginners are many, but enders are few.
Honor, power, place, and praise
Will [always] come . . . to the one who stays.*

*Stick to your task till it sticks to you;
Bend at it, sweat at it, smile at it too;
For out of the bend and the sweat and the smile
Will come life's victories, after awhile.*⁷

Sometimes the need to endure comes when facing a physical challenge. Anyone afflicted with a serious illness or with the infirmities of age hopes to be able to endure to the end of such trials.⁸ Most often, intense physical challenges are accompanied by spiritual challenges as well.

To Endure, We Must Be Surely Converted

Think of the early pioneers. What if they had not endured the hardships of their westward migration? There would be no sesquicentennial celebration this year. Steadfastly they endured—through persecution,⁹ expulsion,¹⁰ a governmental order of extermination,¹¹ expropriation of property,¹² and much more. Their enduring faith in the Lord provided lift for them as it will for you and for me.

The Lord's ultimate concern is for the salvation and exaltation of each individual soul. What if the Apostle Paul's conversion had not been enduring? He never would have testified as he did at the end of his ministry: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."¹³

What if Jesus had wavered in His commitment to do His Father's will?¹⁴ His Atonement would not have been accomplished. The dead would not be resurrected. The blessings of immortality and eternal life would not be.¹⁵ But Jesus did endure. During His final hour, Jesus prayed to His Father, saying, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have *finished* the work which thou gavest me to do."¹⁶

Early in His mortal ministry, Jesus became concerned about the commitment of His followers. He had just fed the 5,000,¹⁷ then had taught them the doctrines of the kingdom. But some had murmured, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?"¹⁸ Even after He had fed them, many lacked the faith to endure with Him. He turned to the Twelve and said, "Will ye also go away?"

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, . . . thou hast the words of eternal life.

"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."¹⁹

Peter's answer defines the real core of commitment. When we know without a doubt that Jesus is the

Christ, we will want to stay with Him. When we are surely converted, the power to endure is ours.

Enduring in the Covenant of Marriage

This power to endure is critical in those two most important relationships we enter into in life. One is marriage; the other is membership in the Lord's Church. These are also unique in that they are both covenant—not contractual—relationships.

Marriage, especially temple marriage, and family ties involve covenant relationships. They cannot be regarded casually. With divorce rates escalating throughout the world today, it is apparent that many spouses are failing to endure to the end of their commitments to each other. And some temple marriages fail because a husband forgets that his highest and most important priesthood duty is to honor and sustain his wife.²⁰ The best thing that a father can do for his children is to "love their mother."²¹

President Gordon B. Hinckley made a statement recently that each Latter-day Saint husband should heed: "Magnify your [wife]," he said, "and in so doing you will magnify your priesthood."²² To his profound advice we might couple the timeless counsel of Paul, who said, "Let every one of you . . . love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."²³ Enduring love provides enduring lift through life's trials. An enduring marriage results when both husband and wife regard their union as one of the two most important commitments they will ever make.

Enduring in Our Covenants with God

The other commitment of everlasting consequence is to the Lord.²⁴ Unfortunately, some souls make a covenant with God—signified by the sacred ordinance of baptism—without a heartfelt commitment to endure with Him. Baptism is an extremely important ordinance. But it is only initiatory. The supreme benefits of membership in the Church can be realized only through the exalting ordinances of the temple. These blessings qualify us for "thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers"²⁵ in the celestial kingdom.

The Lord can readily discern between those with superficial signs of activity and those who are deeply rooted in His Church. This Jesus taught in the parable of the sower. He observed that some "have no root

in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended."²⁶

Loyalty to the Lord carries an obligation of loyalty to those called by the Lord to lead His Church. He has empowered that men be ordained to speak in His holy name.²⁷ As they guide His unsinkable boat safely toward the shore of salvation, we would do well to stay on board with them.²⁸ "No waters can swallow the ship where lies / The Master of ocean and earth and skies."²⁹

Nevertheless, some individuals want to jump "out of the boat" before reaching land. And others, sadly, are persuaded out by companions who insist that they know more about life's perilous journey than do prophets of the Lord. Problems often arise that are not of your own making. Some of you may innocently find yourselves abandoned by one you trusted. But you will never be forsaken by your Redeemer, who said, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say."³⁰

Without a strong commitment to the Lord, an individual is more prone to have a low level of commitment to a spouse. Weak commitments to eternal covenants lead to losses of eternal consequence. Laments later in life are laced with remorse, as expressed in these lines:

*For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: "It might have been!"*³¹

We are speaking of the most important of all blessings. The Lord said, "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."³²

Proper Priorities Help Us Endure

Each of you who really wants to endure to the glorious end that our Heavenly Father has foreseen should firmly establish some personal priorities. With many interests competing for your loyalty, you need to be careful first to stay safely "on the boat." No one can serve two masters.³³ If Satan can get you to love anything—fun, flirtation, fame, or fortune—more than a spouse or the Lord with whom you have made sacred covenants to endure, the adversary begins to triumph. When faced with such temptations, you will find that strength comes from commitments made well in advance. The Lord said, "Settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you."³⁴ He declared through

His prophet Jeremiah, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."³⁵

When priorities are proper, the power to endure is increased. And when internalized, those priorities will help keep you from "going overboard." They will protect you from cheating—in marriage, in the Church, and in life.

If you really want to *be* like the Lord—more than *anything* or *anyone* else—you will remember that your adoration of Jesus is best shown by your emulation of Him. Then you will not allow any other love to become more important than love for your companion, your family, and your Creator. You will govern yourself not by someone else's set of rules but by revealed principles of truth.

The Lord Will Help Us Endure

Your responsibility to endure is uniquely yours. But you are never alone. I testify that the lifting power of the Lord can be yours if you will "come unto Christ" and "be perfected in him." You will "deny yourselves of all ungodliness." And you will "love God with all your might, mind and strength."³⁶

The living prophet of the Lord has issued a clarion call: "I invite every one of you," said President Hinckley, "to stand on your feet and with a song in your heart move forward, living the gospel, loving the Lord, and building the kingdom. Together we shall *stay* the course and *keep* the faith."³⁷

I pray that each of us may so endure and be lifted up at the last day, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. The word *endure* comes from two Latin roots. The prefix *en* means "within." The remainder comes from the verb *durare*, which means "to be firm or solid." Thus, to *endure* means "to become firm within yourself." That meaning carries into the original languages of the Bible.

In the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, the root word *'aman* means "to render firm" or "to be faithful, to trust." It was often translated as "faithful," but never as "faith" alone. *'Aman* meant more than faith. It was not a passive term; it meant "a firm resolve to be faithful." *'Aman* was also the Hebrew root for words that were translated into related terms, such as "verified," "believe," "long continuance,"

“assurance,” “establish(ed),” “sure,” “trust,” “steadfast,” “stand fast,” and others.

In the Greek language of the New Testament, the verb *hupoméno* was used. It means “to remain,” “stay,” or “continue.” *Hupo* (or *hypo*) means “under,” as in *hypodermic* (“under the skin”) or *hypothermia* (“low temperature”). To *endure* connotes a commitment *within* one’s soul.

2. See Matthew 24:13; Mark 13:13; 2 Nephi 33:4; Omni 1:26; 3 Nephi 15:9; D&C 14:7; 18:22; 20:29. This promise has been confirmed by both our Father in Heaven and by the Lord Jesus Christ. From the great Elohim, we have this pronouncement: “The words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved” (2 Nephi 31:15). And from the Savior, we have this promise: “Whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, . . . him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world” (3 Nephi 27:16).
3. 1 Nephi 13:37; see also Mosiah 23:22; Alma 13:29; 36:3; 37:37; 38:5; 3 Nephi 27:21–22; Ether 4:19; D&C 5:35; 9:14; 17:8; 75:16. For additional emphasis, scriptures teach the negative consequences of disobedience to this commandment. For example, “If they will not repent and believe in his name, and be baptized in his name, and endure to the end, they must be damned; for the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has spoken it” (2 Nephi 9:24; see also 2 Nephi 31:16; Mormon 9:29).
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
5. This demonstration of Bernoulli’s principle in physics was first shown to the author on 17 August 1996 by Elder Norman C. Boehm, then an Area Authority of the Church residing in Sacramento, California.
6. The law of lift is at work whenever airplanes fly. It is a “component of the total aerodynamic force acting on an airfoil or on an entire aircraft or winged missile perpendicular to the relative wind and normally exerted in an upward direction, opposing the pull of gravity” (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 3rd ed. [1992], “lift,” 1040).
7. “Stick to Your Task,” in Jack M. Lyon and others, eds., *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People* (1996), 255–56.
8. In his 95th year, President Joseph Fielding Smith publicly expressed the hope that he would be able “to endure to the end in this life” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 92; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970, 27). He who served so faithfully and well all of his days provided a model for all of us to follow.
9. See Joseph Smith—History 1:20, 22–24, 27, 58, 60–61, 74.
10. The pioneers were driven from Ohio to Missouri to Illinois and finally to the valley of the Great Salt Lake.
11. The early pioneers were forced out of Missouri under threat of an order signed by Missouri’s governor directing that the “Mormons must be treated as enemies and *must be exterminated* or driven from the state” (*History of the Church*, 3:175).
12. In 1887, the Congress of the USA took the unprecedented step of eliminating the Church’s legal existence by revoking its corporate charter and authorizing federal receivers to assume ownership of virtually all of the Church’s property and other assets, including its most sacred houses of worship—temples—in Logan, Manti, St. George, and Salt Lake City (see *The Late Corporation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints v. United States*, 136 U.S. 1 [1890]).
13. 2 Timothy 4:7.
14. See 3 Nephi 27:13.
15. See Moses 1:39.
16. John 17:4; italics added. See also John 4:34.
17. See Matthew 14:21; 16:9; Mark 6:44; 8:19; Luke 9:14; John 6:10.
18. John 6:60.
19. John 6:67–69.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 42:22.
21. This statement has been made by many leaders of the Church. For example, see Howard W. Hunter, in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50; David O. McKay, as quoted by Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 77.
22. First session of member fireside conference in Lima, Peru, 9 Nov. 1996.

23. Ephesians 5:33.
24. In addition, worthy men are privileged to qualify for the oath and covenant of the priesthood, which will bless all men, women, and children whom they serve (see D&C 84:33–48).
25. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
26. Mark 4:17.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; 21:5; 68:4.
28. See Acts 27:30–31; 1 Nephi 18:21–23.
29. “Master, the Tempest Is Raging,” *Hymns*, no. 105.
30. Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
31. John Greenleaf Whittier, “Maud Muller,” *The Complete Poetical Works of Whittier* (1892), 48.
32. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7. The Prophet Joseph included this concept of endurance in the thirteenth article of faith: “We have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things.”
33. See Matthew 6:24.
34. Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28.
35. Jeremiah 31:33.
36. Moroni 10:32.
37. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 96; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 72; italics added.

COMMUNICATION

*The time to listen is when someone
needs to be heard.*

—Elder Marvin J. Ashton

Related Scriptures

Job 6:25

“How forcible are right words!”

Colossians 3:8

“Put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.”

Hebrews 13:16

“But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

James 1:19–20

“Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

“For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

James 3:2

“For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.”

Mosiah 2:32

“Beware lest there shall arise contentions among you.”

Alma 12:14

“For our words will condemn us.”

3 Nephi 11:29

“He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention.”

Doctrine and Covenants 20:54

“And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking.”

Doctrine and Covenants 88:124

“Cease to find fault one with another.”

Doctrine and Covenants 136:23–24

“Cease to contend one with another; cease to speak evil one of another.

“Cease drunkenness; and let your words tend to edifying one another.”

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Communication, of course, needs to take careful account of the realities of our mortal relationships in order to avoid errors.

“William Edward Norris said:

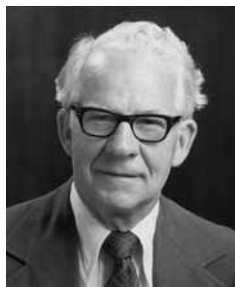
*“If your lips can keep from slips,
Five things observe with care:
To whom you speak; of whom you speak;
And how, and when, and where.”*

“We must be prudent and discreet and yet be willing to communicate, for true brotherhood is such that our friends and families will blow away the chaff in our communications—and do so with the breath of kindness.

“Thus one of the biggest blocks to Christian communication is that we are so afraid of being misunderstood. So, when in doubt, we withhold. Yet Paul said to speak the truth in love; we can then take the chance. We worry (and understandably so) that some communications will only produce more distance. But silence is very risky, too. . . .

“Usually, when we do not know somebody, it is difficult for us to trust them, and this becomes a restraint upon communication and growth. Opening the windows of the soul helps us to build healthy relationships. But if those windows are always closed or the blinds are drawn, it is difficult to help; one simply does not know what is needed” (*All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, 81–82).

FAMILY COMMUNICATIONS



*Elder Marvin J. Ashton
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Apr. 1976, 79–82; or
Ensign, May 1976,
52–54*

Some weeks ago a bewildered father asked, “Why is it I seem to be able to communicate with everyone except my own son?”

I responded with, “What do you mean you can’t communicate with your son?”

“It’s just that whenever I try to tell him anything, he tunes me out,” he replied.

Family Communication

During our private discussion which followed, and very often since, I have concluded that perhaps one of the principal reasons we fail to relate appropriately with family members is because we fail to apply some basics of personal communications. In Hebrews 13:16 we read, “But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Communications in the family will often be a sacrifice because we are expected to use our time, our means, our talent, and our patience to impart, share, and understand. Too often we use communication periods as occasions to tell, dictate, plead, or threaten. Nowhere in the broadest sense should communication in the family be used to impose, command, or embarrass.

To be effective, family communication must be an exchange of feelings and information. Doors of communication will swing open in the home if members will realize time and participation on the part of all are necessary ingredients. In family discussions, differences should not be ignored, but should be weighed and evaluated calmly. One’s point or opinion usually is not as important as a healthy, continuing relationship. Courtesy and respect in listening and responding during discussions are basic in proper dialogue. As we learn to participate together in meaningful associations, we are able to convey our thoughts of love, dependence, and interest. When we are

To be effective, family communication must be an exchange of feelings and information.

inclined to give up in despair in our efforts to communicate because other family members have failed to respond, perhaps we would do well not to give up, but rather to give and take in our conversations. How important it is to know how to disagree with another’s point of view without being disagreeable. How important it is to have discussion periods ahead of decisions. Jones Stephens wrote, “I have learned that the head does not hear anything until the heart has listened, and that what the heart knows today the head will understand tomorrow.”

Let me share with you seven basic suggestions for more effective family communication.

Sacrifice

1. *A willingness to sacrifice.* Be the kind of a family member who is willing to take time to be available. Develop the ability and self-discipline to think of other family members and their communication needs ahead of your own—a willingness to prepare for the moment—the sharing moment, the teaching moment. Shed the very appearance of preoccupation in self, and learn the skill of penetrating a family member’s shield of preoccupation. Sad is the day when a daughter is heard to say, “My mother gives me everything except herself.”

Too early and too often we sow the seeds of “Can’t you see I’m busy? Don’t bother me now.” When we convey the attitude of “Go away, don’t bother me now,” family members are apt to go elsewhere or isolate themselves in silence. All family members on some occasion or other must be taken on their own terms so they will be willing to come, share, and ask.

It takes personal sacrifice to communicate when conditions are right for the other person—during the meal preparation, after a date, a hurt, a victory, a disappointment, or when someone wants to share a confidence. One must be willing to forego personal convenience to invest time in establishing a firm foundation for family communication. When communication in the family seems to be bogging down, each individual should look to himself for the remedy.

If we would know true love and understanding one for another, we must realize that communication is more than a sharing of words. It is the *wise* sharing of emotions, feelings, and concerns. It is the sharing

of oneself totally. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." (James 3:13.)

Setting Stage

2. *A willingness to set the stage.* The location, setting, or circumstances should be comfortable, private, and conversation-conducive. Effective communications have been shared in a grove of trees, on the mount, by the sea, in family home evening, during a walk, in a car, during a vacation, a hospital visit, on the way to school, during the game. When the stage is set, we must be willing to let the other family member be front and center as we appropriately respond.

Months and years after the score of a baseball game is long forgotten, the memory of having been there all alone with Dad will never dim. I'll not soon forget a ten-year-old girl excitedly telling me she had just ridden in the car with her daddy all the way from Salt Lake to Provo and back. "Was the radio on?" I asked. "Oh, no," she responded, "all Daddy did was listen and talk to me." She had her daddy all to herself in a setting she'll not soon forget. Let the stage be set whenever the need is there. Let the stage be set whenever the other person is ready.

Listening

3. *A willingness to listen.* Listening is more than being quiet. Listening is much more than silence. Listening requires undivided attention. The time to listen is when someone needs to be heard. The time to deal with a person with a problem is when he has the problem. The time to listen is the time when our interest and love are vital to the one who seeks our ear, our heart, our help, and our empathy.

We should all increase our ability to ask comfortable questions, and then listen—intently, naturally. Listening is a tied-in part of loving. How powerful are the words, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

"For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." (James 1:19–20.)

Voice Feelings

4. *A willingness to vocalize feelings.* How important it is to be willing to voice one's thoughts and feelings. Yes, how important it is to be able to converse on the level of each family member. Too often we are

inclined to let family members assume how we feel toward them. Often wrong conclusions are reached. Very often we could have performed better had we known how family members felt about us and what they expected.

John Powell shares this touching experience: "It was the day my father died. . . . In the small hospital room, I was supporting him in my arms, when . . . my father slumped back, and I lowered his head gently onto the pillow. I . . . told my mother . . . :

"It's all over, Mom. Dad is dead."

"She startled me. I will never know why these were her first words to me after his death. My mother said: 'Oh, he was so proud of you. He loved you so much.'

"Somehow I knew . . . that these words were saying something very important to me. They were like a sudden shaft of light, like a startling thought I had never before absorbed. Yet there was a definite edge of pain, as though I were going to know my father better in death than I had ever known him in life.

"Later, while a doctor was verifying death, I was leaning against the wall in the far corner of the room, crying softly. A nurse came over to me and put a comforting arm around me. I couldn't talk through my tears. I wanted to tell her:

"I'm not crying because my father is dead. I'm crying because my father never told me that he was proud of me. He never told me that he loved me. Of course, I was expected to know these things. I was expected to know the great part I played in his life and the great part I occupied of his heart, but he never told me.'" (*The Secret of Staying in Love*, Niles, Ill.: Argus, 1974, p. 68.)

How significant are God's words when he took the time to vocalize his feelings with, "This is my beloved Son," yes, even the powerful communication, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17.)

Often parents communicate most effectively with their children by the way they listen to and address each other. Their conversations showing gentleness and love are heard by our ever-alert, impressionable children. We must learn to communicate effectively not only by voice, but by tone, feeling, glances, mannerisms, and total personality. Too often when we are not able to converse with a daughter or wife we wonder, "What is wrong with her?" when we should be wondering, "What is wrong with our methods?"

A meaningful smile, an appropriate pat on the shoulder, and a warm handshake are all-important. Silence isolates. Strained silent periods cause wonderment, hurt, and, most often, wrong conclusions.

God knows the full impact of continuing communication as he admonishes us to pray constantly. He, too, has promised to respond as we relate to him effectively.

Do Not Judge

5. *A willingness to avoid judgment.* Try to be understanding and not critical. Don't display shock, alarm, or disgust with others' comments or observations. Don't react violently. Work within the framework of a person's free agency. Convey the bright and optimistic approach. There is hope. There is a way back. There is a possibility for better understanding.

Let a common ground for personal decision be developed. "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11) are words that are just as gentle and effective today as when they were first uttered.

Avoid imposing your values on others. When we can learn to deal with issues without involving personalities and at the same time avoid bias and emotions, we are on our way to effective family communications. When a family member makes a decision which may be inadequate or improper, do we have the ability and patience to convey the attitude that we don't agree with his decision but he has the right of choice and is still a loved member of the family?

It is easy to point out mistakes and pass judgment. Sincere compliments and praise come much harder from most of us. It takes real maturity for a parent to apologize to a child for an error. An honest apology often makes the son or daughter feel surprisingly warm toward the mother or father or brother or sister. "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." (James 3:2.)

Be Worthy of Trust

6. *A willingness to maintain confidences.* Be worthy of trust even in trivial questions and observations. Weighty questions and observations will only follow if we have been trustworthy with the trivial. Treat innermost trusts and concerns with respect. Build

on deserved trust. Individuals who are blessed to have a relationship with someone to whom they can confidently talk and trust are fortunate indeed. Who is to say a family trust is not greater than a community trust?

Communicate Patiently

7. *A willingness to practice patience.* Patience in communication is that certain ingredient of conduct we hope others will exhibit toward us when we fail to measure up. Our own patience is developed when we are patient with others.

"Be patient; be sober; be temperate; have patience, faith, hope and charity." (D&C 6:19.)

"I get sick and tired of listening to your complaints" and "I have told you a thousand times" are but two of many often-repeated family quotations that indicate patience is gone and channels of communication are plugged.

It takes courage to communicate patiently. We constantly need to express pride, hope, and love on a most sincere basis. Each of us needs to avoid coming through as one who has given up and has become totally weary in trying.

The correction of family members in front of others is to be avoided. Much more notice is taken in quiet, private conversation. Calm endurance is a priceless virtue in one's relationship with all family members.

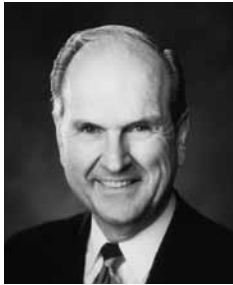
When family members tune each other out, communication is not taking place. Words spoken are unheard, unwanted, and resisted when we fail to understand the basics for proper interchange. Each must be willing to do his part to improve, since the family unit is the basic foundation of the Church. Proper communication will always be a main ingredient for building family solidarity and permanence.

Effective Communication

I pray our Heavenly Father will help us to communicate more effectively in the home through a willingness to sacrifice, a willingness to listen, a willingness to vocalize feelings, a willingness to avoid judgment, a willingness to maintain confidences, and a willingness to practice patience. "How forcible are right words!" (Job 6:25.) Yes, how forcible are right words shared at the right moment with the right person.

May our gracious and kind Heavenly Father help us in our needs and desires for more effective family communication. Communication can help build family unity if we will work at it and sacrifice for it. For this goal, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

LISTEN TO LEARN



*Elder Russell M. Nelson
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Apr. 1991, 27–28, 31;
or Ensign, May
1991, 22–23, 25*

Listen to Learn

In his invocation for this session of conference, Elder Hugh W. Pinnock prayed that we might listen carefully. Many articles in Church literature have dealt with the important art of listening.¹ They support a proverb that teaches this vital lesson: “Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise” (Proverbs 19:20).² Surely wisdom will come as we *listen to learn* from children, parents, partners, neighbors, Church leaders, and the Lord.

Children

Parents and teachers, learn to listen, then listen to learn from children. A wise father once said, “I do a greater amount of good when I listen to my children than when I talk to them.”³

When our youngest daughter was about four years of age, I came home from hospital duties quite late one evening. I found my dear wife to be very weary. I don’t know why. She only had nine children underfoot all day. So I offered to get our four-year-old ready for bed. I began to give the orders: “Take off your clothes; hang them up; put on your pajamas; brush your teeth; say your prayers” and so on, commanding in a manner befitting a tough sergeant in the army. Suddenly she cocked her head to one side, looked at me with a wistful eye, and said, “Daddy, do you own me?”

She taught me an important lesson. I was using coercive methods on this sweet soul. To rule children by force is the technique of Satan, not of the Savior. No, we don’t own our children. Our parental privilege is to love them, to lead them, and to let them go.

The time to listen is when someone needs to be heard. Children are naturally eager to share their experiences, which range from triumphs of delight to trials of distress. Are we as eager to listen? If they try to express their anguish, is it possible for us to listen openly to a shocking experience without going into a state of shock ourselves? Can we listen without interrupting and without making snap judgments that slam shut the door of dialogue? It can remain open with the soothing reassurance that we believe in them and understand their feelings. Adults should not pretend an experience did not happen just because they might wish otherwise.

Even silence can be misinterpreted. A story was written of “a little boy [who] looked up at his mother and said, ‘Why are you mad at me?’ She answered, ‘I’m not angry at you. What makes you say that?’ ‘Well, your hands are on your hips, and you are not saying anything.’⁴

Parents with teenage youth may find that time for listening is often less convenient but more important when young people feel lonely or troubled. And when they seem to deserve favor least, they may need it most.

Wise parents and teachers, listen to learn from children.

Parents

Children of all ages, learn to listen, and listen to learn from parents, as Elder [Dallin H.] Oaks taught us this morning. Spiritually or physically, it can be a matter of life and death.

Several years ago I was invited to give an important lecture at a medical school in New York City. The night before the lecture, Sister Nelson and I were invited to dinner at the home of our host professor. There he proudly introduced us to an honor medical student—his beautiful daughter.

Some weeks later that professor telephoned me in an obvious state of grief. I asked, “What is the matter?”

“Remember our daughter whom you met at our home?”

“Of course,” I replied. “I’ll never forget such a stunning young lady.”

Then her father sobbed and said, “Last night she was killed in an automobile accident!” Trying to gain composure, he continued: “She asked permission to go to a dance with a certain young man. I didn’t have a good feeling about it. I told her so and asked

her not to go. She asked, ‘Why?’ I simply told her that I was uneasy. She had always been an obedient daughter, but she said that if I could not give her a good reason to decline, she wanted to go. And so she did. At the dance, alcoholic beverages were served. Her escort drank a bit—we don’t know how much. While returning home, he was driving too fast, missed a turn, and careened through a guardrail into a reservoir below. They were both submerged and taken to their death.”

As I shared my feeling of sadness, he concluded: “My grief is made worse because I had the distinct feeling that trouble lay ahead. Why couldn’t I have been more persuasive?”

This experience will not have been in vain if others can listen and learn from it. Children, honor your parents,⁵ even when they cannot give a satisfactory explanation for their feelings. Please have faith in this scripture, which applies to all age-groups: “Hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Proverbs 1:8).

Parents have a divine duty to teach their children to love the Lord.⁶ Children have an equal obligation to “obey [their] parents in the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1).⁷

Wise children, listen to learn from parents.

Partners

Husbands and wives, learn to listen, and listen to learn from one another. I was amused to read of an experience recorded by Elder F. Burton Howard in his biography of President Marion G. Romney: “His good-humored love for Ida was manifested in many ways. He delighted in telling of her hearing loss. ‘I once went to see a doctor about her hearing,’ he would say. ‘He asked me how bad it was, and I said I didn’t know. He told me to go home and find out. The doctor instructed me to go into a far room and speak to her. Then I should move nearer and nearer until she does hear. Following the doctor’s instructions, I spoke to her from the bedroom while she was in the kitchen—no answer. I moved nearer and spoke again—no answer. So I went right up to the door of the kitchen and said, ‘Ida, can you hear me?’ She responded, ‘What is it, Marion—I’ve answered you three times.’”⁸

Even with normal hearing, some couples seem not to listen to one another. Taking time to talk is essential to keep lines of communication intact. If marriage is a prime relationship in life, it deserves prime time! Yet less important appointments are

often given priority, leaving only leftover moments for listening to precious partners.

Keeping the garden of marriage well cultivated and free from weeds of neglect requires the time and commitment of love. It is not only a pleasant privilege, it is a scriptural requirement with promise of eternal glory.⁹

Wise partners, listen to learn from one another. . . .

The wise listen to learn from the Lord. I testify of Him and certify that as we “hearken and . . . hear the voice of the Lord,” we will be blessed, “for the hour of his coming is nigh” (D&C 133:16–17), in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Examples include the following:

Marvin J. Ashton, “Family Communications,” *New Era*, Oct. 1978, pp. 7–9.

Lynne Baker, “Please Take Time to Listen!!” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1968, pp. 110–13.

Marilyn A. Bullock, “Listening to My Two-year-old,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, p. 70.

Henry B. Eyring, “Listen Together,” in *1988–89 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1989], pp. 11–21.

Winnifred C. Jardine, “Listen with All of You,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1974, p. 51.

Larry K. Langlois, “When Couples Don’t Listen to Each Other,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1989, pp. 16–19.

Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, pp. 27–31; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, pp. 19–21.

H. Burke Peterson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, pp. 105–8; or *Ensign*, May 1990, pp. 83–84.

“Giving with Your Ears,” *Church News*, 13 Jan. 1985, p. 16.

“Parents, Are You Listening?” *Ensign*, Feb. 1971, pp. 54–57.

2. See also Proverbs 8:32–33; Jacob 6:12.
3. George D. Durrant, “Take Time to Talk,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1973, p. 24; see also James 1:19.
4. Florence B. Pinnock, “Let’s Listen,” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1964, pp. 872–73.
5. See Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Matthew 15:4; 19:19; Mark 7:10; 10:19; Luke 18:20; Ephesians 6:2; 1 Nephi 17:55; Mosiah 13:20.

6. See Leviticus 10:11; Deuteronomy 4:10; 6:5–7; 11:19; Mosiah 1:4; D&C 68:25, 28; Moses 6:57–58.
7. See also Colossians 3:20.
8. F. Burton Howard, *Marion G. Romney: His Life and Faith* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], pp. 144–45.
9. See Ephesians 5:25, 33; Colossians 3:19; 1 Peter 3:1; Jacob 3:7; D&C 132:19.

COVENANTS AND ORDINANCES

*Keep your covenants
and you will be safe. Break them
and you will not.*

—Elder Boyd K. Packer

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Keeping Our Covenants

President Joseph Fielding Smith

“The Holy Spirit of Promise is the Holy Ghost who places the stamp of approval upon every ordinance: baptism, confirmation, ordination, marriage. The promise is that the blessings will be received through faithfulness.

“If a person violates a covenant, whether it be of baptism, ordination, marriage or anything else, the Spirit withdraws the stamp of approval, and the blessings will not be received.

“Every ordinance is sealed with a promise of a reward based upon faithfulness. The Holy Spirit withdraws the stamp of approval where covenants are broken” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:45).

“*Divorce Not Part of Gospel Plan.* If all mankind would live in strict obedience to the gospel, and in that love which is begotten by the Spirit of the Lord, all marriages would be eternal, divorce would be unknown. . . .

“*Lord’s Penalty for Divorce* . . .

“Marriage according to the law of the Church is the most holy and sacred ordinance. It will bring to the husband and the wife, if they abide in their covenants, the fulness of exaltation in the kingdom of God. When that covenant is broken, it will bring *eternal misery to the guilty party*, for we will all have to answer for our deeds done while in the flesh. It is an ordinance that cannot be trifled with, and the covenants made in the temple cannot be broken without dire punishment to the one who is guilty. . . .

“*Man Commanded to Be Fruitful and Multiply.*

The obligations which married couples take upon themselves should conform in every particular to the commandments given by the Lord.

“In the beginning, the Lord said when he gave Eve to Adam, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.’ [Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28.] This earth was created for the very purpose that the spirit children of our Father might have the *privilege of the temporal existence*, receiving bodies of flesh and bones as tabernacles for the spirits which occupy them, and then, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, receive the resurrection in which the spirit and the body become inseparably connected so that man may live again. . . .

“The covenant given to Adam to multiply was renewed after the flood with Noah and his children after him. The Lord said to Noah: ‘And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein. And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you.’ [Genesis 9:7–9.]

“This covenant is still binding, although mankind has departed from the way of eternal life and has rejected the covenant of marriage which the Lord revealed. . . .

“*Enormity of Sex Sin* . . .

“Is there any wonder, then, that the Lord places the violation of this covenant of marriage and the loss of virtue as second only to the shedding of innocent blood? [See Alma 39:5–9.] Is there not, then, sufficient reason for the severity of the punishment which has been promised to those who violate this eternal law? Moreover, *have we not forgotten in large measure the enormity of the crime of unchastity and breaking of marriage vows?* Do those who are guilty think the enormity of the offense of maliciously or wickedly tampering with the laws of life will be overlooked by a just God? Do they think that only a few stripes, if any punishment at all, will amend this broken law?” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:80, 83–84, 86–87, 92).

Elder Marion G. Romney

“These fruits of the gospel—assurance that we shall obtain eternal life, peace in this world sustained by such an assurance, and finally eternal life in the world to come—are within the reach of us all. Sometimes, however, because of our lack of

understanding and appreciation of them, I am persuaded that we take too much for granted. We assume that because we are members of the Church, we shall receive as a matter of course all the blessings of the gospel. I have heard people contend that they have a claim upon them because they have been through the temple, even though they are not careful to keep the covenants they there made. I do not think this will be the case.

“We might take a lesson from an account given by the Prophet of a vision of the resurrection, in which he records that *one of the saddest things he had ever witnessed was the sorrow of members of the Church who came forth to a resurrection below that which they had taken for granted they would receive*” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1949, 43; italics added).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“My message is to you who are tempted either to promote, to enter, or to remain in a life-style which violates your covenants and will one day bring sorrow to you and to those who love you.

“Growing numbers of people now campaign to make spiritually dangerous life-styles legal and socially acceptable. Among them are abortion, the gay-lesbian movement, and drug addiction. They are debated in forums and seminars, in classes, in conversations, in conventions, and in courts all over the world. The social and political aspects of them are in the press every day.

“The point I make is simply this: there is a *MORAL* and *SPIRITUAL* side to these issues which is universally ignored. For Latter-day Saints, morality is one component which must not be missing when these issues are considered—otherwise sacred covenants are at risk! Keep your covenants and you will be safe. Break them and you will not. . . .

“The laws of God are ordained to make us happy. Happiness cannot coexist with immorality: the prophet Alma told us in profound simplicity that ‘wickedness never was happiness’ (Alma 41:10)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 107–8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 84).

Elder Robert D. Hales

“As taught in this scripture [D&C 123:19], 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.

“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 442:22)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 87; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 65).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland and Patricia T. Holland

“*JRH*: That is why we can make covenants with such confidence, knowing with certainty God’s power over darkness and danger and troubles of every kind. We should give gratitude from the depths of our soul for a plan of happiness that provides for escape from every personal mistake we have ever made and every dumb thing we have ever done. We should express eternal thanks for the pure, single-minded, divine goodness that can cover every concern, heal every wound, make up for every defect, and eventually dry every tear. That’s the God and Christ and plan King Lamoni saw, and that is what stunned him so. It will stun us, too—by its strength and by its splendor—when our need is great enough, our faith strong enough, and our view clear enough to see it. In our hour of extremity, we will, if we keep our covenants, see the clouds of darkness lift, the veil of unbelief cast away by the hand of a Father who is eternally committed to our happiness.

“*PTH*: . . . Covenants not only commit us to being unshakable in our devotion to God, they remind us God will always be unshakable in his devotion toward us. And though we may falter and make mistakes, he never falters. He never makes a mistake. He is ever faithful to us. That is the beauty and majesty inherent in the covenants we make with God.

“*JRH*: Covenants are binding, supernal, consummate contracts between God and his children. They are the solemn promises of Deity—a God who always keeps his word—that heaven will pour out unmeasured blessings upon all who are faithful and honor the conditions of their pledge. An individual can swear an oath, but only when God reciprocates in kind is a covenant established.

“We know that oaths are never to be spoken lightly, and covenantal language is of a higher order yet. By definition, covenants invoke the most sacred language we can utter in this world. This language establishes a bond and a relationship unique in the human experience. It is the means by which individuals in a fallen family make their way back to eternal splendor. It is the means by which each one of us can be, in the Lord’s own words, ‘a peculiar treasure unto me above all people’ (Exodus 19:5). That is why keeping our covenants will, as the scripture says, add ‘glory . . . upon their heads for ever and ever’ (Abraham 3:26)” (in Green and Anderson, *To Rejoice as Women*, 99–100).

Elder J. Ballard Washburn

“Thus we see that in marriage, a husband and wife enter into an order of the priesthood called the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. This covenant includes a willingness to have children and to teach them the gospel. Many problems of the world today are brought about when parents do not accept the responsibilities of this covenant. It is contradictory to this covenant to prevent the birth of children if the parents are in good health.

“Thirty-five years ago when I first started practicing medicine, it was a rare thing for a married woman to seek advice about how she could keep from having babies. When I finished practicing medicine, it was a rare thing, except for some faithful Latter-day Saint women, for a married woman to want to have more than one or two children, and some did not want *any* children. We in the Church must not be caught up in the false doctrines of the world that would cause us to break sacred temple covenants.

“We go to the temple to make covenants, but we go home to keep the covenants that we have made. The home is the testing ground. The home is the place where we learn to be more Christlike. The home is the place where we learn to overcome selfishness and give ourselves in service to others” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 13; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 12).

Our Covenant-Based Relationship with the Lord

Concerning the importance of reviewing our gospel covenants, Elder M. Russell Ballard stated:

“A periodic review of the covenants we have made with the Lord will help us with our priorities and with balance in our lives. This review will help us see where we need to repent and change our lives to ensure that we are worthy of the promises that accompany our covenants and sacred ordinances. Working out our own salvation requires good planning and a deliberate, valiant effort” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 15; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 14).

From the following charts, review the promises we make and the blessings offered for obedience to each gospel covenant. Do you sense a need to improve? What can you do to be more faithful in keeping the covenants that prepare us for eternal marriage? What can you do to be more faithful in keeping the covenants associated with the new and everlasting covenant of marriage?

BAPTISM

Authority

A priest in the Aaronic Priesthood (or any Melchizedek Priesthood holder) may perform the ordinance upon approval of the local priesthood leader. He offers the scripturally prescribed baptismal prayer and then completely immerses the baptism recipient in the water.

Covenants We Make with God

We covenant to:

- Come into the fold of God.
- Take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ.
- Stand as a witness for Jesus Christ.
- Always keep the commandments.
- Bear one another's burdens.
- Manifest a determination to serve God unto the end.
- Manifest by works that we have repented of our sins.
- Prepare to receive the Holy Ghost for the complete remission of sins.

See 2 Nephi 31:17–21; Mosiah 18:8–10; D&C 20:37; Articles of Faith 1:4.

Blessings Promised

1. We qualify for membership in Christ's Church.
2. If we are worthy, the Lord promises to:
 - Pour out His Spirit upon us.
 - Redeem us from our sins.
 - Raise us up in the First Resurrection.
 - Give us eternal life.

GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST

Authority

A Melchizedek Priesthood holder, authorized by the local priesthood leader, may confer the gift of the Holy Ghost by prayer and the laying on of hands.

Covenants We Make with God

In order to qualify for the gift of the Holy Ghost we must fulfill the covenants of baptism, continue in humility and faith, and otherwise be worthy of the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost (see Articles of Faith 1:4).

Blessings Promised

1. We are confirmed as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2. We receive the right or privilege to enjoy the continual companionship of the Holy Ghost. We can receive inspiration, divine manifestations, spiritual gifts, and direction from the Holy Ghost continually. We also receive blessings by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost as the Holy Ghost bears witness of Jesus Christ and of divine truths, provides spiritual guidance and warnings, and enables us to discern right and wrong.
3. We are sanctified or cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost and are born of God as we continue faithfully. Through this baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, individual hearts and desires are cleansed and spirits are made pure. Receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost is the culmination of the process of repentance and baptism (see 2 Nephi 31:13, 17; 3 Nephi 27:20).
4. We know the gift of the Holy Ghost is the key to all of the spiritual gifts found in the Church, including the gifts of prophecy and revelation, healing, speaking in tongues, and translating and interpreting tongues.

SACRAMENT

Authority

A priest in the Aaronic Priesthood (or any Melchizedek Priesthood holder) may administer the sacrament upon approval of the local priesthood leader. Sacramental prayers are revealed in the scriptures.

Covenants We Make with God

We covenant to:

- Renew our baptismal covenants.
- Recommit to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments. Partaking of the sacrament is a time for personal introspection, repentance, and rededication.

See 3 Nephi 18:28–29; Moroni 4–5; D&C 20:75–79; 27:2; 46:4.

Blessings Promised

1. The Lord forgives sins we repent for.
2. The Lord promises that we may always have His Spirit to be with us.

RECEIVE THE OATH AND COVENANT OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Authority

A Melchizedek Priesthood holder with the authority to do so may ordain worthy male members to the Melchizedek Priesthood by prayer and the laying on of hands.

Covenants We Make with God

Priesthood holders covenant to:

- Receive in good faith and with honest intent both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods (see D&C 84:33).
- Magnify callings by fulfilling all responsibilities associated with the priesthood offices they are called to.
- Teach the word of God and labor with all their might to advance the Lord's purposes (see Jacob 1:19).
- Obtain a knowledge of the gospel (see D&C 107:31).
- Give service by comforting and strengthening the Saints of God (see Mosiah 18:8–9).
- Be obedient and “give diligent heed to the words of eternal life” (D&C 84:43).
- Listen to and follow revelation from the Lord. “Live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God” (v. 44).

See also Elder Carlos E. Asay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 56–58; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 43–44.

Blessings Promised

Worthy priesthood holders receive these promises:

1. Be “sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies” (D&C 84:33).
2. “Become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham” (v. 34).
3. Become members of “the church and kingdom, and the elect of God” (v. 34).
4. Receive the Father's kingdom and “all that my Father hath shall be given unto him” (v. 38).
5. Receive of the Father's fulness and glory and become “gods, even the sons of God” (D&C 76:58).
6. Are warned that anyone who rejects this covenant and “altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come” (D&C 84:41).

President Marion G. Romney of the First Presidency made the following comment about D&C 84:41: “I don't think he is talking here necessarily about the unpardonable sin, but I am saying that those of us who receive this priesthood and understand what it is about and fail to magnify our callings will lose something we cannot recover hereafter” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, 116; or *Ensign*, May 1974, 80).

TEMPLE ENDOWMENT

Authority

The temple endowment is a gift of spiritual power and blessing from above. It consists of a course of instruction, receiving saving ordinances, and making covenants administered by authorized officiators only in dedicated temples (see D&C 95:8; 97:14; 109:13–15).

The temple endowment is seen as the continuation and culmination of the covenants made at baptism. Temple covenants include “tests by which our willingness and fitness for righteousness may be known” (John A. Widtsoe, *Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 178).

Covenants We Make with God

We covenant to:

“Observe the law of strict virtue and chastity, to be charitable, benevolent, tolerant and pure; to devote both talent and material means to the spread of truth and the uplifting of the race; to maintain devotion to the cause of truth; and to seek in every way to contribute to the great preparation that the earth may be made ready to receive her King,—the Lord Jesus Christ” (James E. Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 84).

Blessings Promised

1. “With the taking of each covenant and the assuming of each obligation a promised blessing is pronounced, contingent upon the faithful observance of the conditions” (Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 84).
2. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the endowment was designed to give us “a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 324), “to prepare the disciples for their missions unto the world” (p. 274), to prevent us from being “overcome by these evils” (p. 259), and to enable us “to secure the fullness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the Firstborn” (p. 237).
3. President Gordon B. Hinckley in the dedicatory prayer of the Vernal Utah Temple said, “We pray that Thou wilt visit it, and may Thy Holy Spirit dwell here to sanctify it and make it holy unto all who enter its portals” (“We Thank Thee for This Sacred Structure,” *Church News*, 8 Nov. 1997, 4). Through the temple endowment, we may seek “a fulness of the Holy Ghost” (D&C 109:15). Temple ordinances are seen as a means for receiving inspiration and instruction through the Holy Spirit and for preparing to return to God’s presence.

CELESTIAL MARRIAGE

Authority

A temple officiator who has the sealing power of the priesthood invokes covenants intended to be efficacious for time and for all eternity. Celestial marriage involves a ceremony performed in a holy temple (see D&C 131:1–3; 132:18–19).

Covenants We Make with God

Couples who promise to abide the law of celestial marriage:

- Covenant in pure love to remain faithful to each other and to God through all eternity.
- Covenant to confine their intimate affections and sexual relations to each other.
- Commit to live in ways that contribute to happy and successful family life.
- Covenant “to ‘be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth’ (Gen. 1:28). A primary purpose of temple marriage in this life is to grow and mature in sharing God’s creative work in raising a family in righteousness. Parents enter into a partnership with God by participating in the procreation of mortal bodies, which house the spirit children of God” (in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:859).

Blessings Promised

1. Husbands and wives will receive eternal life in the world to come, the glory of the celestial kingdom (see D&C 88:4; Moses 6:59).
2. They shall become gods with all power and “shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers” (D&C 132:19).
3. They shall obtain exaltation in the highest degree of the celestial glory (see D&C 131:1–4).
4. They will come to know God the Father and Jesus Christ (see D&C 132:48–50).

Wayward Children Born under the Covenant

The Prophet Joseph Smith

“When a seal is put upon the father and mother, it secures their posterity, so that they cannot be lost, but will be saved by virtue of the covenant of their father and mother” (in *History of the Church*, 5:530).

President Brigham Young

“Let the father and mother, who are members of this Church and Kingdom, take a righteous course, and strive with all their might never to do a wrong, but to do good all their lives; if they have one child or one hundred children, if they conduct themselves towards them as they should, binding them to the Lord by their faith and prayers, I care not where those children go, they are bound up to their parents by an everlasting tie, and no power of earth or hell can separate them from their parents in eternity; they will return again to the fountain from whence they sprang” (in *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 208).

First Presidency—Spencer W. Kimball, N. Eldon Tanner, Marion G. Romney

“In a day when the sanctity of the home is being invaded and where the care of children has been regarded lightly, we, by means of the family home evening manual, have endeavored to impress upon the parents the importance of developing a love in the home so that in the future, should those children thus taught stray away, they would eventually return again, lest they lose their place in the eternal family circle” (*Family Home Evening: Love Makes Our House a Home*, 2).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“It is not uncommon for responsible parents to lose one of their children, for a time, to influences over which they have no control. They agonize over rebellious sons or daughters. They are puzzled over why they are so helpless when they have tried so hard to do what they should.

“It is my conviction that those wicked influences one day will be overruled.

“The Prophet Joseph Smith declared—and he never taught a more comforting doctrine—that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of

Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. . . . Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God’ (Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, p. 110).

“We cannot overemphasize the value of temple marriage, the binding ties of the sealing ordinance, and the standards of worthiness required of them. When parents keep the covenants they have made at the altar of the temple, their children will be forever bound to them” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 94–95; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 68).

Elder James E. Faust

“There are some great spiritual promises which may help faithful parents in this church. Children of eternal sealings may have visited upon them the divine promises made to their valiant forebears who nobly kept their covenants. Covenants remembered by parents will be remembered by God. The children may thus become the beneficiaries and inheritors of these great covenants and promises. This is because they are the children of the covenant” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 43; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 35).

COVENANT MARRIAGE



Elder Bruce C. Hafen

Of the Seventy

In Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 33–36; or Ensign, Nov. 1996, 26–28

Marriage Is a Covenant, Not a Contract

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*.

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.

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.”¹ 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.²

An Eternal Perspective of Marriage

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.

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.”³ Astute parents will see a little connection here—no children, no misery! But left in the garden, Adam and Eve could never know joy. So the Lord taught them they would live and bear children in sorrow, sweat, and thorns.

Still, the ground was cursed *for their sake*:⁴ their path of affliction also led to the *joy* of both redemption

and comprehension.⁵ 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.

And yet—marrying and raising children *can* yield the most valuable religious experiences of a couple’s 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.”⁶

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.

The “Wolf” of Natural Adversity

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.⁷

The “Wolf” of Personal Imperfections

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.

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.

Marriage is by nature a covenant, not just a private contract one may cancel at will.

The “Wolf” of Excessive Individualism

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.

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 far more at risk than children in two-parent families.⁸ The primary cause of today’s general decline in child well-being is a remarkable “collapse of marriage.”⁹

Modern Questions about Marriage

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.¹⁰ But as the modern prophets recently proclaimed, “marriage . . . is ordained of God.”¹¹ Even secular marriage was historically a three-party covenant among a man, a woman, and the state. Society has a huge interest in the outcome and the offspring of every marriage. So the public nature of marriage distinguishes it from all other relationships. Guests come to weddings, wrote Wendell Berry, because sweethearts “say their vows to the community as much as to one another,” giving themselves not only to each other, but also to the common good “as no *contract* could ever join them.”¹²

Observing Covenants Brings Strength

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.”

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.

Be As Shepherds, Not Hirelings

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

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.

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

Notes

1. John 10:12–15.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 2.
3. 2 Nephi 2:23.
4. See Moses 4:23.
5. See Moses 5:11.
6. Alma 28:8.
7. See Moses 5:27.
8. See Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, “Dan Quayle Was Right,” *Atlantic Monthly*, Apr. 1993, 47.
9. Maggie Gallagher, *The Abolition of Marriage* (1996), 4.
10. See Bruce Dunford, “Governor: Take State Out of Marriage Role,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 9 Jan. 1996, p. A5; “Family Cannot Be Forced,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 17 Jan. 1996, p. A10.
11. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
12. Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community* (1993), 125, 137–39; italics added.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 97:8.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:2.
15. See 2 Nephi 2:25.

DATING STANDARDS

*Right marriage begins
with right dating.*

—Elder Spencer W. Kimball

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Soul mates’ are fiction and an illusion; and while every young man and young woman will seek with all diligence and prayerfulness to find a mate with whom life can be most compatible and beautiful, yet it is certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage if both are willing to pay the price” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 4).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Not only should a mission be regarded as a priesthood duty, but every young man should look forward to this experience with great joy and anticipation. . . .

“You can do nothing more important. School can wait. Scholarships can be deferred. Occupational goals can be postponed. Yes, even temple marriage should wait until after a young man has served an honorable full-time mission for the Lord. And I would admonish you to date only faithful young women who also believe this and give you that encouragement” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 57; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 44).

“Now, brethren, do not expect perfection in your choice of a mate. Do not be so particular that you overlook her most important qualities of having a strong testimony, living the principles of the gospel, loving home, wanting to be a mother in Zion, and supporting you in your priesthood responsibilities.

“Of course, she should be attractive to you, but do not just date one girl after another for the sole pleasure of dating without seeking the Lord’s confirmation in your choice of your eternal companion.

“And one good yardstick as to whether a person might be the right one for you is this: in her presence, do you think your noblest thoughts, do you aspire

to your finest deeds, do you wish you were better than you are?” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 59; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 53).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“How truly beautiful is a well-groomed young woman who is clean in body and mind. She is a daughter of God in whom her Eternal Father can take pride. How handsome is a young man who is well groomed. He is a son of God, deemed worthy of holding the holy priesthood of God. He does not need tattoos or earrings on or in his body. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve are all united in counseling against these things. . . .

“And now just a word on the most common and most difficult of all problems for you young men and young women to handle. It is the relationship that you have one with another. You are dealing with the most powerful of human instincts. Only the will to live possibly exceeds it.

“The Lord has made us attractive one to another for a great purpose. But this very attraction becomes as a powder keg unless it is kept under control. It is beautiful when handled in the right way. It is deadly if it gets out of hand.

“It is for this reason that the Church counsels against early dating. This rule is not designed to hurt you in any way. It is designed to help you, and it will do so if you will observe it.

“Steady dating at an early age leads so often to tragedy. Studies have shown that the longer a boy and girl date one another, the more likely they are to get into trouble.

“It is better, my friends, to date a variety of companions until you are ready to marry. Have a wonderful time, but stay away from familiarity. Keep your hands to yourself. It may not be easy, but it is possible. . . .

“. . . You mean so much to this Church. It could not be the same without you. Stand tall, proud of your inheritance as sons and daughters of God. Look to Him for understanding and guidance. Walk according to His precepts and commandments.

“You can have a good time. Of course you can! We want you to have fun. We want you to enjoy life. We do not want you to be prudes. We want you to be robust and cheerful, to sing and dance, to laugh and be happy.

“But in so doing, be humble and be prayerful, and the smiles of heaven will fall upon you” (“A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 8, 11).

“I do not worry about you young men who have recently returned from the mission field. You know as well as I what you ought to do. It is your responsibility and opportunity, under the natural process of dating and courting, to find a wonderful companion and marry in the house of the Lord. Don’t rush it unduly and don’t delay it unduly. ‘Marry in haste and repent at leisure’ is an old proverb that still has meaning in our time. But do not dally along in a fruitless, frustrating, and frivolous dating game that only raises hopes and brings disappointment and in some cases heartache” (“To Single Adults,” *Ensign*, June 1989, 72; see also 73–75).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

“Boys seldom criticize a girl for using too little makeup. Sometimes they say, ‘She’s a nice girl, but I wish she’d dress up, and she uses too much makeup.’ To be overdressed, to be gaudily dressed, to be dressed to look sexy, to be overdecorated is bad taste, to say the least. The young woman is smart who can don just enough powder and lipstick to convince the fellows it isn’t makeup at all, but the ‘real you.’ . . .

“Young men should keep their faces shaved, their hair combed, their haircuts reasonably conservative, their nails cleaned. Overtight, suggestive pants brand young men as vulgar. Young people can be smart and personable, dignified and attractive by finding an area somewhere less than the extremes and still in good style” (“Save the Youth of Zion,” *Improvement Era*, Sept. 1965, 761).

“Clearly, right marriage begins with right dating. A person generally marries someone from among those with whom he associates. . . . Therefore, this warning comes with great emphasis. Do not take the chance of dating nonmembers, or members who are untrained and faithless. A girl may say, ‘Oh I do not intend to marry this person. It is just a “fun” date.’ But one cannot afford to take a chance on falling in love with someone who may never accept the gospel” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, 241–42).

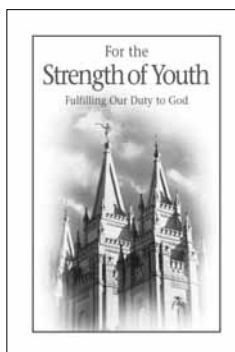
Elder M. Russell Ballard

“You young men must cultivate a considerate attitude toward women of all ages. The young women asked

me to tell you that they want you to respect them and show them common, sincere courtesy. Do not hesitate to show your good manners by opening a door for them, taking the initiative in inviting them on a date, and standing as they enter a room. Believe it or not, in this age of equal rights, the young women want you to extend these simple courtesies” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 48; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 37).

FOR THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH: FULFILLING OUR DUTY TO GOD

Booklet



Agency and Accountability

“Wherefore, men . . . are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death” (2 Nephi 2:27).

Your Heavenly Father has given you agency, the ability to choose right from wrong

and to act for yourself. You have been given the Holy Ghost to help you know good from evil. While you are here on earth, you are being proven to see if you will use your agency to show your love for God by keeping His commandments.

While you are free to choose for yourself, you are not free to choose the consequences of your actions. When you make a choice, you will receive the consequences of that choice. The consequences may not be immediate, but they will always follow, for good or bad. Wrong choices delay your progression and lead to heartache and misery. Right choices lead to happiness and eternal life. That is why it is so important for you to choose what is right throughout your life.

You are responsible for the choices you make. You should not blame your circumstances, your family, or your friends if you choose to disobey God’s commandments. You are a child of God with great strength. You have the ability to choose righteousness and happiness, no matter what your circumstances.

You are also responsible for developing the abilities and talents Heavenly Father has given you. You are accountable to Him for what you do with your abilities and how you spend your time. Do not idle away your time. Be willing to work hard. Choose to do many good things of your own free will.

Matthew 25:14–29

Gratitude

“He who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious” (D&C 78:19).

The Lord wants you to have a spirit of gratitude in all you do and say. Live with a spirit of thanksgiving and you will have greater happiness and satisfaction in life. Even in your most difficult times, you can find much to be grateful for. Doing so will strengthen and bless you.

In your prayers, before you ask for blessings, pour out your heart to God in thanks for the blessings you have already received. Thank Him for your family, for friends and loved ones, for leaders and teachers, for the gospel, and for His Son, Jesus Christ.

You can also express gratitude to the Lord by the way you live. When you keep His commandments and serve others, you show that you love Him and are grateful to Him. Express appreciation to everyone who helps you in any way.

Luke 17:12–19

Education

“Learn wisdom in thy youth” (Alma 37:35).

The Lord wants you to educate your mind and improve your skills and abilities. Education will help you to be an influence for good in the world. It will help you better provide for yourself, your loved ones, and those in need.

Be willing to work diligently and make sacrifices to obtain learning. Education is an investment that brings great rewards. You live in a competitive world where a good education opens the doors of opportunity that may otherwise be closed to you.

Maintain an enthusiasm for learning throughout your life. Find joy in continuing to learn about yourself, other people, and the world around you. Study the words of the Lord, and continue learning about your Heavenly Father’s plan. Make seminary an important part of your total education.

Doctrine and Covenants 88:77–80

Family

“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” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”).

Being part of a family is a great blessing. Your family can provide you with companionship and happiness, help you learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and help you prepare for eternal life. Not all families are the same, but each is important in Heavenly Father’s plan.

Do your part to build a happy home. Be cheerful, helpful, and considerate of others. Many problems in the home are created because family members speak and act selfishly or unkindly. Concern yourself with the needs of other family members. Seek to be a peacemaker rather than to tease, fight, and quarrel. Remember that the family is the most sacred unit of the Church.

Honor your parents by showing love and respect for them and by being obedient. Be willing to help in the home with chores that need to be done. Participate in family activities and traditions, including family prayer, family home evenings, and family scripture reading. These traditions strengthen and unify families. Set a good example for other family members.

Strengthen your relationships with your brothers and sisters. They can become your closest friends. Support them in their interests and help them with problems they may be facing.

Ephesians 6:1–3

Friends

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

Choose your friends carefully. They will greatly influence how you think and act, and even help determine the person you will become. Choose friends who share your values so you can strengthen and encourage each other in living high standards. A true friend will encourage you to be your best self.

To have good friends, be a good friend yourself. Show interest in others and let them know you care about them. Treat everyone with kindness and

respect. Go out of your way to be a friend to those who are shy or do not feel included.

Invite your friends of other faiths to your Church meetings and activities, where they can learn about the gospel. Help them feel welcome and wanted. Many people have joined the Church through the example and fellowship of their friends. Don't be offended if your friends decline your invitation to learn more about the gospel. Just continue to be their friend.

Make a special effort to reach out to new converts and to those who are less active. Help them feel welcome among your group of friends. You can strengthen them by sharing your testimony and by setting a good example.

Alma 17:1–2

Dress and Appearance

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . . The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

Your body is God's sacred creation. Respect it as a gift from God, and do not defile it in any way. Through your dress and appearance, you can show the Lord that you know how precious your body is. You can show that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Prophets of God have always counseled His children to dress modestly. The way you dress is a reflection of what you are on the inside. Your dress and grooming send messages about you to others and influence the way you and others act. When you are well groomed and modestly dressed, you invite the companionship of the Spirit and can exercise a good influence on those around you.

Never lower your dress standards for any occasion. Doing so sends the message that you are using your body to get attention and approval and that modesty is important only when it is convenient.

Immodest clothing includes short shorts and skirts, tight clothing, shirts that do not cover the stomach, and other revealing attire. Young women should wear clothing that covers the shoulder and avoid clothing that is low-cut in the front or the back or revealing in any other manner. Young men should also maintain modesty in their appearance. All should avoid extremes in clothing, appearance, and hairstyle. Always be neat and clean and avoid being sloppy or inappropriately casual in dress, grooming,

and manners. Ask yourself, “Would I feel comfortable with my appearance if I were in the Lord's presence?”

Someday you will receive your endowment in the temple. Your dress and behavior should help you prepare for that sacred time.

Do not disfigure yourself with tattoos or body piercings. If girls or women desire to have their ears pierced, they are encouraged to wear only one pair of modest earrings.

Show respect for the Lord and for yourself by dressing appropriately for Church meetings and activities, whether on Sunday or during the week. If you are not sure what is appropriate, ask your parents or leaders for help.

Alma 1:27

Entertainment and the Media

“If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Whatever you read, listen to, or look at has an effect on you. Therefore, choose only entertainment and media that uplift you. Good entertainment will help you to have good thoughts and make righteous choices. It will allow you to enjoy yourself without losing the Spirit of the Lord.

While much entertainment is good, some of it can lead you away from righteous living. Offensive material is often found in web sites, concerts, movies, music, videocassettes, DVDs, books, magazines, pictures, and other media. Satan uses such entertainment to deceive you by making what is wrong and evil look normal and exciting. It can mislead you into thinking that everyone is doing things that are wrong.

Do not attend, view, or participate in entertainment that is vulgar, immoral, violent, or pornographic in any way. Do not participate in entertainment that in any way presents immorality or violent behavior as acceptable.

Pornography in all its forms is especially dangerous and addictive. What may begin as a curious indulgence can become a destructive habit that takes control of your life. It can lead you to sexual transgression and even criminal behavior.

Pornography is a poison that weakens your self-control, changes the way you see others, causes you

to lose the guidance of the Spirit, and can even affect your ability to have a normal relationship with your future spouse. If you encounter pornography, turn away from it immediately.

Depictions of violence often glamorize vicious behavior. They offend the Spirit and make you less able to respond to others in a sensitive, caring way. They contradict the Savior's message of love for one another.

Have the courage to walk out of a movie or video party, turn off a computer or television, change a radio station, or put down a magazine if what is being presented does not meet Heavenly Father's standards. Do these things even if others do not. Let your friends and family know that you are committed to keeping God's standards. You have the gift of the Holy Ghost, which will give you strength and help you make good choices.

Moroni 7:12–19

Music and Dancing

“Praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing” (D&C 136:28).

Music is an important and powerful part of life. It can be an influence for good that helps you draw closer to Heavenly Father. However, it can also be used for wicked purposes. Unworthy music may seem harmless, but it can have evil effects on your mind and spirit.

Choose carefully the music you listen to. Pay attention to how you feel when you are listening. Don't listen to music that drives away the Spirit, encourages immorality, glorifies violence, uses foul or offensive language, or promotes Satanism or other evil practices.

Dancing can be fun and can provide an opportunity to meet new people. However, it too can be misused. When dancing, avoid full body contact with your partner. Do not use positions or moves that are suggestive of sexual behavior. Plan and attend dances where dress, grooming, lighting, lyrics, and music contribute to a wholesome atmosphere where the Spirit of the Lord may be present.

Doctrine and Covenants 25:12

Language

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good” (Ephesians 4:29).

How you speak says much about who you are. Clean and intelligent language is evidence of a bright and wholesome mind. Use language that uplifts, encourages, and compliments others. Do not insult others or put them down, even in joking. Speak kindly and positively about others so you can fulfill the Lord's commandment to love one another. When you use good language, you invite the Spirit to be with you.

Always use the names of God and Jesus Christ with reverence and respect. Misusing their names is a sin. Profane, vulgar, or crude language or gestures, as well as jokes about immoral actions, are offensive to the Lord and to others. Foul language harms your spirit and degrades you. Do not let others influence you to use it.

Choose friends who use good language. Help others around you use clean language by your example and by good-naturedly encouraging them to choose other words. Politely walk away or change the subject when others around you use bad language.

If you have developed the habit of swearing, you can break it. Begin by making a decision to change. Pray for help. If you start to use words you know are wrong, keep quiet or say what you have to say in a different way.

James 3:2–13

Dating

“The Lord has made us attractive one to another for a great purpose. But this very attraction becomes as a powder keg unless it is kept under control. . . . It is for this reason that the Church counsels against early dating” (President Gordon B. Hinckley).

In cultures where dating or courtship is acceptable, dating can help you develop lasting friendships and eventually find an eternal companion. Date only those who have high standards and in whose company you can maintain your standards. A young man and a young woman on a date are responsible to help each other maintain their standards and to protect each other's honor and virtue. You must honor the sanctity of the priesthood and of womanhood.

Do not date until you are at least 16 years old. Dating before then can lead to immorality, limit the number of other young people you meet, and deprive you of experiences that will help you choose an eternal partner.

Not all teenagers need to date or even want to. Many young people do not date during their teen years because they are not yet interested, do not have opportunities, or simply want to delay forming serious relationships. However, good friendships can and should be developed at every age.

When you begin dating, go in groups or on double dates. Avoid going on frequent dates with the same person. Make sure your parents meet those you date. You may want to invite your dates to activities with your family. Plan dating activities that are positive and inexpensive and that will help you get to know each other. Do things that will help you and your companions maintain your self-respect and remain close to the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 6:14

Sexual Purity

“The sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”).

Physical intimacy between husband and wife is beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife. God has commanded that sexual intimacy be reserved for marriage.

When you obey God’s commandment to be sexually pure, you prepare yourself to make and keep sacred covenants in the temple. You prepare yourself to build a strong marriage and to bring children into the world as part of a loving family. You protect yourself from the emotional damage that always comes from sharing physical intimacies with someone outside of marriage.

Do not have any sexual relations before marriage, and be completely faithful to your spouse after marriage. Satan may tempt you to rationalize that sexual intimacy before marriage is acceptable when two people are in love. That is not true. In God’s sight, sexual sins are extremely serious because they defile the power God has given us to create life. The prophet Alma taught that sexual sins are more serious than any other sins except murder or denying the Holy Ghost (see Alma 39:5).

Before marriage, do not do anything to arouse the powerful emotions that must be expressed only in marriage. Do not participate in passionate kissing, lie on top of another person, or touch the private, sacred parts of another person’s body, with or without

clothing. Do not allow anyone to do that with you. Do not arouse those emotions in your own body.

In cultures where dating or courting is acceptable, always treat your date with respect, never as an object to be used for your lustful desires. Stay in areas of safety where you can easily control your physical feelings. Do not participate in talk or activities that arouse sexual feelings.

Homosexual activity is a serious sin. If you find yourself struggling with same-gender attraction, seek counsel from your parents and bishop. They will help you.

Victims of rape, incest, or other sexual abuse are not guilty of sin. If you have been a victim of any of these crimes, know that you are innocent and that God loves you. Seek your bishop’s counsel immediately so he can help guide you through the process of emotional healing.

If you are tempted to commit sexual transgressions, seek help from your parents, your bishop, and friends you can trust. Pray to the Lord, who will help you resist temptation and overcome inappropriate thoughts and feelings.

If you have committed sexual transgressions, begin the process of repentance now so you can find inner peace and have the full companionship of the Spirit. Seek the Lord’s forgiveness. Talk with your bishop. He will help you obtain the forgiveness available to those who truly repent.

Genesis 39:1–12; Doctrine and Covenants 38:42

Repentance

“He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42).

The Savior gave His life for us and suffered for our sins. This great sacrifice is called the Atonement. Through the Atonement, you can receive forgiveness and be cleansed from your sins when you repent. When you do what is necessary to receive forgiveness, you will know for yourself the power of the Atonement and the love God has for you. You will feel the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ, which will bring you great strength.

Satan wants you to think that you cannot repent, but that is absolutely not true. The Savior has promised you forgiveness if you will do what is required. The sooner you repent, the sooner you will find the blessings that come from forgiveness.

Some people knowingly break God's commandments, expecting to repent before they go to the temple or serve a mission. Such deliberate sin mocks the Savior's Atonement and invites Satan to influence your life. Repentance for such behavior is difficult and can take a long time. If you sin in this way, you may lose years of blessings and spiritual guidance. You may become trapped in the sinful behavior, making it difficult to find your way back.

You always need to confess your sins to the Lord. You should also confess your sins to those you have wronged. If you have committed serious sins, such as immorality, you need to confess them to your bishop.

Alma 36:6–24

Honesty

"Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness" (Exodus 20:15–16).

Be honest with yourself, others, and the Lord. When you are honest in every way, you build strength of character that will allow you to be of great service to God and others. You will be blessed with peace of mind and self-respect. When you are honest, you will be trusted by the Lord and by those around you.

Dishonesty hurts you and usually hurts others as well. When you lie, steal, shoplift, or cheat, you damage your spirit and become less able to do good things. Be honest in your job, giving a full amount of work for your pay.

Don't rationalize that wrong is right, even though many people around you may think there is no harm in being dishonest. Being honest requires courage and commitment to do what you know is right.

Alma 27:27

Sabbath Day Observance

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

The Lord has given the Sabbath day for your benefit and has commanded you to keep it holy. Observing the Sabbath will bring you closer to the Lord and to your family. It will give you needed rest and rejuvenation.

Many uplifting activities are appropriate for the Sabbath. Worship the Lord, attend church, spend quiet time with your family, study the gospel, write letters, write in your journal, do family history work, and visit the sick or homebound. Your dress before, during, and after church meetings should show respect for the Sabbath.

When seeking a job, share with your potential employer your desire to attend your Sunday meetings and keep the Sabbath day holy. Many employers value employees with these personal convictions. Whenever possible, choose a job that does not require you to work on Sundays.

Sunday is not a holiday or a day for recreation or athletic events. Do not seek entertainment or spend money on this day. Let your friends know what your standards are so they will not try to persuade you to participate in activities that are not appropriate for the Sabbath.

Doctrine and Covenants 59:9–13

Tithes and Offerings

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, . . . and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10; 3 Nephi 24:10).

The law of tithing is an important commandment that you should obey throughout your life. A tithe is one-tenth of your income.

Paying tithing shows your gratitude for all that God has given you. It is a way to help build God's kingdom on earth. Tithing is used to build temples and meetinghouses, translate and publish the scriptures, provide Church materials to members, do missionary work, perform temple and family history work, and support seminaries and institutes.

Your attitude is important in paying tithing. Pay it because you love the Lord and have faith in Him. Pay it willingly with a thankful heart. Pay it first, even when you think you don't have enough money to meet your other needs. Doing so will help you overcome selfishness and be more receptive to the Spirit.

At the end of each year, schedule a time for tithing settlement with your bishop. This is a meeting in which you review your contribution records and declare whether you have paid a full tithe.

Obey the law of the fast by fasting once each month (if health permits), usually on the first Sunday of the month. A proper fast day observance includes not eating or drinking for two consecutive meals and giving a generous fast offering to help care for those in need. Begin and end your fast with prayer, asking for special help with a specific need.

Doctrine and Covenants 119:3–4

Physical Health

“All saints who remember to keep and do these sayings . . . shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones; and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint” (D&C 89:18–20).

The Lord has commanded you to take good care of your body. To do this, observe the Word of Wisdom, found in Doctrine and Covenants 89. Eat nutritious food, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep.

When you do all these things, you remain free from harmful addictions and have control over your life. You gain the blessings of a healthy body, an alert mind, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Never use tobacco products, such as cigarettes, snuff, chewing tobacco, cigars, and pipe tobacco. They are very addictive and will damage your body and shorten your life. Also, do not drink coffee or tea, for these are addictive and harmful.

Any form of alcohol is harmful to your body and spirit. Being under the influence of alcohol weakens your judgment and self-control and could lead you to break the law of chastity or other commandments. Drinking can lead to alcoholism, which destroys individuals and families.

Any drug, chemical, or dangerous practice that is used to produce a sensation or “high” can destroy your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. These include hard drugs, prescription or over-the-counter medications that are abused, and household chemicals.

Never let Satan or others lead you to think that breaking the Word of Wisdom will make you happier or more attractive.

Daniel 1:3–20

Service to Others

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

Service to others is one of the most important characteristics of a disciple of Jesus Christ. A disciple is willing to bear other people’s burdens and to comfort those who need comfort (see Mosiah 18:8–9). Often Heavenly Father will meet the needs of others through you.

When serving, look to the Savior as your example. Although He came to earth as the Son of God, He humbly served those around Him.

There are many ways to serve others. You can serve in your Church assignments and in your home, school, and community. Seek daily the guidance of the Holy Ghost to know whom to serve and how to help meet their needs. Often the most important service is expressed through simple, everyday acts of kindness.

As you devote yourself to serving others, you will draw closer to Heavenly Father. Your heart will be filled with love. Your capacities will increase, and your life and the lives of those around you will be blessed.

Luke 10:25–37

Go Forward with Faith

The standards presented in this book will help you make correct choices. Review them often and ask yourself, “Am I living the way the Lord wants me to live?”

To help you become all that the Lord wants you to become, get on your knees each day and express to Him the desires of your heart. He is the source of all wisdom, and you need His help. He will hear and answer you.

Read the scriptures daily. They are a powerful source of personal revelation and a constant strength to your testimony.

Remember and keep the covenants you made when you were baptized and that you renew each week when you partake of the sacrament. You young men should keep the covenants you made when you received the priesthood. Keeping these covenants now will help you prepare for the temple covenants you will make in the future.

Be true to the Lord and to His Church in all circumstances. The authorities of the Church will lead you in paths of happiness. Be grateful for your membership in God’s great kingdom.

Be humble and willing to listen to the whisperings of the Spirit. Place the wisdom of the Lord above your own wisdom.

When you do these things, the Lord will make much more out of your life than you can by yourself. He will increase your opportunities, expand your vision, and strengthen you. He will give you the help you need to meet your trials and challenges. You will find true joy as you come to know your Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, and feel their love for you.

2 Nephi 31:16–21

DEBT

*The time has come to get
our houses in order.*

—President Gordon B. Hinckley

Related Scriptures

Proverbs 22:77

“The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.”

Romans 13:8

“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.”

Mosiah 4:28

“And I would that ye should remember, that whosoever among you borroweth of his neighbor should return the thing that he borroweth, according as he doth agree, or else thou shalt commit sin; and perhaps thou shalt cause thy neighbor to commit sin also.”

Doctrine and Covenants 64:27

“Behold, it is said in my laws, or forbidden, to get in debt to thine enemies.”

Doctrine and Covenants 104:78

“And again, verily I say unto you, concerning your debts—behold it is my will that you shall pay all your debts.”

Doctrine and Covenants 136:25

“If thou borrowest of thy neighbor, thou shalt restore that which thou hast borrowed; and if thou canst not repay then go straightway and tell thy neighbor, lest he condemn thee.”

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Spencer W. Kimball

“All my life from childhood I have heard the Brethren saying, ‘get out of debt and stay out of debt.’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 166).

“Selfishness and other sins are responsible for most divorces. The apostle Paul knew the answer. He said for men to love their wives and wives to love their husbands. For two people to work out their marriage together, they need a carefully worked out budget, made by both husband and wife, and then careful adherence to the same” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1975, 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 6).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Our inspired leaders have always urged us to get out of debt, live within our means, and pay as we go” (“Pay Thy Debt, and Live,” *Ensign*, June 1987, 3).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“To satisfy our desires, we go into debt, dissipate our resources in the payment of high interest, and become as slaves working to pay it off. . . .

“I commend to you the virtues of thrift and industry. . . . It is work and thrift that make the family independent” (“Thou Shalt Not Covet,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1990, 4).

President Thomas S. Monson

“We urge all Latter-day Saints to be prudent in their planning, to be conservative in their living, and to avoid excessive or unnecessary debt” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 68; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 47).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

See quotation on pages 115–19.

Elder L. Tom Perry

“The current cries we hear coming from the great and spacious building tempt us to compete for ownership in the things of this world. . . . Often these items are purchased with borrowed money without giving any thought to providing for our future needs. . . .

“. . . Wisely we have been counseled to avoid debt as we would avoid the plague. . . .

“. . . A well-managed family does not pay interest—it earns it” (in Conference Report, Sept.–Oct. 1995, 45, 47; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 35–36).

President James E. Faust

“We must be careful of the misuse of credit. The use of credit cards in many places has increased consumer

debt to staggering proportions. I am reminded of the story of ‘an elderly farmer [who] wrote to a mail order house as follows: “Please send me one of the gasoline engines you show on page 787, and if it’s any good, I’ll send you a check.”

“In time he received the following reply: “Please send check. If it’s any good, we’ll send the engine.” [Jacob M. Braude, *Braude’s Treasure of Wit and Humor* (1964), 45.]

“Contemporary society rushes headlong to accumulate the material goods of this world. This leads many to think they can alter the law of the harvest, reaping rewards without paying the price of honest toil and effort. Wishing to prosper immediately, they speculate in high-risk financial schemes that promote instant wealth. This all too frequently results in economic reverses, sometimes even financial ruin. In Proverbs we read, ‘A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.’ [Proverbs 28:20.]” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 59; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 44).

Elder James E. Faust

“It is important to learn to distinguish between wants and needs. It takes self-discipline to avoid the ‘buy now, pay later’ philosophy and to adopt the ‘save now and buy later’ practice. . . .

“Owning a home free of debt is an important goal of provident living. . . . Homes that are free and clear of mortgages and liens cannot be foreclosed on. . . .

“. . . Independence means many things. It means . . . being free of personal debt and of the interest and carrying charges required by debt the world over” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 24–25; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 20–21).

Elder Joe J. Christensen

See “Greed, Selfishness, and Overindulgence” on pages 120–22.

TO THE BOYS AND TO THE MEN



President Gordon B. Hinckley

President of the Church

In Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 69–72; or Ensign, Nov. 1998, 52–54

To the Older Men

Now, brethren, I should like to talk to the older men, hoping that there will be some lesson for the younger men as well.

I wish to speak to you about temporal matters.

As a backdrop for what I wish to say, I read to you a few verses from the 41st chapter of Genesis.

Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, dreamed dreams which greatly troubled him. The wise men of his court could not give an interpretation. Joseph was then brought before him:

“Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river:

“And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow:

“And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed. . . .

“And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine: . . .

“And I saw in my dream . . . seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good:

“And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them:

“And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears. . . .

“And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, . . . God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

“The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. . . .

“. . . What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

“Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

“And there shall arise after them seven years of famine. . . .

“ . . . And God will shortly bring it to pass” (Genesis 41:17–20, 22–26, 28–30, 32).

Get Our Houses in Order

Now, brethren, I want to make it very clear that I am not prophesying, that I am not predicting years of famine in the future. But I am suggesting that the time has come to get our houses in order.

So many of our people are living on the very edge of their incomes. In fact, some are living on borrowings.

We have witnessed in recent weeks wide and fearsome swings in the markets of the world. The economy is a fragile thing. A stumble in the economy in Jakarta or Moscow can immediately affect the entire world. It can eventually reach down to each of us as individuals. There is a portent of stormy weather ahead to which we had better give heed.

I hope with all my heart that we shall never slip into a depression. I am a child of the Great Depression of the thirties. I finished the university in 1932, when unemployment in this area exceeded 33 percent.

My father was then president of the largest stake in the Church in this valley. It was before our present welfare program was established. He walked the floor worrying about his people. He and his associates established a great wood-chopping project designed to keep the home furnaces and stoves going and the people warm in the winter. They had no money with which to buy coal. Men who had been affluent were among those who chopped wood.

Warning against Consumer Debt

I repeat, I hope we will never again see such a depression. But I am troubled by the huge consumer installment debt which hangs over the people of the nation, including our own people. In March 1997 that debt totaled \$1.2 trillion, which represented a 7 percent increase over the previous year.

In December of 1997, 55 to 60 million households in the United States carried credit card balances. These balances averaged more than \$7,000 and cost \$1,000 per year in interest and fees. Consumer debt as a percentage of disposable income rose from 16.3 percent in 1993 to 19.3 percent in 1996.

Everyone knows that every dollar borrowed carries with it the penalty of paying interest. When money

cannot be repaid, then bankruptcy follows. There were 1,350,118 bankruptcies in the United States last year. This represented a 50 percent increase from 1992. In the second quarter of this year, nearly 362,000 persons filed for bankruptcy, a record number for a three-month period.

We are beguiled by seductive advertising. Television carries the enticing invitation to borrow up to 125 percent of the value of one's home. But no mention is made of interest.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr., in the April 1938 general conference, said from this pulpit, “Once in debt, interest is your companion every minute of the day and night; you cannot shun it or slip away from it; you cannot dismiss it; it yields neither to entreaties, demands, or orders; and whenever you get in its way or cross its course or fail to meet its demands, it crushes you” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1938, 103).

Live within Your Means

I recognize that it may be necessary to borrow to get a home, of course. But let us buy a home that we can afford and thus ease the payments which will constantly hang over our heads without mercy or respite for as long as 30 years.

No one knows when emergencies will strike. I am somewhat familiar with the case of a man who was highly successful in his profession. He lived in comfort. He built a large home. Then one day he was suddenly involved in a serious accident. Instantly, without warning, he almost lost his life. He was left a cripple. Destroyed was his earning power. He faced huge medical bills. He had other payments to make. He was helpless before his creditors. One moment he was rich; the next he was broke.

Since the beginnings of the Church, the Lord has spoken on this matter of debt. To Martin Harris through revelation He said: “Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage” (D&C 19:35).

President Heber J. Grant spoke repeatedly on this matter from this pulpit. He said:

“If there is any one thing that will bring peace and contentment into the human heart, and into the family, it is to live within our means. And if there is any one thing that is grinding and discouraging and disheartening, it is to have debts and

obligations that one cannot meet" (*Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham [1941], 111).

Become Self-Reliant

We are carrying a message of self-reliance throughout the Church. Self-reliance cannot obtain when there is serious debt hanging over a household. One has neither independence nor freedom from bondage when he is obligated to others.

In managing the affairs of the Church, we have tried to set an example. We have, as a matter of policy, stringently followed the practice of setting aside each year a percentage of the income of the Church against a possible day of need.

I am grateful to be able to say that the Church in all its operations, in all its undertakings, in all of its departments, is able to function without borrowed money. If we cannot get along, we will curtail our programs. We will shrink expenditures to fit the income. We will not borrow.

One of the happiest days in the life of President Joseph F. Smith was the day the Church paid off its long-standing indebtedness.

What a wonderful feeling it is to be free of debt, to have a little money against a day of emergency put away where it can be retrieved when necessary.

President Faust would not tell you this himself. Perhaps I can tell it, and he can take it out on me

afterward. He had a mortgage on his home drawing 4 percent interest. Many people would have told him he was foolish to pay off that mortgage when it carried so low a rate of interest. But the first opportunity he had to acquire some means, he and his wife determined they would pay off their mortgage. He has been free of debt since that day. That's why he wears a smile on his face, and that's why he whistles while he works.

Free Yourself from Bondage of Debt

I urge you, brethren, to look to the condition of your finances. I urge you to be modest in your expenditures; discipline yourselves in your purchases to avoid debt to the extent possible. Pay off debt as quickly as you can, and free yourselves from bondage.

This is a part of the temporal gospel in which we believe. May the Lord bless you, my beloved brethren, to set your houses in order. If you have paid your debts, if you have a reserve, even though it be small, then should storms howl about your head, you will have shelter for your wives and children and peace in your hearts. That's all I have to say about it, but I wish to say it with all the emphasis of which I am capable.

I leave with you my testimony of the divinity of this work and my love for each of you, in the name of the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

DIFFERENCES INHERENT BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

*Some roles are best suited
to the masculine nature and others
to the feminine nature.*

—Elder Boyd K. Packer

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Harold B. Lee

“From my experience, it would seem that faithful mothers have a special gift that we often refer to as mother’s intuition. Perhaps with the great blessing of motherhood, our Heavenly Father has endowed them with this quality, since fathers, busy in priesthood callings and with the work of earning a livelihood, never draw quite as close to heavenly beings in matters that relate to the more intimate details of bringing up children in the home” (*Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, 291).

President Spencer W. Kimball

“In his wisdom and mercy, our Father made men and women dependent on each other for the full flowering of their potential. Because their natures are somewhat different, they can complement each other; because they are in many ways alike, they can understand each other. Let neither envy the other for their differences; let both discern what is superficial and what is beautifully basic in those differences, and act accordingly” (“Relief Society—Its Promise and Potential,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, 5).

“We had full equality as his spirit children. We have equality as recipients of God’s perfected love for each of us. . . .

“Within those great assurances, however, our roles and assignments differ. These are eternal differences—with women being given many tremendous responsibilities of motherhood and sisterhood and men being given the tremendous responsibilities

of fatherhood and the priesthood” (“The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 102).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“You [women] were not created to be the same as men. Your natural attributes, affections, and personalities are entirely different from a man’s. They consist of faithfulness, benevolence, kindness, and charity. They give you the personality of a woman. They also balance the more aggressive and competitive nature of a man.

“The business world is competitive and sometimes ruthless. We do not doubt that women have both the brainpower and skills—and in some instances superior abilities—to compete with men. But by competing they must, of necessity, become aggressive and competitive. Thus their godly attributes are diminished and they acquire a quality of sameness with man” (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 547–48).

President Howard W. Hunter

“I suppose you would say it is a man’s viewpoint to throw a burden upon a woman to maintain the stability and the sweetness of marriage, but this seems to be her divine nature. She has a superior spirituality in the marriage relationship, and the opportunity to encourage, uplift, teach, and be the one who sets the example in the family for righteous living. When women come to the point of realizing that it is more important to be superior than to be equal, they will find the real joy in living those principles that the Lord set out in his divine plan” (*Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 139).

“It seems strange that women want to enter into professions and into work and into places in society on an equality with men, wanting to dress like men and carry on men’s work. I don’t deny the fact that women are capable of doing so, but as I read the scriptures, I find it hard to reconcile this with what the Lord has said about women—what he has said about the family, what he has said about children. It seems to me that in regard to men and women, even though they might be equal in many things, there is a differentiation between them that we fully understand. I hope the time never comes when women will be brought down to the level with men, although they seem to be making these demands in meetings held . . . all over the world” (*Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 150).

President James E. Faust

“Before we were born, male and female, we made certain commitments and . . . agreed to come to this earth with great, rich, but different gifts. We were called, male and female, to do great works with separate approaches and separate assignments.

“. . . Becoming like men is not the answer. Rather, the answer lies in being who you are and living up to your divine potential by fulfilling eternal commitments. . . .

“All of you will have to sometime answer to your natural womanly instincts, which the Prophet Joseph said are according to your natures. He said, ‘If you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates.’ [*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 226.] You should respond generously to those instincts and promptings to do good. Hold your soul very still, and listen to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. Follow the noble, intuitive feelings planted deep within your souls by Deity in the previous world. In this way you will be responding to the Holy Spirit of God and will be sanctified by truth. By so doing, you will be eternally honored and loved. Much of your work is to enrich mankind with your great capacity for care and mercy” (“How Near to the Angels,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 95–97).

President Boyd K. Packer

“The tender hand of the sister gives a gentle touch of healing and encouragement which the hand of a man, however well intentioned, can never quite duplicate” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 94; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 72).

“In the home and in the Church, sisters should be esteemed for their very nature. Be careful lest you unknowingly foster influences and activities which tend to erase the masculine and feminine differences nature has established. A man, a father, can do much of what is usually assumed to be a woman’s work. In turn, a wife and a mother can do much—and in time of need, most things—usually considered the responsibility of the man, without jeopardizing their distinct roles. Even so, leaders, and especially parents, should recognize that there is a distinct

masculine nature and a distinct feminine nature essential to the foundation of the home and the family. Whatever disturbs or weakens or tends to erase that difference erodes the family and reduces the probability of happiness for all concerned” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 73).

Elder Thomas S. Monson

“What the modernists, even the liberationists, fail to remember is that women, in addition to being persons, also belong to a sex, and that with the differences in sex are associated important differences in function and behavior. Equality of rights does not imply identity of functions. As Paul the apostle declared: ‘. . . neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.’ (1 Cor. 11:11.)” (“The Women’s Movement: Liberation or Deception?” *Ensign*, Jan. 1971, 20).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“Except Adam and Eve by nature be different from one another, they could not multiply and fill the earth [see Genesis 1:28, note 28c]. The complementing differences are the very key to the plan of happiness.

“Some roles are best suited to the masculine nature and others to the feminine nature” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 28; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 21).

Elder James E. Faust

See quotations on page 80.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“We live in a day when there are many political, legal, and social pressures for changes that confuse gender and homogenize the differences between men and women. Our eternal perspective sets us against changes that alter those separate duties and privileges of men and women that are essential to accomplish the great plan of happiness. We do not oppose all changes in the treatment of men and women, since some changes in laws or customs simply correct old wrongs that were never grounded in eternal principles” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 99; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 73–74).

There is a distinct masculine nature and a distinct feminine nature essential to the foundation of the home and the family.

Elder Richard G. Scott

“Our Heavenly Father endowed His sons and daughters with unique traits especially fitted for their individual responsibilities as they fulfill His plan. To follow His plan requires that you do those things He expects of you as a son or daughter, husband or wife. Those roles are different, but entirely compatible. In the Lord’s plan, it takes two—a man and a woman—to form a whole. Indeed, a husband and wife are not two identical halves, but a wondrous, divinely determined combination of complementary capacities and characteristics.

“Marriage allows these different characteristics to come together in oneness—in unity—to bless a husband and wife, their children and grandchildren. For the greatest happiness and productivity in life, both husband and wife are needed. Their efforts interlock and are complementary. Each has individual traits that best fit the role the Lord has defined for happiness as a man or woman. When used as the Lord intends, those capacities allow a married couple to think, act, and rejoice as one—to face challenges together and overcome them as one, to grow in love and understanding, and through temple ordinances to be bound together as one whole, eternally. That is the plan.

“You can learn how to be more effective parents by studying the lives of Adam and Eve. Adam was Michael who helped create the earth—a glorious, superb individual. Eve was his equal—a full, powerfully contributing partner. After they had partaken of the fruit, the Lord spoke with them. Their comments reveal some different characteristics of a man and woman. To Adam He said, ‘Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?’ [Moses 4:17.] Now, Adam’s response was characteristic of a man who wants to be perceived as being as close to right as possible. Adam responded, ‘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.’ [Moses 4:18.] And the Lord said unto Eve, ‘What is this thing which thou hast done?’ [Moses 4:19.] Eve’s response was characteristic of a woman. Her answer was very simple and straightforward. ‘The serpent

beguiled me, and I did eat.’ [Moses 4:19.]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 101; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 73–74).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“We know so little, brothers and sisters, about the reasons for the division of duties between womanhood and manhood as well as between motherhood and priesthood. These were divinely determined in another time and another place. . . .

“We men know the women of God as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, associates, and friends. You seem to tame us and to gentle us, and, yes, to teach us and to inspire us. For you, we have admiration as well as affection, because righteousness is not a matter of role, nor goodness a matter of gender. In the work of the Kingdom, men and women are not without each other, but do not envy each other, lest by reversals and renunciations of role we make a wasteland of both womanhood and manhood” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 13; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 10).

Elder Merrill J. Bateman

“When a man understands how glorious a woman is, he treats her differently. When a woman understands that a man has the seeds of divinity within him, she honors him not only for who he is but for what he may become. An understanding of the divine nature allows each person to have respect for the other. The eternal view engenders a desire in men and women to learn from and share with each other.

“Men and women are created as complements. They complete one another. Paul told the Corinthians: ‘Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord’ (1 Corinthians 11:11). Men and women complement each other not only physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. The apostle Paul taught that ‘the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband’ and through them both the children are made holy (1 Corinthians 7:14). Men and women have different strengths and weaknesses, and marriage is a synergistic relationship in which spiritual growth is enhanced because of the differences” (“The Eternal Family,” 113).

FOR TIME AND ALL ETERNITY



*Elder Boyd K. Packer
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Oct. 1993, 27–32;
or Ensign, Nov. 1993,
21–24*

The Great Plan of Happiness

Dear brethren and sisters, the scriptures and the teachings of the Apostles and prophets speak of us in premortal life as sons and daughters, spirit children of God.¹ Gender existed before, and did not begin at mortal birth.²

In the great council in heaven,³ God's plan was presented:⁴ the plan of salvation,⁵ the plan of redemption,⁶ the great plan of happiness.⁷ The plan provides for a proving; all must choose between good and evil.⁸ His plan provides for a Redeemer, an atonement, the Resurrection, and, if we obey, our return to the presence of God.

The adversary rebelled and adopted a plan of his own.⁹ Those who followed him were denied the right to a mortal body.¹⁰ Our presence here confirms that we sanctioned our Father's plan.¹¹

The single purpose of Lucifer is to oppose the great plan of happiness, to corrupt the purest, most beautiful and appealing experiences of life: romance, love, marriage, and parenthood.¹² The specters of heartbreak and guilt¹³ follow him about. Only repentance can heal what he hurts.

God's Plan Requires Marriage and Family

The plan of happiness requires the righteous union of male and female, man and woman, husband and wife.¹⁴ Doctrines teach us how to respond to the compelling natural impulses which too often dominate how we behave.

A body patterned after the image of God was created for Adam,¹⁵ and he was introduced into the Garden.¹⁶ At first, Adam was alone. He held the priesthood,¹⁷ but, alone, he could not fulfill the purposes of his creation.¹⁸

No other man would do. Neither alone nor with other men could Adam progress. Nor could Eve with another woman. It was so then. It is so today.

Eve, an helpmeet, was created. Marriage was instituted,¹⁹ for Adam was commanded to cleave unto his *wife* (not just to a *woman*) and "to none else."²⁰

A choice, it might be said, was imposed upon Eve.²¹ She should be praised for her decision. Then "Adam fell that men might be."²²

Elder Orson F. Whitney described the Fall as having "a twofold direction—downward, yet forward. It brought man into the world and set his feet upon progression's highway."²³

God blessed Adam and Eve "and said unto them: Be fruitful, and multiply."²⁴ And so the family was established.

God Values Men and Women Equally

There is nothing in the revelations which suggests that to be a man rather than to be a woman is preferred in the sight of God, or that He places a higher value on sons than on daughters.

All virtues listed in the scriptures—love, joy, peace, faith, godliness, charity—are shared by both men and women,²⁵ and the highest priesthood ordinance in mortality is given only to man and woman together.²⁶

After the Fall, natural law had far-reaching sovereignty over mortal birth. There are what President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., called "pranks" of nature,²⁷ which cause a variety of abnormalities, deficiencies, and deformities. However unfair they seem to man's way of reasoning, they somehow suit the purposes of the Lord in the proving of mankind.

The following of every worthy instinct, the responding to every righteous urge, the consummating of every exalting human relationship are provided for and approved in the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ and are protected by commandments revealed to His church.

The Roles of Men and Women

Except Adam and Eve by nature be different from one another, they could not multiply and fill the earth.²⁸ The complementing differences are the very key to the plan of happiness.

Some roles are best suited to the masculine nature and others to the feminine nature. Both the scriptures and the patterns of nature place man as the protector, the provider.²⁹

Those responsibilities of the priesthood which have to do with the administration of the Church of necessity function outside the home. By divine decree, they have been entrusted to men. It has been that way since the beginning, for the Lord revealed that “the order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son. . . . This order was instituted in the days of Adam.”³⁰

A man who holds the priesthood does not have an advantage over a woman in qualifying for exaltation. The woman, by her very nature, is also co-creator with God and the primary nurturer of the children. Virtues and attributes upon which perfection and exaltation depend come naturally to a woman and are refined through marriage and motherhood.

The priesthood is conferred only upon worthy men in order to conform to our Father’s plan of happiness. With the laws of nature and the revealed word of God working in harmony, it simply works best that way.

The priesthood carries with it awesome responsibility. “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; by kindness, and pure knowledge.”³¹

Should a man “exercise control or dominion or compulsion . . . in any degree of unrighteousness,”³² he violates “the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.”³³ Then “the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved.”³⁴ Unless he repents, he will lose his blessings.

While the different roles of man and woman are set forth in exalted celestial declarations, they are best demonstrated in the most practical, ordinary, down-to-earth experiences of family life.

Recently I heard a speaker in sacrament meeting complain that he could not understand why his grandchildren always spoke of going to *Grandma’s* house, never to *Grandpa’s* house. I solved that great mystery for him: Grandpas don’t bake pies!

Natural and Spiritual Laws Are Eternal

Natural and spiritual laws which govern life were instituted from before the foundation of the world.³⁵ They are eternal, as are the consequences for either obeying or disobeying them. They are not based on social or political considerations. They cannot be changed. No pressure, no protest, no legislation can alter them.

Years ago I supervised the Indian seminaries. When I visited a school at Albuquerque, the principal told me of an incident that happened in a first-grade class.

During a lesson, a kitten wandered into the room and distracted the youngsters. It was brought to the front of the room so all could see it.

One youngster asked, “Is it a boy kitty or a girl kitty?”

The teacher, unprepared for that discussion, said, “It doesn’t matter; it’s just a kitten.”

But the children persisted, and one little boy said, “I know how we can tell if it is a boy kitty or a girl kitty.”

The teacher, cornered, said, “All right, you tell us how we can tell if it is a boy kitty or a girl kitty.”

The boy answered, “We can vote on it!”

Some things cannot be changed. Doctrine cannot be changed.

“Principles which have been revealed,” President Wilford Woodruff said, “for the salvation and exaltation of the children of men . . . are principles you cannot annihilate. *They are principles that no combination of men [or women] can destroy.* They are principles that can never die. . . . They are beyond the reach of man to handle or to destroy. . . . It is not in the power of the whole world put together to destroy those principles. . . . Not one jot or tittle of these principles will ever be destroyed.”³⁶

During World War II, men were called away to fight. In the emergency, wives and mothers worldwide were drawn into the workforce as never before. The most devastating effect of the war was on the family. It lingers to this generation.

Multiply and Replenish the Earth

In the October 1942 general conference, the First Presidency delivered a message to “the Saints in every land and clime,” in which they said, “By virtue of the authority in us vested as the First Presidency of the Church, we warn our people.”

And they said: “Amongst His earliest commands to Adam and Eve, the Lord said: ‘Multiply and replenish the earth.’ He has repeated that command in our day. He has again revealed in this, the last dispensation, the principle of the eternity of the marriage covenant. . . .

“The Lord has told us that it is the duty of every husband and wife to obey the command given to Adam to multiply and replenish the earth, so that the

legions of choice spirits waiting for their tabernacles of flesh may come here and move forward under God's great design to become perfect souls, for without these fleshly tabernacles they cannot progress to their God-planned destiny. Thus, every husband and wife should become a father and mother in Israel to children born under the holy, eternal covenant.

"By bringing these choice spirits to earth, each father and each mother assume towards the tabernacled spirit and towards the Lord Himself by having taken advantage of the opportunity He offered, an obligation of the most sacred kind, because the fate of that spirit in the eternities to come, the blessings or punishments which shall await it in the hereafter, depend, in great part, upon the care, the teachings, the training which the parents shall give to that spirit.

"No parent can escape that obligation and that responsibility, and for the proper meeting thereof, the Lord will hold us to a strict accountability. No loftier duty than this can be assumed by mortals."

Motherhood Is a Holy Calling

Speaking of mothers, the First Presidency said: "Motherhood thus becomes a holy calling, a sacred dedication for carrying out the Lord's plans, a consecration of devotion to the uprearing and fostering, the nurturing in body, mind, and spirit, of those who kept their first estate and who come to this earth for their second estate 'to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.' (Abraham 3:25) To lead them to keep their second estate is the work of motherhood, and 'they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.' (op. cit.) [Abraham 3:26]

"This divine service of motherhood can be rendered only by mothers. It may not be passed to others. Nurses cannot do it; public nurseries cannot do it; hired help cannot do it—only mother, aided as much as may be by the loving hands of father, brothers, and sisters, can give the full needed measure of watchful care."

The First Presidency counseled that "the mother who entrusts her child to the care of others, that she may do non-motherly work, whether for gold, for fame, or for civic service, should remember that 'a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.' (Prov. 29:15) In our day the Lord has said that unless parents teach their children the doctrines of the

Church 'the sin be upon the heads of the parents.' (D&C 68:25)

"Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels."³⁷

That message and warning from the First Presidency is needed more, not less, today than when it was given. And no voice from any organization of the Church on any level of administration equals that of the First Presidency.³⁸

Any souls who by nature or circumstance are not afforded the blessing of marriage and parenthood, or who innocently must act alone in rearing children and working to support them, will not be denied in the eternities any blessing—provided they keep the commandments.³⁹ As President Lorenzo Snow promised, "That is sure and positive."⁴⁰

Parable of the Treasure and Keys

I close with a parable.

Once a man received as his inheritance two keys. The first key, he was told, would open a vault which he must protect at all cost. The second key was to a safe within the vault which contained a priceless treasure. He was to open this safe and freely use the precious things which were stored therein. He was warned that many would seek to rob him of his inheritance. He was promised that if he used the treasure worthily, it would be replenished and never be diminished, not in all eternity. He would be tested. If he used it to benefit others, his own blessings and joy would increase.

The man went alone to the vault. His first key opened the door. He tried to unlock the treasure with the other key, but he could not, for there were two locks on the safe. His key alone would not open it. No matter how he tried, he could not open it. He was puzzled. He had been given the keys. He knew the treasure was rightfully his. He had obeyed instructions, but he could not open the safe.

In due time there came a woman into the vault. She too held a key. It was noticeably different from the key he held. Her key fit the other lock. It humbled him to learn that he could not obtain his rightful inheritance without her.

They made a covenant that together they would open the treasure and, as instructed, he would watch

over the vault and protect it; she would watch over the treasure. She was not concerned that, as guardian of the vault, he held two keys, for his full purpose was to see that she was safe as she watched over that which was most precious to them both. Together they opened the safe and partook of their inheritance. They rejoiced, for, as promised, it replenished itself.

With great joy they found that they could pass the treasure on to their children; each could receive a full measure, undiminished to the last generation.

Perhaps some few of their posterity would not find a companion who possessed the complementary key, or one worthy and willing to keep the covenants relating to the treasure. Nevertheless, if they kept the commandments, they would not be denied even the smallest blessing.

Because some tempted them to misuse their treasure, they were careful to teach their children about keys and covenants.

There came, in due time, among their posterity some few who were deceived or jealous or selfish because one was given two keys and another only one. "Why," the selfish ones reasoned, "cannot the treasure be mine alone to use as I desire?"

Some tried to reshape the key they had been given to resemble the other key. Perhaps, they thought, it would then fit both locks. And so it was that the safe was closed to them. Their reshaped keys were useless, and their inheritance was lost.

Those who received the treasure with gratitude and obeyed the laws concerning it knew joy without bounds through time and all eternity.

I bear witness of our Father's plan for happiness, and bear testimony in the name of Him who wrought the Atonement, that it might be, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See D&C 76:24; see also Numbers 16:22; Hebrews 12:9.
2. See D&C 132:63; First Presidency, "The Origin of Man" (Nov. 1909), in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75), 4:203; see also Spencer W. Kimball, "The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood," *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, p. 71; Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, p. 115; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 83.
3. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), pp. 348–49, 357, 365.
4. See Abraham 3:24–27.
5. See Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14; 42:5; Moses 6:62.
6. See Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25–36; 17:16; 18:39; 22:13–14; 39:18; 42:11, 13.
7. Alma 42:8.
8. See Alma 42:2–5.
9. See 2 Nephi 9:28; Alma 12:4–5; Helaman 2:8; 3 Nephi 1:16; D&C 10:12, 23; Moses 4:3.
10. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 181, 297.
11. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 181.
12. See 2 Nephi 2:18; 28:20.
13. See Alma 39:5; Moroni 9:9.
14. See D&C 130:2; 131:2; 1 Corinthians 11:11; Ephesians 5:31.
15. See Moses 6:8–9.
16. See Moses 3:8.
17. See Moses 6:67.
18. See Moses 3:18.
19. See Moses 3:23–24.
20. D&C 42:22.
21. See Moses 4:7–12.
22. 2 Nephi 2:25.
23. *Cowley and Whitney on Doctrine*, comp. Forace Green (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1963), p. 287.
24. Moses 2:28; see also Genesis 1:28; 9:1.
25. See Galatians 5:22–23; D&C 4:5–6; Alma 7:23–24.
26. See D&C 131:2.
27. See "Our Wives and Our Mothers in the Eternal Plan" (address given in general Relief Society conference, 3 Oct. 1946), in *J. Reuben Clark: Selected Papers on Religion, Education, and Youth*, ed. David H. Yarn, Jr. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1984), p. 62.
28. See Genesis 1:28, note 28c.

29. See D&C 75:28; 1 Timothy 5:8.
30. D&C 107:40–41; see also D&C 84:14–16.
31. D&C 121:41–42; italics added.
32. D&C 121:37.
33. D&C 84:39.
34. D&C 121:37.
35. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 308, 367.
36. In *Journal of Discourses*, 22:342; italics added.
37. In Conference Report, Oct. 1942, pp. 7, 11–12.
38. See D&C 107:8–9, 22, 91.
39. See D&C 137:7–9.
40. “Discourse by President Lorenzo Snow,” *Millennial Star*, 31 Aug. 1899, p. 547.

THE JOY OF WOMANHOOD



Sister Margaret D. Nadauld
Young Women
General President
In Conference Report,
Oct. 2000, 14–17;
or Ensign, Nov. 2000,
14–16

Faithful Women Have a Glorious Mission

It is a remarkable blessing to be a daughter of God today. We have the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are blessed to have the priesthood restored to the earth. We are led by a prophet of God who holds all of the priesthood keys. I love and honor President Gordon B. Hinckley and all of our brethren who bear the priesthood worthily.

I am inspired by the lives of good and faithful women. From the beginning of time the Lord has placed significant trust in them. He has sent us to earth for such a time as this to perform a grand and glorious mission. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that even before we were born, we were among those who “received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men” (D&C 138:56). What a wonderful vision that gives us of our purpose on earth.

Where much is given, much is required. Our Heavenly Father asks His daughters to walk in virtue, to live in righteousness so that we can fulfill our life’s mission and His purposes. He wants us to be successful, and He will help us as we seek His help.

Women Were Given Special Qualities

That women were born into this earth female was determined long before mortal birth, as were the divine differences of male and female. I love the clarity of the teachings of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve in the proclamation on the family, where they state, “Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”¹ From that statement we are taught that every girl was feminine and female in spirit long before her mortal birth.

God sent women to earth with some qualities in extra capacity. In speaking to young women, President Faust observed that femininity “is the divine adornment of humanity. It finds expression in your . . . capacity to love, your spirituality, delicacy, radiance, sensitivity, creativity, charm, graciousness, gentleness, dignity, and quiet strength. It is manifest differently in each girl or woman, but each . . . possesses it. Femininity is part of your inner beauty.”²

Care for Outward Appearance

Our outward appearance is a reflection of what we are on the inside. Our lives reflect that for which we seek. And if with all our hearts we truly seek to know the Savior and to be more like Him, we shall be, for He is our divine, eternal Brother. But He is more than that. He is our precious Savior, our dear Redeemer. We ask with Alma of old, “Have ye received his image in your countenances?” (Alma 5:14).

You can recognize women who are grateful to be a daughter of God by their outward appearance. These women understand their stewardship over their bodies and treat them with dignity. They care for their bodies as they would a holy temple, for they understand the Lord’s teaching, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16).

Women who love God would never abuse or deface a temple with graffiti. Nor would they throw open the doors of that holy, dedicated edifice and invite the world to look on. How even more sacred is the body, for it was not made by man. It was formed

by God. We are the stewards, the keepers of the cleanliness and purity with which it came from heaven. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:17).

Grateful daughters of God guard their bodies carefully, for they know they are the wellspring of life and they reverence life. They don't uncover their bodies to find favor with the world. They walk in modesty to be in favor with their Father in Heaven, for they know He loves them dearly.

Minister to Others

You can recognize women who are grateful to be a daughter of God by their attitude. They know that the errand of angels is given to women, and they desire to be on God's errand to love His children and minister to them, to teach them the doctrines of salvation, to call them to repentance, to save them in perilous circumstances, to guide them in the performance of His work, to deliver His messages.³ They understand that they can bless their Father's children in their homes and neighborhoods and beyond. Women who are grateful to be daughters of God bring glory to His name.

Magnify Gifts

You can recognize women who are grateful to be a daughter of God by their abilities. They fulfill their divine potential and magnify their God-given gifts. They are capable, strong women who bless families, serve others, and understand that "the glory of God is intelligence" (D&C 93:36). They are women who embrace enduring virtues in order to be all that our Father needs them to be. The prophet Jacob spoke of some of those virtues when he said their "feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God, which thing is pleasing unto God" (Jacob 2:7).

Reverence Motherhood

You can recognize women who are grateful to be daughters of God by their reverence for motherhood, even when that blessing has been withheld from them for a time. In those circumstances, their righteous influence can be a blessing in the lives of children they love. Their exemplary teachings can echo the voice of a faithful home and resonate truth in the hearts of children who need another witness.

Women of God can never be like women of the world.

Grateful daughters of God love Him and teach their children to love Him without reservation and without resentment. They are like the mothers of Helaman's youthful army, who had such great faith and "had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them" (Alma 56:47).

When you observe kind and gentle mothers in action, you see women of great strength. Their families can feel a spirit of love and respect and safety when they are near her as she seeks the companionship of the Holy Ghost and the guidance of His Spirit. They are blessed by her wisdom and good judgment. The husbands and children whose lives they bless will contribute to the stability of societies all over this world. Grateful daughters of God learn truths from their mothers and grandmothers and aunts. They teach their daughters the joyful art of creating a home. They seek fine educations for their children and have a thirst for knowledge themselves. They help their children develop skills that they can use in serving others. They know that the way they have chosen is not the easy way, but they know it is absolutely worth their finest efforts.

They understand what Elder Neal A. Maxwell meant when he said: "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?"⁴

Daughters of God know that it is the nurturing nature of women that can bring everlasting blessings, and they live to cultivate this divine attribute. Surely when a woman reverences motherhood, her children will arise up and call her blessed (see Prov. 31:28).

Not like Women of the World

Women of God can never be like women of the world. 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.

Oh, how we pray that every young woman will grow up to be all the wonderful things she is meant to be. We pray that her mother and father will show her the right way. May daughters of God honor the priesthood and sustain worthy priesthood holders. May they understand their own great capacity for strength in the timeless virtues that some would scoff at in a modern, liberated world for women.

Understand and Nourish Potential

May mothers and fathers understand the great potential for good their daughters inherited from their heavenly home. We must nourish their gentleness, their nurturing nature, their innate spirituality and sensitivity, and their bright minds. Celebrate the fact that girls are different from boys. Be thankful for the position they have in God's grand plan. And always remember what President Hinckley said, "Only after the earth had been formed, after the day had been separated from the night, after the waters had been divided from the land, after vegetation and animal life had been created, and after man had been placed on the earth, was woman created; and only then was the work pronounced complete and good."⁵

Fathers, husbands, young men, may you catch a vision of all that women are and can be. Please be worthy of God's holy priesthood, which you bear, and honor that priesthood, for it blesses all of us.

Sisters, regardless of your age, please understand all that you are and must be, all that you were prepared to be in royal courts on high by God Himself. May we use with gratitude the priceless gifts we have been given for the lifting of mankind to higher thinking and nobler aspirations, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. "Womanhood: The Highest Place of Honor," *Ensign*, May 2000, 96.
3. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 35.
4. *In Conference Report*, Apr. 1978, 14; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 10–11.
5. "Our Responsibility to Our Young Women," *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 11.

DIVORCE

Nurture and cultivate your marriage. Guard it and work to keep it solid and beautiful.

—President Gordon B. Hinckley

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Related Scriptures

Genesis 2:24

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

Matthew 19:4–6

“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

“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?

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

Doctrine and Covenants 42:22, 75

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

“But if ye shall find that any persons have left their companions for the sake of adultery, and they themselves are the offenders, and their companions are living, they shall be cast out from among you.”

Concern for Family Life

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Nurture and cultivate your marriage. Guard it and work to keep it solid and beautiful. Divorce is becoming so common, even rampant, that studies show in a few years half of those now married will be divorced. It is happening, I regret to say, even among some who are sealed in the house of the Lord. Marriage is a contract, it is a compact, it is a union

between a man and a woman under the plan of the Almighty. It can be fragile. It requires nurture and very much effort. I regret to acknowledge that some husbands are abusive, some are unkind, some are thoughtless, some are evil. They indulge in pornography and bring about situations which destroy them, destroy their families, and destroy the most sacred of all relationships.

“I pity the man who at one time looked into the eyes of a beautiful young woman and held her hand across the altar in the house of the Lord as they made sacred and everlasting promises one to another, but who, lacking in self-discipline, fails to cultivate his better nature, sinks to coarseness and evil, and destroys the relationship which the Lord has provided for him” (“Walking in the Light of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 99).

“I am concerned about family life in the Church. We have wonderful people, but we have too many whose families are falling apart. It is a matter of serious concern. I think it is my most serious concern” (“Pres. Hinckley Notes His 85th Birthday, Reminisces about Life,” *Church News*, 24 June 1995, 6).

Growing Plague of Divorce Is Not of God

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Too many who come to marriage have been coddled and spoiled and somehow led to feel that everything must be precisely right at all times, that life is a series of entertainments, that appetites are to be satisfied without regard to principle. How tragic the consequences of such hollow and unreasonable thinking! . . .

“There may be now and again a legitimate cause for divorce. I am not one to say that it is never justified. But I say without hesitation that this plague among us, which seems to be growing everywhere, is not of God, but rather is the work of the adversary of righteousness and peace and truth” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 96–98; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 73–74).

President James E. Faust

“What, then, might be ‘just cause’ for breaking the covenants of marriage? Over a lifetime of dealing with human problems, I have struggled to understand what might be considered ‘just cause’ for breaking of covenants. I confess I do not claim the wisdom

or authority to definitively state what is ‘just cause.’ Only the parties to the marriage can determine this. They must bear the responsibility for the train of consequences which inevitably follows if these covenants are not honored. In my opinion, ‘just cause’ should be nothing less serious than a prolonged and apparently irredeemable relationship which is destructive of a person’s dignity as a human being.

“At the same time, I have strong feelings about what is not provocation for breaking the sacred covenants of marriage. Surely it is not simply ‘mental distress’ or ‘personality differences’ or having ‘grown apart’ or having ‘fallen out of love.’ This is especially so where there are children” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 46; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 36–37).

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE



*Elder David B. Haight
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Apr. 1984, 14–17;
or Ensign, May 1984,
12–14*

I pray for the companionship of the Holy Spirit, that my remarks will be in harmony with revealed truth and will be received and understood by that same heavenly influence.

Assault on Traditional Family

For more than twenty-five years we have witnessed an unending assault on the traditional family. Sacred values of human goodness, discipline, and love and honor for God our Eternal Father have been challenged.

A new self-centered generation has made the family a prime target of continuing belittlement. Marriage is downgraded or shunned, parenthood degraded and avoided. These, with other disturbing influences, have resulted in a torrent of evil temptations for so-called instant gratification and the demeaning of marriage and the sacred roles of wife and mother.

Divine Intent for Marriage

Unfortunately, there are many good human beings who would live differently, but they do not know of God’s eternal plan for His children. We learn from

the scriptures that the divine intent is that marriage is to be an eternal union with enduring family relationships throughout eternity.

Scripture reveals that, after the earth was developed, God created man in His own image and gave him dominion over the earth. By the side of man stood the woman, sharing with him the divinely bestowed honor and dignity of supremacy over all other creations. God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18).

“In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27).

The Lord also instructed, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24), thereby giving sanction to the union of male and female in authorized marriage, which is heaven-planned for the creation of mortal bodies.

The Lord’s Program for the Family

The earliest recorded commandment to Adam and Eve was to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28).

We regard children as gifts from God, committed to our care for loving, nurturing, and careful training.

The Lord also instructed, “And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:28).

They are not to be mistreated or abused, for, with their parents, they are part of a family with the potential of eternal relationship.

President Spencer W. Kimball explained:

“The Lord organized the whole program in the beginning with a father who procreates, provides, and loves and directs, and a mother who conceives and bears and nurtures and feeds and trains. The Lord could have organized it otherwise but chose to have a unit with responsibility and purposeful associations where children train and discipline each other and come to love, honor, and appreciate each other. The family is the great plan of life as conceived and organized by our Father in Heaven” (*Ensign*, July 1973, p. 15).

Marriage was meant to be and can be a loving, binding, and harmonious relationship between a husband and wife.

Divorce Always Tragic and Painful

As we contemplate our Lord's declaration to Moses, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39), we reflect with sadness upon the present serious trend of families and homes being torn apart through divorce.

It would seem that a major underlying cause of divorce is in not understanding that marriage and families are God-given and God-ordained. If we understood the full meaning we would have less divorce and its attendant unhappiness. Couples would plan for a happy marriage relationship based on divine instruction.

If couples understood from the beginning of their romance that their marriage relationship could be blessed with promises and conditions extending into the eternities, divorce would not even be a considered alternative when difficulties arise. The current philosophy—get a divorce if it doesn't work out—handicaps a marriage from the beginning.

The ever-increasing rise in divorce is ample evidence of how acceptable divorce has become as the popular solution to unhappy or "not-quite-up-to-expectation" marriages.

But no matter how acceptable divorce has become—how quick and easy to obtain—divorce is tragic and painful, not only at the outset, but also in the years to come.

Divorce can never really be final. How can mothers and fathers really divorce themselves from their own flesh and blood children, or from the memories of days and years of shared experiences which have become part of their very lives.

Divorce rarely occurs without immense emotional, social, and financial upheaval. Most people underestimate the alienation, bitterness, disruption, and frustration between a divorcing couple, and among their children, friends, and relatives. Some never adjust to the resulting emotional consequences.

Perhaps most tragic of all is that more than 60 percent of all divorces involve children under eighteen years of age. Children of divorce all too often have a higher delinquency rate and less self-confidence, and tend to be more promiscuous and themselves more likely to have unhappy marriages.

A major underlying cause of divorce is in not understanding that marriage and families are God-given and God-ordained.

Prepare for Success

Considering the enormous importance of marriage, it is rather astonishing that we don't make better preparation for success. Usually, young couples date for a few months or for a year or two, enjoying romance and getting acquainted, and then get married. Once married, they soon learn that romance must blend with spiritual beliefs, in-law relationships, money issues, and serious discussions involving ethics, children, and the running of a home.

Too many people are inadequately prepared for this lofty responsibility.

"People go to college for years to prepare for a vocation or profession . . . not [nearly] as . . . rewarding [or as important] as marriage." (See Lowell S. Bennion, "Conference on Utah Families," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 6 Apr. 1980, p. F-9.)

Seek Good Counsel

Serious transgressions, as well as injured lives that sometimes are revealed in bishops' offices, all too frequently make it clear that husband and wife relationships deserve a great deal more prayerful attention than many are giving it. Fewer marriages would get in trouble, and more would be happier, if couples visited a warm-hearted bishop who might suggest ways of avoiding pitfalls, and encourage husbands and wives to thoughtfully use self-discipline and needed restraint and develop the loving attribute of unselfishness.

A few years ago, President Harold B. Lee received this letter from a married woman: "When we thought that the end was here and that there was only one thing to do and that was to get a divorce, we had been told that we should counsel with our bishop. At first . . . we hesitated, because he was just a young man. . . . But he was our bishop so we went to see him. We poured out our souls to our young bishop. He sat and listened silently, and when we ran out of conversation he said, simply, 'Well, my wife and I, we had problems, too, and we learned how to solve them.' That is all . . . he said. But you know there was something that happened as a result of that young bishop's statement. We walked out of there and we said, 'Well, if they can solve their problems, what is the matter with us?'" (*Ensign*, Jan. 1974, p. 100).

Protect and Nurture Marriage

A prominent producer recently stated:

“In movies and on television there is . . . reluctance to deal with marriage, . . . [except as] a comic turn or in soap operas. We prefer to stress . . . [sexual involvement] and leave [alone] . . . the happily-ever-after, . . . as in children’s fairy stories” (Karl E. Meyer, *The Wife of Your Youth* [Palos Heights, Illinois: Np, 1977], np).

Our concern is not just that media producers and writers don’t portray happy, fruitful marriage, but that many married couples don’t take their marriages seriously enough—to work at them, protect them, nurture them, cultivate them day in and day out, week in and week out, yearlong, quarter-century long, half-a-century long, forever.

Middle-age divorce is particularly distressing, as it indicates that mature people, who are the backbone of our society, are not working carefully enough to preserve their marriages. Divorces granted to people over forty-five have increased at an alarming rate. When middle-aged people even consider breaking up their marriage—a couple who may have reared their children, who possibly have grandchildren—and now decide to go their separate ways, they need to realize that every divorce is the result of selfishness on the part of one or both.

In Malachi we read:

“The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. . . .

“Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth” (Malachi 2:14–15).

The Ideal Marriage

Marriage is a covenant. Two of the Ten Commandments deal directly with preserving the sanctity of marriage: “Thou shalt not commit adultery” and “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife” (Exodus 20:14, 17).

Jesus magnified the law against adultery: “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

The ideal marriage is the faithfulness of a man and a woman to each other, a faithfulness that began when each had chosen the other. In Proverbs we read, “Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth” (Proverbs 5:18). Let her affection fill you at all times with delight, and be infatuated always with her love. (See Proverbs 5:19.)

It is a privilege indeed to live our life with the wife of our youth, to enjoy the golden years together—neither objecting to the wrinkles nor the gray hair—but to continue acquiring a depth of love, oneness, and wisdom which can be shared with each other now and throughout all eternity.

Marriage is sustained by faith and knowledge of its divine establishment, and is sustained daily by the energy of love. A wise man explained, “When the satisfaction or the security of another person becomes as significant to one as one’s own satisfaction and security then the state of love exists” (Harry Stack Sullivan, *Concepts of Modern Psychiatry*, 2nd ed. [New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1961], p. 42).

Ask God for Help

A strong, shared conviction that there is something eternally precious about a marriage relationship builds faith to resist evil. Marriage should be beautiful and fulfilling, with joy beyond our fondest dreams, for “neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11).

Latter-day Saints need not divorce—there are solutions to marriage problems. If, as husband and wife, you are having serious misunderstandings or if you feel some strain or tension building up in your marriage, you should humbly get on your knees together and ask God our Father, with a sincere heart and real intent, to lift the darkness that is over your relationship, that you may receive the needed light, see your errors, repent of your wrongs, forgive each other, and receive each unto yourselves as you did in the beginning. I solemnly assure you that God lives and will answer your humble pleas, for he has said, “Ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done” (D&C 50:29). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

EDUCATION

*We believe in
the training of our youth,
girls as well as boys.*

—President Gordon B. Hinckley

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Prepare for the Future

President Gordon B. Hinckley

To the priesthood. “Be smart about training your minds and hands for the future. . . . You have an obligation to make the most of your life. Plan now for all the education you can get, and then work to bring to pass a fulfillment of that plan.

“You live in a complex age. The world needs men and women of ability and training. Do not short-circuit your education.

“I am not suggesting that all of you should become professional men. What I am suggesting is this: whatever you choose to do, train for it. Qualify yourselves. . . . Regardless of the vocation you choose, you can speed your journey in getting there through education. . . .

“Be smart. Do not forfeit the schooling that will enhance your future in order to satisfy your desire for immediate, fleeting pleasure. Cultivate the long view of your life. Most of you are going to be around for a good while” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1981, 57; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 40).

“We believe in the training of our youth, girls as well as boys. . . .

“You have available to you tremendous opportunities for training your minds and your hands. You will wish for marriage and the companionship of a good husband. But none of us can foretell the future. Prepare yourselves for any eventuality. . . .

“Hopefully, most of you will marry. But the training you have received will not have been in vain. It will be a blessing whether you be single or married” (“Live up to Your Inheritance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 82).

“The world into which you will move will be terribly competitive. You need to increase your education, to refine your skills, to hone your abilities so that you may fill responsibilities of consequence in the society of which you will become a part” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 100; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 71).

To the priesthood. “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 Timothy 5:8).

“It is your primary obligation to provide for your family.

“Your wife will be fortunate indeed if she does not have to go out and compete in the marketplace. She will be twice blessed if she is able to remain at home while you become the breadwinner of the family.

“Education is the key to economic opportunity. The Lord has laid a mandate upon us as a people to acquire learning ‘by study, and also by faith’ (D&C 109:14). It is likely that you will be a better provider if your mind and hands are trained to do something worthwhile in the society of which you will become a part” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 68; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 50).

Elder L. Tom Perry

“Careers are ever changing. They tell me that young people entering the workforce today will have major career changes maybe three or four times during their work life. Job changes will occur even more frequently, even ten to twelve times during a life’s work cycle. . . . The instability in the world today makes it imperative that we take heed of the counsel and prepare for the future” (in Conference Report, Sept.–Oct. 1995, 47; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 36–37).

Elder Russell M. Nelson

“Opportunities for development of spiritual and intellectual potential are equal. Masculinity has no monopoly on the mind, and femininity has no exclusive dominion over the heart. The highest titles of human achievement—teacher, educated professional, loyal employee, faithful friend, student of the scriptures, child of God, disciple of Christ, trusted companion, loving parent—are earned under

a uniform requirement of worthiness" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 25; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 21).

"I remember my moment of resolution many years ago when, as an untrained teenager, I secured temporary employment at Christmastime. The work was monotonous. Each hour and each day passed slowly. I resolved then and there that I must obtain an education that would qualify me better for life. I determined to stay in school and work for an education as though my very life depended upon it" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1992, 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 6).

Bishop Victor L. Brown

"We should teach our children the importance of schooling as a help in discovering how to think and to learn" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 117; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 81).

Importance of Education for Women

Elder Howard W. Hunter

"There are impelling reasons for our sisters to plan toward employment also. We want them to obtain all the education and vocational training possible before marriage. If they become widowed or divorced and need to work, we want them to have

dignified and rewarding employment. If a sister does not marry, she has every right to engage in a profession that allows her to magnify her talents and gifts" ("Prepare for Honorable Employment," *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 124).

Elder Russell M. Nelson

"A wise woman renews herself. In proper season, she develops her talents and continues her education. She musters the discipline to reach her goals. She dispels darkness and opens windows of truth to light her way.

"A woman teaches priorities by precept and example. Recently I watched a television program in which a female lawyer was being interviewed. She was at home with her child on a full-time basis. When asked of her decision, she replied, 'Oh, I may go back to the law sometime, but not now. For me, the issue is simple. Any lawyer could take care of my clients, but only I should be the mother of this child.'

"Such a decision is made not in terms of rights but in terms of obligations and responsibilities. She knows that as she rises to meet responsibilities, rights will take care of themselves" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 26–27; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 21).

EQUALITY OF MEN AND WOMEN

*Our roles and assignments
differ. . . . But the man is not
without the woman nor the woman
without the man in the Lord.*

—President Spencer W. Kimball

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President George Albert Smith

“When the Prophet Joseph Smith turned the key for the emancipation of womankind, it was turned for all the world, and from generation to generation the number of women who can enjoy the blessings of religious liberty and civil liberty has been increasing” (“Address to the Members of the Relief Society,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Dec. 1945, 717).

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Our roles and assignments differ. These are eternal differences—with women being given many tremendous responsibilities of motherhood and sisterhood and men being given the tremendous responsibilities of fatherhood and the priesthood—but the man is not without the woman nor the woman without the man in the Lord (see 1 Cor. 11:11). . . .

“Even though the eternal roles of men and women differ, . . . this leaves much to be done by way of parallel personal development—for both men and women” (“The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 102).

“We do not want our LDS women to be *silent* partners or *limited* partners in that eternal assignment! Please be a *contributing* and *full* partner” (“Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 106).

President Howard W. Hunter

“A man who holds the priesthood accepts his wife as a partner in the leadership of the home and family with full knowledge of and full participation in all

decisions relating thereto. . . . The Lord intended that the wife be a helpmeet for man (*meet* means equal)—that is, a companion equal and necessary in full partnership” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50–51).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“I see my own companion of fifty-two years. Is her contribution less acceptable before the Lord than is mine? I am satisfied it is not. She has walked quietly at my side, sustained me in my responsibilities, reared and blessed our children, served in many capacities in the Church, and spread an unmitigated measure of cheer and goodness wherever she has gone. The older I grow the more I appreciate—yes, the more I love—this little woman with whom I knelt at the altar in the house of the Lord more than half a century ago” (“Rise to the Stature of the Divine within You,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 97).

President Boyd K. Packer

“In the Church there is a distinct line of authority. We serve where called by those who preside over us.

“In the home it is a partnership with husband and wife equally yoked together, sharing in decisions, always working together. While the husband, the father, has responsibility to provide worthy and inspired leadership, his wife is neither behind him nor ahead of him but at his side” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 73).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“Where spiritual things are concerned, as pertaining to all of the gifts of the Spirit, with reference to the receipt of revelation, the gaining of testimonies, and the seeing of visions, in all matters that pertain to godliness and holiness and which are brought to pass as a result of personal righteousness—in all these things men and women stand in a position of absolute equality before the Lord” (“Our Sisters from the Beginning,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1979, 61).

“The Lord never sends apostles and prophets and righteous men to minister to his people without placing women of like spiritual stature at their sides. . . . The exaltation of the one is dependent upon that of the other” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:302).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“Your wife is your partner in the leadership of the family and should have full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating to your home” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 26; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 21).

Elder James E. Faust

“How should those who bear the priesthood treat their wives and the other women in their family? Our wives need to be cherished. They need to hear their husbands call them blessed, and the children need to hear their fathers generously praise their mothers (see Proverbs 31:28). The Lord values his daughters just as much as he does his sons. In marriage, neither is superior; each has a different primary and divine responsibility. Chief among these different responsibilities for wives is the calling of motherhood. I firmly believe that our dear faithful sisters enjoy a special spiritual enrichment which is inherent in their natures” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 54; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 38–39).

“Both fathers and mothers do many intrinsically different things for their children. Both mothers and fathers are equipped to nurture children, but their approaches are different. Mothers seem to take a dominant role in preparing children to live within their families, present and future. Fathers seem best equipped to prepare children to function in the environment outside the family” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 44–45; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 35).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“We live in a day when there are many political, legal, and social pressures for changes that confuse gender and homogenize the differences between men and women. Our eternal perspective sets us against changes that alter those separate duties and privileges of men and women that are essential to

accomplish the great plan of happiness. We do not oppose all changes in the treatment of men and women, since some changes in laws or customs simply correct old wrongs that were never grounded in eternal principles” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 99; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 73–74).

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Sisters “want to be heard and valued and want to make meaningful contributions to the stake or ward and its members that will serve the Lord and help accomplish the mission of the Church. . . .

“Brethren, please be sure you are seeking the vital input of the sisters in your council meetings” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 103; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 76).

*In marriage,
neither is
superior.*

Sister Eliza R. Snow

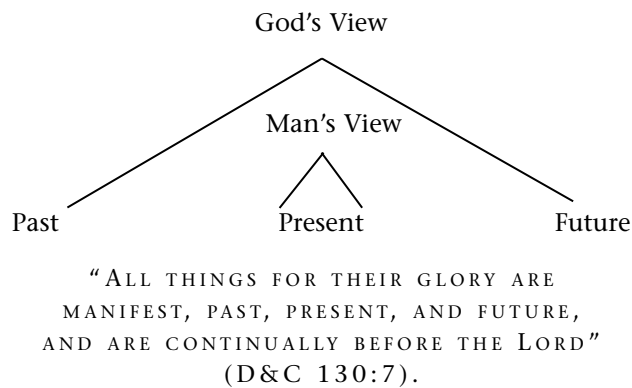
“The status of women is one of the questions of the day. Socially and politically it forces itself upon the attention of the world. Some . . . refuse to concede that woman is entitled to the enjoyment of any rights other than those which the whims, fancies or justice, as the case may be, of men may choose to grant her. The reasons which they cannot meet with argument they decry and ridicule; an old refuge for those opposed to correct principles which they are unable to controvert. Others, again, not only recognize that woman’s status should be improved, but are so radical in their extreme theories that they would set her in antagonism to man, assume for her a separate and opposing existence; and to show how entirely independent she should be would make her adopt the more reprehensible phases of character which men present, and which should be shunned or improved by them instead of being copied by women. These are the two extremes, and between them is the ‘golden mean.’” (“Woman’s Status,” *Woman’s Exponent*, 15 July 1872, 29).

ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

*A view of marriage and the family
based on eternal principles
increases the probability of success.*

—Elder Merrill J. Bateman

SELECTED TEACHINGS



President Spencer W. Kimball

“The more clearly we see eternity, the more obvious it becomes that the Lord’s work in which we are engaged is one vast and grand work with striking similarities on each side of the veil. . . .

“If we live in such a way that the considerations of eternity press upon us, we will make better decisions” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 25).

“If we looked at mortality as the whole of existence, then pain, sorrow, failure, and short life would be calamity. But if we look upon life as an eternal thing stretching far into the premortal past and on into the eternal post-death future, then all happenings may be put in proper perspective” (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 97).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“One apparent impact of the women’s movement has been the feelings of discontent it has created among young women who have chosen the role of wife and mother. They are often made to feel that there are more exciting and self-fulfilling roles for women than housework, diaper changing, and children calling for mother. This view loses sight

of the eternal perspective that God elected women to the noble role of mother and that exaltation is eternal fatherhood and eternal motherhood. (“To the Elect Women of the Kingdom of God,’ Nauvoo Illinois Relief Society Dedication, 30 June 1978.)” (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 548).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“God is weaving his tapestry according to his own grand design. All flesh is in his hands. It is not our prerogative to counsel him. It is our responsibility and our opportunity to be at peace in our minds and in our hearts, and to know that he is God, that this is his work, and that he will not permit it to fail” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1983, 5; or *Ensign*, May 1983, 6).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“Eternal life, which from an eternal perspective is ‘the greatest of all the gifts of God’ (D&C 14:7), is reserved for those who believe and obey” (*New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 358).

“Marriage and the family unit are the central part of the plan of progression and exaltation. All things center in and around the family unit in the eternal perspective. Exaltation consists in the continuation of the family unit in eternity” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:546).

“It is the hope of a better life to come that enables the saints to stand against the perils and enticements of this world. Whenever men gain the Lord’s eternal perspective of whence they came, why they are here, and what lies ahead in the eternal realms of living and being, they are able better to govern the deeds done in the flesh. A knowledge of the resurrection thus leads to personal righteousness” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:396).

Elder L. Tom Perry

“Are we investing, first and foremost, in the things that are eternal in nature? Do we have an eternal perspective? Or have we fallen into the trap of investing in the things of this world first and then forgetting the Lord?” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 40; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 34).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“The questions we ask can make plain our paucity of perspective. One of the reasons why Esau was

willing to sell his birthright is disclosed thus: ‘Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?’ (Genesis 25:32.) If Esau saw his birthright as pertaining only to this life, he surely did not have an eternal perspective! Faith, after all, involves perspectives that stretch both ways—beyond today by remembering of the past, and by extrapolating our faith into the future. Such is part of both the utility and the beauty of faith: a mess of pottage remains a mess of pottage and no more” (*Men and Women of Christ*, 116).

A “trap to be avoided . . . is the tendency we have—rather humanly, rather understandably—to get ourselves caught in peering through the prism of the present and then distorting our perspective about things. Time is of this world; it is not of eternity. We can, if we are not careful, feel the pressures of time and see things in a distorted way. How important it is that we see things as much as possible through the lens of the gospel with its eternal perspectives. . . .

“. . . It is very important that we not assume the perspectives of mortality in making the decisions that bear on eternity! We need the perspectives of the gospel to make decisions in the context of eternity. We need to understand we cannot do the Lord’s work in the world’s way” (“But for a Small Moment,” 453–54).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“The gospel teaches us that we are the spirit children of heavenly parents. Before our mortal birth we had ‘a pre-existent, spiritual personality, as the sons and daughters of the Eternal Father’ (statement of the First Presidency, *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1912, p. 417; also see Jeremiah 1:5). We were placed here on earth to progress toward our destiny of eternal life. These truths give us a unique perspective and different values to guide our decisions from those who doubt the existence of God and believe that life is the result of random processes” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 96–97; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 72).

“The pure in heart have a distinctive way of looking at life. Their attitudes and desires cause them to view their experiences in terms of eternity. This eternal perspective affects their choices and priorities. As they draw farther from worldliness they feel closer to our Father in Heaven and more able to be guided by his Spirit. We call this state of mind, this quality of life, *spirituality*” (*Pure in Heart*, 111).

“Seen with the perspective of eternity, a temporal setback can be an opportunity to develop soul power of eternal significance. Strength is forged in adversity. Faith is developed in a setting where we cannot see what lies ahead” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 78; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 63).

Elder Merrill J. Bateman

“One can assume that the longer the view a woman and man have regarding the marital relationship, the greater the probability of success. The divorce rate for temple marriages is well below that of civil marriages, and civil divorce rates are exceeded by separation rates for open marriages. (See Tim B. Heaton and Kristen L. Goodman, ‘Religion and Family Formation,’ *Review of Religious Research* 26, no. 4 [June 1985]: 343–59; John O. G. Billy, Nancy S. Landale, and Steven D. McLaughlin, ‘The Effect of Marital Status at First Birth on Marital Dissolution Among Adolescent Mothers,’ *Demography* 23, no. 3 [August 1986]: 329–49; Larry L. Bumpass and James A. Sweet, ‘National Estimates of Cohabitation,’ *Demography* 26, no. 4 [November 1989]: 615–25.) A view of marriage and the family based on eternal principles increases the probability of success. When one takes the long view, one tries harder to be patient, long-suffering, kind, gentle, and meek. These characteristics, in turn, strengthen the marriage” (“The Eternal Family,” 115).

One can assume that the longer the view a woman and man have regarding the marital relationship, the greater the probability of success.

THE FAMILY: A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.

—First Presidency and
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

THE FAMILY: A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

*First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102*

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 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.

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” (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.

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.

*The divine plan
of happiness
enables family
relationships to be
perpetuated beyond
the grave.*

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.

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“I salute fathers and mothers who are loyal to one another and who nurture their children in faith and love. There has been a wonderful response to the proclamation on the family, which we issued last October. . . . We hope you will read it and reread it” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 90; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 66).

Elder M. Russell Ballard

“The recent proclamation to the world on the family, issued by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, makes very clear that the family is ordained of God. The proclamation warns that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 112; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 81).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“Learn the doctrinal foundation of the great plan of happiness by studying the scriptures, pondering their content, and praying to understand them. Carefully study and use the proclamation of the First Presidency and the Twelve on the family. . . . It was inspired of the Lord” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 103; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 75).

Elder Merrill J. Bateman

“The proclamation teaches that ‘successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.’ In other words, the Lord measures the success of a family by the quality of

its relationships. In a home where faith, love, and forgiveness are dominant, members find joy and satisfaction in being together. Ideally the father presides in love and righteousness, provides the necessities of life, and protects the family while the mother is primarily responsible for the nurturing of the children. In contrast, the world often measures family success by the accumulation of worldly things and the size of the estate that is passed on to the children” (“The Eternal Family,” 115).

Principle of Faith

Matthew 9:29

“Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.”

2 Corinthians 5:7

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

Philippians 4:13

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

1 Nephi 3:7

“I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for 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.”

Doctrine and Covenants 76:53

“And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.”

President Joseph Fielding Smith

“When a man and a woman, in all sincerity, enter into a covenant of marriage for time and all eternity (and after they have ‘overcome by faith,’ and are ‘just and true’ [D&C 76:53]), the Holy Ghost—who is the Spirit of promise—bears record of or ratifies that sealing. In other words, he seals the promises appertaining to the marriage covenant upon them” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:98).

President Harold B. Lee

“Faith, not doubt, is the beginning of all learning, whether in science or religion. . . . It is faith that seeks for spiritual knowledge and power by studying

out in your own mind the matter in question, by applying all possible human wisdom to the solution of your problem and then asking God if your conclusion is right. If it is right, your bosom shall burn within you and you shall ‘feel’ that it is right, but if your conclusion is not right, you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing that is wrong. (Doc. and Cov. 9:8–9.)” (*Decisions for Successful Living*, 194).

President Spencer W. Kimball

“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” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 248).

“Mary and John, I congratulate you for your vision and faith and your willingness to forgo the fanfare and glamour of a worldly wedding for a simple, quiet, but beautiful marriage in the temple, a sweet eternal ceremony that will be unostentatious and sacred like your birth, blessing, baptism, or ordination” (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 127).

Elder LeGrand Richards

“Anderson M. Baten dedicated a poem to his beloved wife, Beulah, entitled, *The Philosophy of Life*, which expresses his faith that his marriage tie would extend beyond the grave:

*“I wed thee forever, not for now;
Nor for the sham of earth’s brief years.
I wed thee for the life beyond the tears,
Beyond the heart pain and the clouded brow.
Love knows no grave, and it will guide us, dear,
When life’s spent candles flutter and burn low.”*
(*Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, 203).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

Commenting on 2 Corinthians 1:24. “After the grace of God as manifest through the sacrifice of his Son, after baptism, after temple marriage, after the Lord offers any blessing to men—still the promised rewards come by individual faith, by personal righteousness, by one man standing alone before his Maker and doing those things which enable him to work out his salvation” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:410).

Marriage should be beautiful and fulfilling, with joy beyond our fondest dreams.

Elder David B. Haight

“Marriage is sustained by faith and knowledge of its divine establishment, and is sustained daily by the energy of love. . . .

“A strong, shared conviction that there is something eternally precious about a marriage relationship builds faith to resist evil. Marriage should be beautiful and fulfilling, with joy beyond our fondest dreams, for ‘neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord’ (1 Corinthians 11:11)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 16–17; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 14).

Principle of Prayer

President Spencer W. Kimball

“When a husband and wife go together frequently to the holy temple, kneel in prayer together in their home with their family, . . . then happiness is at its pinnacle” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 309).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Prayer in the home and prayer with each other will strengthen your union. Gradually thoughts, aspirations, and ideas will merge into a oneness until you are seeking the same purposes and goals.

“Rely on the Lord, the teachings of the prophets, and the scriptures for guidance and help, particularly when there may be disagreements and problems” (“Salvation—A Family Affair,” *Ensign*, July 1992, 2, 4; see also Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 85–86; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 60).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“I know of no other practice that will have so salutary an effect upon your lives as will the practice of kneeling together in prayer. The very words, Our Father in Heaven, have a tremendous effect. You cannot speak them with sincerity and with recognition without having some feeling of accountability to God. The little storms that seem to afflict every marriage become of small consequence while kneeling before the Lord and addressing him as a suppliant son and daughter.

“Your daily conversations with him will bring peace into your hearts and a joy into your lives that can come from no other source. Your companionship will

sweeten through the years. Your love will strengthen. Your appreciation one for another will grow.

“Your children will be blessed with a sense of security that comes of living in a home where dwells the Spirit of God. They will know and love parents who respect one another, and a spirit of respect will grow in their own hearts. They will experience the security of kind words quietly spoken. They will be sheltered by a father and mother who, living honestly with God, live honestly with one another and with their fellowmen. They will mature with a sense of appreciation, having heard their parents in prayer express gratitude for blessings great and small. They will grow with faith in the living God” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 216).

“Your companionship will be one that will sweeten and strengthen through the years and that will endure through eternity. Your love and appreciation for one another will increase” (*Cornerstones of a Happy Home*, 11).

Elder Joe J. Christensen

“Many Church leaders as well as professional counselors have indicated that they have never seen a marriage in serious difficulty in which the couple was still praying together daily. When you invite the Lord to be a partner in your union, there is a softening of feelings, a moderation of tension that occurs through the power of the Spirit. See what happens when, as you kneel together, you hear your companion express gratitude and love for you. Pray that you, working together, may overcome whatever difficulties you may have so that your love can increase. . . .

“Sometimes, when Barbara has not been feeling well or has been discouraged for whatever reason, it has seemed to me to be helpful and meaningful during our joint companion prayer to shift into the first person and genuinely express my feelings, ‘Father, I am so grateful to have a companion such as Barbara. Help her to know how much I love and appreciate her as one of Thy chosen daughters. Assist her to be healed completely and given the health and strength she needs to continue on with her life’s important mission as wife and mother.’ . . .

“I would invite you to candidly analyze your situation. Are you and your companion praying together daily that your marriage may be strengthened? If not, now is an excellent time to start!” (*One Step at a Time*, 15–16).

Principle of Repentance

President Spencer W. Kimball

“One day in the temple in Salt Lake City, as I walked down the long hall preparing to go into one of the rooms to perform a marriage for a young couple, a woman followed me . . . and with great agitation she said, ‘Elder Kimball, do you remember me?’ Her eyes were searching and her ears were seeking to hear if I remembered her. I was abashed. For the life of me I could not make the connection. I was much embarrassed. I finally said, ‘I am sorry, but I cannot remember you.’ Instead of disappointment, there was great joy that came to her face. She was relieved. She said, ‘Oh, I am so grateful you can’t remember me. With my husband I spent all night with you one time, while you were trying to change our lives. We had committed sin, and we were struggling to get rid of it. You labored all night to help me to clear it. We have repented, and we have changed our lives totally. I am glad you don’t remember me, because if you, one of the apostles, cannot remember me, maybe the Savior cannot remember my sins’” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 108).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“There is a remedy for all of this. It is not found in divorce. It is found in the gospel of the Son of God. He it was who said, ‘What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder’ (Matthew 19:6). The remedy for most marriage stress is not in divorce. It is in repentance. It is not in separation. It is in simple integrity that leads a man to square up his shoulders and meet his obligations. It is found in the Golden Rule” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 97; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 73–74).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

“It is well to remember that, awful, horrible and serious as adultery and other sexual sins are, the Lord has kindly provided forgiveness on condition of repentance commensurate with the sin. But where these sins are concerned, even more than with less grievous ones, prevention is so much better than cure” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, 74).

“Another young couple showed a similar unawareness of the gravity of sin, and especially of sexual sin. They came to me in June, having become formally engaged with a ring the previous December, and in

the six months' interval their sexual sin had been repeated frequently. In June they went to their respective bishops seeking recommends to the temple. The girl's bishop, knowing that she had always been active, did not searchingly question her as to cleanliness, and a recommend was soon tucked away in her purse for use in the planned June marriage. The bishop of the other ward questioned the young man carefully and learned of the six months of transgression.

"In my office the couple frankly admitted their sin and shocked me when they said: 'That isn't so very wrong, is it, when we were formally engaged and expected to marry soon?' They had no comprehension of the magnitude of the sin. They were ready to go into the holy temple for their marriage without a thought that they were defiling the Lord's house. How lacking was their training! How insincere was their approach! They were very disturbed when their marriage had to be postponed to allow time for repentance. They had rationalized the sin nearly out of existence. They pressed for a date, the first possible one they could set up and on which they could plan their temple marriage. They did not understand that forgiveness is not a thing of days or months or even years but is a matter of intensity of feeling and transformation of self. Again, this showed a distortion of attitude, a lack of conviction of the seriousness of their deep transgression. They had not confessed their serious sin. They had but admitted it when it had been dug out. There is a wide difference between the two situations.

"This couple seemed to have no conception of satisfying the Lord, of paying the total penalties and obtaining a release and adjustment which could be considered final and which might be accepted of the Lord. I asked them the question: 'As you weigh this transgression, do you feel that you should be excommunicated from the Church?' They were surprised at such a question. They had thought of their heinous sin as nothing more than an indiscretion. They had been born and reared in the Church and had received the gift of the Holy Ghost at eight years of age. But in the successive nights of their perfidy they had driven the Holy Spirit away. They had made him unwelcome. They were not listening to his promptings. It is inconceivable that they did not know how wrong their sin was but they had convinced

themselves against the truth. They had seared their consciences as with a hot iron" (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, 155–56).

"In my office one day sat a sober couple who had a large family of little children. Early in their married life they had both committed adultery, and for many years had been suffering untold agonies of remorse. They had forgiven each other but were still suffering tortures.

"The couple came to get some questions answered. They could stand it no longer. The husband broke the silence. 'I told my wife that because of our adultery years ago we could never hope for salvation in the celestial kingdom, much less exaltation and eternal life, but that we could receive great satisfactions as we bore children and reared them to be so righteous that we could be sure they would all receive all the blessings of the gospel and the Church and eventually reach their exaltation.'

"When I quoted a long list of scriptures showing that forgiveness was possible eventually, when the heavy price had been paid, I could see hope stir within them and a peace settle over them. They left my office radiant with a new-found ecstasy" (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, 343).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

"The single purpose of Lucifer is to oppose the great plan of happiness, to corrupt the purest, most beautiful and appealing experiences of life: romance, love, marriage, and parenthood [see 2 Nephi 2:18; 28:20]. The specters of heartbreak and guilt [see Alma 39:5; Moroni 9:9] follow him about. Only repentance can heal what he hurts" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 27–28; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 21).

"In the battle of life, the adversary takes enormous numbers of prisoners, and many who know of no way to escape and are pressed into his service. Every soul confined to a concentration camp of sin and guilt has a key to the gate. The adversary cannot hold them if they know how to use it. The key is labeled *Repentance*. The twin principles of repentance and forgiveness exceed in strength the awesome power of the adversary.

"I know of no sins connected with the moral standard for which we cannot be forgiven. I do not exempt abortion. The formula is stated in forty words:

The twin principles of repentance and forgiveness exceed in strength the awesome power of the adversary.

“Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

“By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them’ (D&C 58:42–43).

“However long and painful the process of repentance, the Lord has said:

“This is the covenant . . . I will make with them. . . . I will put my *laws* into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

“And *their sins and iniquities* will I remember no more’ (Hebrews 10:16–17; italics added)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 68).

Principle of Forgiveness in Marriage

President Spencer W. Kimball

“If the faults of two people are more nearly equal, if both of them have a beam-impaired vision, that still gives no justification for a selfish, unforgiving attitude. With this in mind, I once wrote to a woman with whom I had had previous occasion to discuss at length her family problems. I had given counsel in my desire to prevent further misunderstandings and avoid a separation or divorce. After some weeks, she wrote that she would accept my decision. I responded in part as follows:

“It is not *my* decision—it is up to you to make the decisions. You have your free agency. If you are determined to get a divorce it is your responsibility and your suffering if you are not willing to make adjustments. When I talked with you, I understood that you had forgiven each other and would start from there to build a beautiful life. Apparently, I was mistaken. All my warnings and pleadings seem to have fallen on deaf ears. I want you to know that I do not justify in your husband anything that was wrong, but I recognized all the way through that his was not the whole fault. I have never been able to feel that you had wholly purged the selfishness from your own soul. I do know that two people as seemingly intelligent and apparently mature as you two, could have a gloriously happy life, if both of you would begin to let your concerns run in favor of the other, instead of in favor of your selfish selves.

“The escapist never escapes. If two people, selfish and self-centered, and without the spirit of forgiveness, escape from each other, they cannot escape from themselves. The disease is not cured

by the separation or the divorce, and it will most assuredly follow along in the wake of future marriages” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, 270–71).

President Howard W. Hunter

“First, I invite all members of the Church to live with ever more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion he displayed. I pray that we will treat each other with more kindness, more patience, more courtesy and forgiveness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 8).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“There must be recognition on the part of both husband and wife of the solemnity and sanctity of marriage and of the God-given design behind it.

“There must be a willingness to overlook small faults, to forgive, and then to forget” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 97; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 74).

“Eternal vigilance is the price of eternal development. Occasionally we may stumble. I thank the Lord for the great principle of repentance and forgiveness. When we drop the ball, when we make a mistake, there is held out to us the word of the Lord that he will forgive our sins and remember them no more against us. But somehow we are prone to remember them against ourselves” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 64–65; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 48).

President Thomas S. Monson

“Recently I read where an elderly man disclosed at the funeral of his brother, with whom he had shared, from early manhood, a small one-room cabin near Canisteo, New York, that following a quarrel they had divided the room in half with a chalk line and neither had crossed the line nor spoken a word to the other since that day—sixty-two years before! What a human tragedy—all for the want of mercy and forgiveness” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 77; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 59).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

“If we will sue for peace, taking the initiative in settling differences—if we can forgive and forget with all our hearts—if we can cleanse our own souls of sin, accusations, bitterness, and guilt before we cast a stone at others—if we forgive all real or fancied offenses before we ask forgiveness for our own sins—if

we pay our own debts, large or small, before we press our debtors—if we manage to clear our own eyes of the blinding beams before we magnify the motes in the eyes of others—what a glorious world this would be! Divorce would be reduced to a minimum; courts would be freed from disgusting routines; family life would be heavenly” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1949, 133).

Elder James E. Faust

“What is the central characteristic of those having only five loaves and two fishes? What makes it possible, under the Master’s touch, for them to serve, lift, and bless so that they touch for good the lives of hundreds, even thousands? After a lifetime of dealing in the affairs of men and women, I believe it is the ability to overcome personal ego and pride—both are enemies to the full enjoyment of the Spirit of God and to walking humbly before him. The ego interferes with husbands and wives asking each other for forgiveness. It prevents the enjoyment of the full sweetness of a higher love. The ego often prevents parents and children from fully understanding each other. The ego enlarges our feelings of self-importance and worth. It blinds us to reality. Pride keeps us from confessing our sins and shortcomings to the Lord and working out our repentance” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 4–5; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 6).

Elder Robert D. Hales

“I must ask for forgiveness from Heavenly Father for those things which I have done which are less than perfect and ask forgiveness of anyone I might have offended knowingly or unknowingly because of my personality or style” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 105; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 78).

Elder Robert L. Simpson

“Every couple, whether in the first or the twenty-first year of marriage, should discover the value of pillow-talk time at the end of the day—the perfect time to take inventory, to talk about tomorrow. And best of all, it’s a time when love and appreciation for one another can be reconfirmed. The end of another day is also the perfect setting to say, ‘Sweetheart, I am sorry about what happened today. Please forgive me’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 30; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 21).

FORGIVENESS: THE ULTIMATE FORM OF LOVE



*Elder Marion D. Hanks
Assistant to the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Oct. 1973, 14–15, 17;
or Ensign, Jan. 1974,
20, 22*

Lesson of Forgiveness

Today I would like to speak of one lesson among many that he [the Lord] taught us and that you and I must learn if we are to merit his friendship.

Christ’s love was so pure that he gave his life for us: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13.) But there was another gift he bestowed while he was on the cross, a gift that further measured the magnitude of his great love: he forgave, and asked his Father to forgive, those who persecuted and crucified him.

Was this act of forgiveness less difficult than sacrificing his mortal life? Was it less a test of his love? I do not know the answer. But I have felt that the ultimate form of love for God and men is forgiveness.

He met the test. What of us? Perhaps we shall not be called upon to give our lives for our friends or our faith (though perhaps some shall), but it is certain that every one of us has and will have occasion to confront the other challenge. What will we do with it? What *are* we doing with it?

Someone has written: “. . . the withholding of love is the negation of the spirit of Christ, the proof that we never knew him, that for us he lived in vain. It means that he suggested nothing in all our thoughts, that he inspired nothing in all our lives, that we were not once near enough to him to be seized with the spell of his compassion for the world.”

Christ’s example and instructions to his friends are clear. He forgave, and he said: “. . . Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” (Matt. 5:44.)

Response to Offenses

What is our response when we are offended, misunderstood, unfairly or unkindly treated, or sinned against, made an offender for a word, falsely accused, passed over, hurt by those we love, our offerings rejected? Do we resent, become bitter, hold a grudge? Or do we resolve the problem if we can, forgive, and rid ourselves of the burden?

The nature of our response to such situations may well determine the nature and quality of our lives, here and eternally. A courageous friend, her faith refined by many afflictions, said to me only hours ago, "Humiliation must come before exaltation."

Forgiveness Required

It is required of us to forgive. Our salvation depends upon it. In a revelation given in 1831 the Lord said:

"My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.

"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.

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men." (D&C 64:8–10.)

Therefore, Jesus taught us to pray, "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." (See Matt. 6:14–15.)

Does it not seem a supreme impudence to ask and expect God to forgive when we do not forgive?—openly? and "in our hearts"?

The Lord affirms in the Book of Mormon that we bring ourselves under condemnation if we do not forgive. (See Mosiah 26:30–31.)

But not only our eternal salvation depends upon our willingness and capacity to forgive wrongs committed against us. Our joy and satisfaction in this life, and our true freedom, depend upon our doing so. When Christ bade us turn the other cheek, walk the second mile, give our cloak to him who takes our coat, was it to be chiefly out of

consideration for the bully, the brute, the thief? Or was it to relieve the one aggrieved of the destructive burden that resentment and anger lay upon us? . . .

God help us to rid ourselves of resentment and pettiness and foolish pride; to love, and to forgive, in order that we may be friends with ourselves, with others, and with the Lord.

". . . even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (Col. 3:13.)

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Principle of Mutual Respect

President Spencer W. Kimball

"It is not enough to refrain from adultery. We need to make the marriage relationship sacred, to sacrifice and work to maintain the warmth and respect which we enjoyed during courtship. God intended marriage to be eternal, sealed by the power of the priesthood, to last beyond the grave. Daily acts of courtesy and kindness, conscientiously and lovingly carried out, are part of what the Lord expects" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1978, 7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 6).

We need to make the marriage relationship sacred, to sacrifice and work to maintain the warmth and respect which we enjoyed during courtship.

President Howard W. Hunter

"Any man who abuses or demeans his wife physically or spiritually is guilty of grievous sin and in need of sincere and serious repentance. Differences should be worked out in love and kindness and with a spirit of mutual reconciliation. A man should always speak to his wife lovingly and kindly, treating her with the utmost respect. Marriage is like a tender flower, brethren, and must be nourished constantly with expressions of love and affection" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 51).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

"How beautiful is the marriage of a young man and a young woman who begin their lives together kneeling at the altar in the house of the Lord, pledging their love and loyalty one to another for time and all eternity. When children come into that home, they are nurtured and cared for, loved and blessed with the feeling that their father loves their mother. In that environment they find peace and

strength and security. Watching their father, they develop respect for women. They are taught self-control and self-discipline, which bring the strength to avoid later tragedy” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 73; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 52).

“Every marriage is subject to occasional stormy weather. But with patience, mutual respect, and a spirit of forbearance, we can weather these storms. Where mistakes have been made, there can be apology, repentance, and forgiveness. But there must be willingness to do so on the part of both parties” (“This I Believe,” 80).

President James E. Faust

“There is no great or majestic music which constantly produces the harmony of a great love. The most perfect music is a welding of two voices into one spiritual solo. Marriage is the way provided by God for the fulfillment of the greatest of human needs, based upon mutual respect, maturity, selflessness, decency, commitment, and honesty. Happiness in marriage and parenthood can exceed a thousand times any other happiness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 14; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 11).

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley

“Companionship in marriage is prone to become commonplace and even dull. I know of no more certain way to keep it on a lofty and inspiring plane than for a man occasionally to reflect upon the fact that the helpmeet who stands at his side is a daughter of God, engaged with Him in the great creative process of bringing to pass His eternal purposes. I know of no more effective way for a woman to keep ever radiant the love for her husband than for her to look for and emphasize the godly qualities that are a part of every son of our Father and that can be evoked when there is respect and admiration and encouragement. The very processes of such actions will cultivate a constantly rewarding appreciation for one another” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 82; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 71–72).

Elder L. Tom Perry

“Adam learned that the bonds of marriage are stronger than any other family bond. The sacred bonds of marriage invite unity, fidelity, respect, and mutual support” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 97; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 72).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Relationships and their outcome seem to be governed by principles which are unvarying and cannot be repealed. . . . There is no tempering of the consequences of dishonesty, lack of self-discipline, and lack of respect for the rights of others upon interpersonal relationships . . . and no one . . . can change this fact. . . .’ (*Journal of Marriage and Family*, February 1971, p. 46.)” (*That My Family Should Partake*, 15).

Elder Merrill J. Bateman

“When a man understands how glorious a woman is, he treats her differently. When a woman understands that a man has the seeds of divinity within him, she honors him not only for who he is but for what he may become. An understanding of the divine nature allows each person to have respect for the other. The eternal view engenders a desire in men and women to learn from and share with each other” (“The Eternal Family,” 113).

Principle of Compassion

English Synonyms for Compassion

Mercy, charity, commiseration, empathy, pity, sympathy, clemency, grace, leniency

English Antonyms for Compassion

Harshness, cruelty, unkindness, abruptness, ruthlessness, enmity, animosity, bitterness, hatred, hostility, rancor, abuse

Some Meanings of *Compassion* As Used in the Scriptures

1. *Chamal* {khaw-mal'} Hebrew: verb. Possible definitions: (Qal) to spare, pity, have compassion on. Example: Exodus 2:6
2. *Racham* {raw-kham'} Hebrew: verb. Possible definitions: to love, love deeply, have mercy, be compassionate, have tender affection, have compassion. Example: Deuteronomy 13:17.

3. *Splagchnizomai* {splangkhn-nid'-zom-ahee} Greek: verb. Possible definitions: to be moved as to one's bowels, hence to be moved with compassion or have compassion (for the bowels were thought to be the seat of love and pity). Example: Matthew 9:36; Mark 1:41.
4. *Eleeo* {el-eh-eh'-o} Greek: verb. Possible definitions: to have mercy on, to help one afflicted or seeking aid, to bring help to the wretched. Example: Mark 5:19.
5. *Metriopatheo* {met-ree-op-ath-eh'-o} Greek: verb. Possible definitions: to be affected moderately or in due measure; to preserve moderation in the passions, especially anger or grief; hence of one who is not unduly disturbed by the errors, faults, sins of others, but bears them gently. Example: Hebrews 5:2.
6. *Sympatheo* {soom-path-eh'-o} Greek: verb. Possible definitions: (a) to be affected with the same feeling as another, to sympathize with (b) to feel for, have compassion on. Example: Hebrews 10:34 (see Greek and Hebrew lexicons).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

"How godlike a quality is mercy. It cannot be legislated. It must come from the heart. It must be stirred up from within. It is part of the endowment each of us receives as a son or daughter of God and partaker of a divine birthright. I plead for an effort among all of us to give greater expression and wider latitude to this instinct which lies within us. . . .

"I plead for a stronger spirit of compassion in all of our relationships, a stronger element of mercy, for the promise is sure that if we are merciful we shall obtain mercy. . . .

"Mercy is of the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The degree to which each of us is able to extend it becomes an expression of the reality of our discipleship under Him who is our Lord and Master.

"I remind you that it was He who said, 'Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also' (Matthew 5:39).

"It was He who said, 'And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also' (5:40).

"It was He who said, 'And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain' (5:41).

"It was He who said, 'Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away' (5:42).

"It was He who said to the woman taken in sin:

"Where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? . . .

"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more' (John 8:10-11).

"It was He who, while hanging on the cross in dreadful agony, cried out, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34).

"He, the Son of the everlasting Father, was the epitome of mercy. His ministry was one of compassion toward the poor, the sick, the oppressed, the victims of injustice and man's inhumanity to man. His sacrifice on the cross was an unparalleled act of mercy in behalf of all humanity.

"How great a thing is mercy. Most often it is quiet and unassuming. It receives few headlines. It is the antithesis of vengeance and hatred, of greed and offensive egotism. . . .

"And this brings me to another area where there is so great a need for that mercy which speaks of forbearance, kindness, clemency, compassion. I speak of the homes of the people.

"Every child, with few possible exceptions, is the product of a home, be it good, bad, or indifferent. As children grow through the years, their lives, in large measure, become an extension and a reflection of family teaching. If there is harshness, abuse, uncontrolled anger, disloyalty, the fruits will be certain and discernible, and in all likelihood they will be repeated in the generation that follows. If, on the other hand, there is forbearance, forgiveness, respect, consideration, kindness, mercy, and compassion, the fruits again will be discernible, and they will be eternally rewarding. They will be positive and sweet and wonderful. And as mercy is given and taught by parents, it will be repeated in the lives and actions of the next generation.

"I speak to fathers and mothers everywhere with a plea to put harshness behind us, to bridle our anger, to lower our voices, and to deal with mercy and love and respect one toward another in our homes" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 86-89; or *Ensign*, May 1990, 68-70).

President Thomas S. Monson

“What power, what tenderness, what compassion did our Master and Exemplar thus demonstrate! We too can bless if we will but follow His noble example. Opportunities are everywhere. Needed are eyes to see the pitiable plight and ears to hear the silent pleadings of a broken heart. Yes, and a soul filled with compassion, that we might communicate not only eye to eye or voice to ear but, in the majestic style of the Savior, even heart to heart” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 80; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 61).

Principle of Work**Genesis 3:17–19**

“Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

“Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

2 Nephi 5:17

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cause my people to be industrious, and to labor with their hands.”

Mosiah 10:4–5

“And I did cause that the men should till the ground, and raise all manner of grain and all manner of fruit of every kind.

“And I did cause that the women should spin, and toil, and work, and work all manner of fine linen, yea, and cloth of every kind, that we might clothe our nakedness; and thus we did prosper in the land—thus we did have continual peace in the land for the space of twenty and two years.”

Doctrine and Covenants 42:42

“Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer.”

Doctrine and Covenants 68:30–31

“The idler shall be had in remembrance before the Lord. Now, I, the Lord am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“There is no substitute under the heavens for productive labor. It is the process by which dreams become realities. It is the process by which idle visions become dynamic achievements.

“Most of us are inherently lazy. We would rather play than work. A little play and a little loafing are good. But it is work that spells the difference in the life of a man or woman. It is work that provides the food we eat, the clothing we wear, the homes in which we live. We cannot deny the need for work with skilled hands and educated minds if we are to grow and prosper individually and collectively” (“I Believe,” *New Era*, Sept. 1996, 4).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

“‘In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread’ is not outdated counsel. It is basic to personal welfare. One of the greatest favors parents can do for their children is to teach them to work. Much has been said over the years about children and monthly allowances, and opinions and recommendations vary greatly. I’m from the ‘old school.’ I believe children should earn their money needs through service and appropriate chores. Some financial rewards to children may also be tied to educational effort and the accomplishment of other worthwhile goals. I think it is unfortunate for a child to grow up in a home where the seed is planted in the child’s mind that there is a family money tree that automatically drops ‘green stuff’ once a week or once a month” (*One for the Money*, 8).

Elder L. Tom Perry

“Teaching children the joy of honest labor is one of the greatest of all gifts you can bestow upon them. I am convinced that one of the reasons for the breakup of so many couples today is the failure of parents to teach and train sons in their responsibility to provide and care for their families and to enjoy the challenge this responsibility brings. Many of us also have fallen short in instilling within our daughters the desire of bringing beauty and order into their homes through homemaking” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 78; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 62).

“Marriage is a divine institution, ordained of God. Achieving success in the home is a supernal challenge—no other success can compensate for it.

Unless, however, a husband and wife learn to work together as one, marriage can also be an infernal ordeal. There are too many unhappy marriages in the world today. There are too many marriages that do not stay the course, ending prematurely in divorce” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 72).

Elder David B. Haight

“Our concern is not just that media producers and writers don’t portray happy, fruitful marriage, but that many married couples don’t take their marriages seriously enough—to work at them, protect them, nurture them, cultivate them day in and day out, week in and week out, yearlong, quarter-century long, half-a-century long, forever” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 16; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 13).

Elder James E. Faust

“An essential part of teaching children to be disciplined and responsible is to have them learn to work. As we grow up, many of us are like the man who said, ‘I like work; it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours’ (Jerome Klapka Jerome, in *The International Dictionary of Thoughts*, comp. John P. Bradley, Leo F. Daniels, and Thomas C. Jones [Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1969], p. 782). Again, the best teachers of the principle of work are the parents themselves. For me, work became a joy when I first worked alongside my father, grandfather, uncles, and brothers. I am sure that I was often more of an aggravation than a help, but the memories are sweet and the lessons learned are valuable. Children need to learn responsibility and independence. Are the parents personally taking the time to show and demonstrate and explain so that children can, as Lehi taught, ‘act for themselves and not . . . be acted upon’? (2 Nephi 2:26).

“Luther Burbank, one of the world’s greatest horticulturists, said, ‘If we had paid no more attention to our plants than we have to our children, we would now be living in a jungle of weeds’ (in *Elbert Hubbard’s Scrap Book* [New York: Wm. H. Wise and Co., 1923], p. 227)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 42; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 34).

Elder M. Russell Ballard

“Some people who lived through the Great Depression and the period following, when the

government bestowed gratuities upon the people, developed a feeling that the world owed them a living. In that climate, the First Presidency said in 1936: ‘The aim of the Church is to help the people to help themselves. Work is to be re-enthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership.’ (In Conference Report, Oct. 1936, p. 3.) . . .

“The love for work needs to be reenthroned in our lives. Every family should have a plan for work that touches the lives of each family member so that this eternal principle will be ingrained in their lives” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 116; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 85).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

“Husbands, be patient with your wives; and wives, be patient with your husbands. Don’t expect perfection. Find agreeable ways to work out the differences that arise” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 37; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 32).

“Parents should plant deeply the seed of the work ethic into the hearts and habits of their children. As society has shifted from an agrarian to an urban structure, the joy and necessity of diligent, hard work have been neglected. If our young people do not learn to work while in their homes, they likely will be compelled to learn later in a setting where the lesson may be painful” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 9; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 8).

Elder Dean L. Larsen

“Marriage is not an easy venture. It is largely a one-time-through, do-it yourself project for the husband and wife. I repeatedly encounter the illusion today, especially among younger people, that perfect marriages happen simply if the right two people come together. This is untrue. Marriages don’t succeed automatically. Those who build happy, secure, successful marriages pay the price to do so. They work at it constantly” (“Enriching Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1985, 20).

***Those who build
happy, secure,
successful
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price to do so.***

Sister Barbara B. Smith

“Accountability is a necessary condition of work. Responsibility brings system to the workings of a family and order to a marriage. Defining responsibilities and planning a method of reporting

back fosters freedom from family discord and is also a meaningful stage in developing personal discipline” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1981, 119–20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 84).

“PUT YOUR SHOULDER TO THE WHEEL”



Elder Neal A. Maxwell

*Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

*In Conference Report,
Apr. 1998, 48–51;
or Ensign, May
1998, 37–39
(priesthood session)*

Learning to Work by Raising Pigs

Brethren, during my Aaronic Priesthood years I was a swineherd! Way back then, by means of a 4-H Club project involving purebred Duroc pigs, I became familiar with work! As proof that what follows is not merely swollen memory, may I, with Elder Nelson’s help, display very briefly this blanket of nearly 100 ribbons won by my prize pigs at various fairs over several years.

Up near Elder Nelson’s hand is a pink ribbon, won 60 years ago. It was the very first ribbon I ever won. I think the judge had a tender eye, and the pig wasn’t really so choice, but he knew I needed encouragement and hence the fourth prize. The purple ribbons were for champions that were exhibited later on!

Thank you, Elder Nelson.

Brethren, I learned the hard way about the need to watch shifting pork prices at the local meat-packing plant. Careful records of profits and losses were kept with the help of my bookkeeper father. As in all things, my parents, so supportive, even ended up doing some of the perspiring themselves, including a special mother born 95 years ago today. She showed me how to work, and she loved me enough to correct me.

In order to obtain low-cost pig feed, I regularly bought dozens and dozens of three-day-old loaves of bread at a bakery for a mere penny a loaf. Additionally, if present at the right time at a local dairy, I could get about 70 gallons of skim milk *free!* Now I pay \$2.50 a gallon—an amusing irony. By saving in these

ways, I could buy the needed grain for the pigs with the little hard cash that I had.

There were many times when a pregnant sow would give birth to her litter after midnight. The resultant weariness of attending to all that, and more, was real. Yet through it all, there was a sense of some accomplishment, including contributing to our family menus. Most young men my age did similar work. Back then, brethren, we were all poor together, and we didn’t know it. Work was a given. Today, for some, receiving is a given.

However, there were real social downsides to raising pigs. Already shy, I remember vividly the principal of the junior high school coming into my class once and saying aloud in front of everybody: “Neal, your mother just called. Your pigs are out!” I felt like crawling under my desk but instead ran home to help round up the pigs.

Gratitude for Parents Who Taught Work

My father was loving but exacting. He noted that while I worked hard, my work was often not carefully done. I was a stranger to excellence. One summer day I determined to please Dad by putting in a number of needed fence posts, firmly implanted and fully aligned. I worked hard all that day and then expectantly scanned the lane down which my father would walk home. When he arrived, I watched anxiously as he carefully inspected the fence posts, even checking them with a level bar before pronouncing them to be fully satisfactory. Then came his praise. My sweat of the brow had earned Dad’s commendation which, in turn, melted my heart.

Please forgive this brief autobiographical note, which I have used to express my deep appreciation for learning to work at an early age. Even so, brethren, I certainly did not always put my shoulder to the wheel with a “heart full of song” (*Hymns*, no. 252), but I did learn about shoulders and wheels, which helped later in life, when the wheels grew larger. Some of today’s otherwise good young men mistakenly think that putting their shoulders to the wheel is the same thing as putting their hands on a steering wheel!

The Gospel of Work

Our Heavenly Father has described His vast plan for His children by saying, “Behold, this is my *work* and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and

eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39; italics added). Consider the significance of the Lord’s use of the word *work*. What He is doing so lovingly and redemptively is, nevertheless, work—even for Him! We, likewise, speak of “working out our salvation,” of the “law of the harvest,” and of the “sweat of the brow” (see Moses 5:1; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 4:1). These are not idle phrases. Instead, they underscore the importance of work. In fact, brethren, work is always a spiritual necessity even if, for some, work is not an economic necessity.

Thus I speak to you as good young men, including seven fine grandsons listening tonight, among them two missionaries and three recently ordained deacons. I remind you that the gospel of work is part of “the fulness of the gospel.” Though joyful, missionary work is work. Though joyful, temple work is work. Alas, a few of our underwhelmed youth work all right, but mostly at trying to please themselves.

Balance of Work Should Be Orchestrated

Unfortunately, a few of our otherwise good youth are unstretched, having almost a free pass. Perks are provided, including cars complete with fuel and insurance—all paid for by parents who sometimes listen in vain for a few courteous and appreciative words.

Young men, your individual mix of work will vary, understandably, by season and circumstance as between the hours spent on *homework* and *family work* and *Church work*, *part-time work*, and *work on service projects*. Each form of work can stretch your talents. Nevertheless, watch for the warning lights. For instance, if you are engaged in *part-time work*, are all your wages spent on yourself? Is tithing paid? Is some saved for a mission? President Spencer W. Kimball gave us this crisp counsel: “If the [young man] is permitted to spend his all on himself, that spirit of selfishness may continue with him to his grave” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 560).

Homework from school is surely a necessity, but does mental work squeeze out spiritual work entirely? Your grade-point average is very important, but what is your GPA for Christian service?

Doing *Church work* can develop vital reflexes, and the need for this form of work will never cease. But are you merely going through the motions?

Family work is vital too, but does it really go beyond merely keeping your own rooms clean and picking up your own clothes?

Whatever the mix of work, the hardest work you and I will ever do is to put off our selfishness. It is heavy lifting!

A balance of work needs to be orchestrated, because some forms of work tend to dominate other forms, like fathers working late at the office too often. Our preferred chores need little encouragement just as in Elder Spencer Condie’s paraphrase of Strauss’s warning to orchestra conductors: “Never give an encouraging nod to the brass section, or you’ll never hear the strings again!”

Fathers, Work with Your Sons

Be careful, fathers, when you inordinately desire things to be better for your children than they were for you. Do not, however unintentionally, make things worse by removing the requirement for reasonable work as part of their experience, thereby insulating your children from the very things that helped make you what you are!

Granted, some tactical situations have changed! For most young men, there are no cows to be milked, pigs to be fed, et cetera. Yes, some of today’s work may seem artificial and contrived. Nevertheless, young men, be patient with your parents as they try to help provide reasonable and meaningful work. In that connection, how blessed we would be if more sons could work alongside their fathers, if only occasionally. Fathers and sons, if such teaming up is not already happening at all, please, in the next three months, select just one stretching chore to do together.

Known for the Work Ethic

Young men, I do not know what your individual gifts are, but you have them! Please employ these gifts and stretch your talents—along with taking out garbage cans, mowing lawns, raking leaves, or shoveling snow for widows, widowers, or a sick neighbor.

Knowing how to work will give you an edge in life, and experience with excellence—a special edge!

Let us all be quick and generous to praise our youth for the work they accomplish, especially when they do it well!

The rising generation will determine if Latter-day Saints will continue to be known for the work ethic. Long ago, President Brigham Young advised: “I want to see our Elders so full of integrity that [their work] will be preferred. . . . If we live our religion and are

worthy [of] the name . . . Latter-day Saints, we are just the men that all such business can be entrusted to with perfect safety; if it can not [be] it will prove that we do not live our religion" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 232–33).

No Perspiration-Free Shortcuts

When the time comes, young men, make your career choices. Know that whether one is a neurosurgeon, forest ranger, mechanic, farmer, or teacher is a matter of preference not of principle. While those career choices are clearly very important, these do not mark your real career path. Instead, brethren, you are sojourning sons of God who have been invited to take the path that leads home. There, morticians will find theirs is not the only occupation to become obsolete. But the capacity to work and work wisely will never become obsolete. And neither will the ability to learn. Meanwhile, my young brethren, I have not seen any perspiration-free shortcuts to the celestial kingdom; there is no easy escalator to take us there.

Special Spirits Sent to Do Special Chores

Now, whether holders of the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood, at no time has it been more important for you to know *who* you are than in today's world. For a long, long time, each of you has been part of a great and ongoing drama. You were actually with God in the beginning (see D&C 93:29). You were at the grand, premortal council when, as His spirit sons, you shouted for joy over the prospect of this mortal experience in furtherance of Heavenly Father's plan of salvation.

Further drama lies ahead for the faithful, including one day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ, and when all will acknowledge that God is God, and that He is perfect in His justice and mercy (see Mosiah 27:31; 16:1; Alma 12:15). Those who love the Lord will inherit His celestial kingdom, where eye hath not seen nor ear heard such things as the Lord hath prepared for them (see 1 Corinthians 2:9). Jesus has already worked to prepare such a glorious place for us.

My brethren, old and young, *sweeping* is the only way to describe your spiritual history and your possible future! There will always be plenty of work

to do, especially for those who know how to do the Lord's work! I gladly endorse what President Hinckley has declared, namely that "we have the finest generation of young people ever in the history of this Church" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 714; see also Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 69).

I believe in your future possibilities. You are special spirits sent to do special chores. It is toward those chores that I have tried to give you a friendly nudge tonight!

I love you! May God bless you and keep you on that path that will take you home is my prayer in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Principle of Wholesome Recreational Activities

President Spencer W. Kimball

"Too much leisure for children leaves them in a state of boredom, and it is natural for them to want more and more of the expensive things for their recreation. We must bring dignity to labor in sharing the responsibilities of the home and the yard" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 5–6; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 5).

President Ezra Taft Benson

"Wholesome recreation is part of our religion, and a change of pace is necessary, and even its anticipation can lift the spirit" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, 92; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 66).

"Families must spend more time together in work and recreation. Family home evenings should be scheduled once a week as a time for recreation, work projects, skits, songs around the piano, games, special refreshments, and family prayers. Like iron links in a chain, this practice will bind a family together, in love, pride, tradition, strength, and loyalty" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 86; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 60).

"Successful families do things together: family projects, work, vacations, recreation, and reunions" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 6; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 6).

"Mothers in Zion, your God-given roles are so vital to your own exaltation and to the salvation and exaltation of your family. . . .

Families must spend more time together in work and recreation.

“. . . Take time to be a real friend to your children. . . .

“. . . Take time to read to your children. . . .

“. . . Take time to do things together as a family”
(*To the Mothers in Zion*, 8–10).

“With love in my heart for the fathers in Israel, may I suggest ten specific ways that fathers can give spiritual leadership to their children: . . .

“4. Go on daddy-daughter dates and father-and-sons’ outings with your children. As a family, go on campouts and picnics, to ball games and recitals, to school programs, and so forth. Having Dad there makes all the difference.

“5. Build traditions of family vacations and trips and outings. These memories will never be forgotten by your children” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 62–63; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 51; *To the Fathers in Israel*, 8–9).

President Hugh B. Brown

“This is entitled ‘When Is Success a Failure?’

“When you are doing the lower while the higher is possible,

When you are not a cleaner, finer, larger man on account of your work,

When you live only to eat and drink, have a good time, and accumulate money, then success is a failure.

When you do not carry a higher wealth in your character than in your pocketbook,

When the attainment of your ambition has blighted the aspirations and crushed the hopes of others,

When hunger for more money, more land, more houses and bonds has grown to be your dominant passion,

When your profession has made you a physical wreck—a victim of ‘nerves’ and moods,

When your absorption in your work has made you practically a stranger to your family,

When your greed for money has darkened and cramped your wife’s life, and deprived her of self-expression, of needed rest and recreation, of amusement of any kind,

When all sympathy and fellowship have been crushed out of your life by selfish devotion to your vocation,

When you do not overtop your vocation, when you are not greater as a man than as a lawyer, a merchant, a physician or a scientist,

When you plead that you have never had time to cultivate your friendships, your politeness, or your good manners,

When you have lost on your way your self-respect, your courage, your self-control, or any other quality of manhood, then success has been a failure.”

(In Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 113.)

President Thomas S. Monson

“So frequently we mistakenly believe that our children need more things, when in reality their silent pleadings are simply for more of our time. The accumulation of wealth or the multiplication of assets belies the Master’s teaching:

“‘Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

“‘But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

“‘For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’ [Matthew 6:19–21.]” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 80; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 62).

Elder Mark E. Petersen

“Is it too much to hold a home evening each Monday and there teach our family the value of a clean life, doing so by recreation as well as by precept?” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1980, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1980, 70).

Elder Thomas S. Monson

“Our house is to be a *house of order*. ‘To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven’ (Ecclesiastes 3:1), advised Ecclesiastes, the Preacher. Such is true in our lives. Let us provide time for family, time for work, time for study, time for service, time for recreation, time for self—but above all, time for Christ” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 22; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 18).

Elder L. Tom Perry

“If I were cast again in the role of having a young family around me, I would be determined to give them more time. . . .

“. . . Saturday would be a special activity day divided into two parts: first, a time for teaching children the blessings of work, how to care for and improve

the home, the yard, the garden, the field; second, a time for family activity, to build a family heritage of things you enjoy doing together” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 8–9; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 9).

“Dr. Nick Stinnett of the University of Nebraska gave a most interesting talk at an annual meeting of the National Council on Family Relations. It was titled ‘Characteristics of Strong Families.’ . . . [One of his points was:]

“. . . A strong family spends a significant amount of time together while playing, working, eating, or in recreation. Although family members all have outside interests, they find adequate time to spend together” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1983, 107; or *Ensign*, May 1983, 79).

“Build traditions in your families that will bring you together, for they can demonstrate your devotion, love, and support for one another. . . . Sharing these occasions as a family will help us build a foundation established upon a rock” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 29; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 23).

“Strengthen relationships through family activities” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 48; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 36).

“It is this part of Lehi’s dream I would like to comment on today. The current cries we hear coming from the great and spacious building tempt us to compete for ownership in the things of this world. We think we need a larger home with a three-car garage and a recreational vehicle parked next to it. . . . Often these items are purchased with borrowed money without giving any thought to providing for our future needs. The result of all this instant gratification is overloaded bankruptcy courts and families that are far too preoccupied with their financial burdens” (in Conference Report, Sept.–Oct. 1995, 45; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 35).

Elder James E. Faust

“*Develop family traditions.* Some of the great strengths of families can be found in their own traditions, which may consist of many things: making special occasions of the blessing of children, baptisms, ordinations to the priesthood, birthdays, fishing trips, skits on Christmas Eve, family home evening, and so forth. The traditions of each family are unique and are provided in large measure by the mother’s imprint” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1983, 58; or *Ensign*, May 1983, 41).

Elder Russell M. Nelson

“If marriage is a prime relationship in life, it deserves prime time!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 27; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 23).

Elder Marion D. Hanks

“He who believes knows that he belongs. But he also needs to feel himself an important and accepted part of a group. Young people want and deserve parents and a family they can be proud of. Their capacity to become worthwhile persons is strongly affected by the absence or presence of such a family and by their own acceptance of the challenge to be a contributing, responsible member of it. The influence of a good family is well-captured by this account from an unknown source:

““It was a gorgeous October day. My husband Art and I were down at the boat landing helping our friend Don drag his skiff up on the beach. Art remarked wistfully that it would be a long time before next summer, when we could all start sailing again. “You folks ought to take up skiing like our family and have fun the year round,” Don said.

““Doesn’t that get pretty expensive?” I asked.

“Don straightened up and smiled. “It’s funny,” he said. “We live in an old-fashioned house—legs on the tub, that sort of thing. For years we’ve been saving up to have the bathroom done over. But every winter we take the money out of the bank and go on a couple of family skiing trips. Our oldest boy is in the army now, and he often mentions in his letters what a great time we had on those trips. You know, I can’t imagine his writing home, ‘Boy, we really have a swell bathroom, haven’t we?’”” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1968, 57).

“A few weeks ago I listened to a stake president exhort his people to build strong families and to enjoy them. It was a great sermon, and the high point of it for me was his account of the family skiing trip when a four-year-old wanted to go to the top with the rest of the family and ski down. When they arrived it was discovered that he had to snowplow all the way down because it was just a bit too tough a run for his age and experience. The mother started to accompany her four-year-old son down the hill, but her teenage son voluntarily took over and lovingly shepherded his little brother down instead of swooping down himself as he could have done. He cheerfully sacrificed one swift run down the mountain

and blessed a whole family with a sweet spirit of love and concern and appreciation” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 130; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 91–92).

Elder Joe J. Christensen

“Keep your courtship alive. Make time to do things together—just the two of you. As important as it is to be with the children as a family, you need regular weekly time alone together. Scheduling it will let your children know that you feel that your marriage is so important that you need to nurture it. That takes commitment, planning, and scheduling” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 86; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 65).

Elder Dean L. Larsen

“Marriages don’t succeed automatically. Those who build happy, secure, successful marriages pay the price to do so. They work at it constantly. . . .

“. . . Discover things you enjoy doing together, and then do them regularly. Appreciate one another’s talents, and encourage and foster them.

“A wise bishop told me recently that every Friday night is date night for him and his wife. The older children in the family know that they have a babysitting assignment every Friday evening. It is a tradition that they enjoy with their parents” (“Enriching Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1985, 20, 23).

Bishop Vaughn J. Featherstone

“Do fun things that do not require money outlay but make more lasting impressions on your children” (“Food Storage,” *Ensign*, May 1976, 117).

Bishop J. Richard Clarke

“Now, what about our leisure time? How we use our leisure is equally as important to our joy as our occupational pursuits. Proper use of leisure requires discriminating judgment. Our leisure provides opportunity for renewal of spirit, mind, and body. It is a time for worship, for family, for service, for study, for wholesome recreation. It brings harmony into our life” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 112; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 78).

Sister Barbara B. Smith

“It might be a temptation for a working mother to plan special outings and play times as the so-called ‘quality’ time she has with her children. But many

are aware of the danger this poses in giving them a distorted picture of life by using all their time together in recreation. It is important for children to see the balance that is necessary between work and play. They need to know that special events are more meaningful when daily routines are established and when assigned duties are completed” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 114; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 80).

THE ETERNAL FAMILY



Elder Robert D. Hales

*Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

*In Conference Report,
Oct. 1996, 86–90;
or Ensign, Nov. 1996,
64–68*

The Doctrine of Eternal Families

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.

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 Hebrews 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).

From the earliest beginnings, God established the family and made it eternal. Adam and Eve were sealed in marriage for time and all eternity:

“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).

“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).

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:

“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” (Matthew 16:19).

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:

“Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

“Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi. . . .

“. . . The keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands” (D&C 110:13–14, 16).

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).

Promises and Requirements of Sealings

What is the promise of these sealings which are performed in the temples? The Lord outlines the promise and requirements in this sacred verse:

“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).

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.

Love Spouse above All Others

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 Timothy 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; italics added; see Mosiah 4:14–15; D&C 68:25–28).

Satan’s Efforts to Destroy the Family

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 roles of men and women,

encourage moral uncleanness and violations of the sacred law of chastity, and discourage parents from placing the bearing and rearing of children as one of their highest priorities.

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).

Save Families, Not Just Ourselves

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 that 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.

Families Prepare Us for Eternal Life

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 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.

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.

Faith of a Friend with a Terminal Illness

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.

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” (Matthew 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” (Matthew 26:42).

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?”

***We are each
an important and
integral part of
a family.***

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.

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 Revelation 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, and 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.

Gospel Doctrines Comfort a Young Widow

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."

The fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ brings great comfort in stressful 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.

A Dying Man Has Faith in Eternal Families

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.

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.

The Gospel Brings Light and Hope

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, make 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.

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 FAMILY



Elder Henry B. Eyring

*Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

*CES fireside for college-age
young adults, 5 Nov. 1995;
or To Draw Closer to God,
157–73*

Since the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith until 23 September 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.

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 a person directly, by inspiration. But he will, in addition, tell us through his servants. In the words of the prophet 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.

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*, Nov. 1995, p. 102).

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).

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).

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.

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:

“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).

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:

“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.”

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).

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 will 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.

Read in that same way, as if you were a little child, the next words of the proclamation:

“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 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.”

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 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.

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.”

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.

I was in Boston. For a little nostalgia, 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.

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, at the price of \$21 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 week night.

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 for 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 which 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.

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 a 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.

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:

“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 to God’s eternal plan.”

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).

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.

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 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:

“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.

“Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting” (D&C 132:19–20).

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).

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:

“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” (Joseph Smith—History 1:39).

For some of us, the test in that 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 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.

The proclamation describes our schooling here for family life in the presence of our Eternal Father:

“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.

“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.”

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.

To begin with, we can decide to plan for success, not 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.

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 the 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.

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 harder to hold. But there are other ways the young man and the young woman could think tonight 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, which goes something like this: Income five dollars and expenses six dollars: misery. Income four dollars and expenses three dollars: happiness.

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:

“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.” (*Journal of Discourses*, 11:201.)

***Think carefully
about what you
really need.***

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 clothes, and recreation, 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.

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.

There is another way we could plan to succeed tonight, 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.

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 tonight that we will do all we can to bring down the powers of heaven into that family we want so much to have forever.

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.”

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. From Moroni these words describe exactly how that change is the natural fruit of living the gospel of Jesus Christ:

“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;

“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).

When we prepare children 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.

You know that is true; I know that is true from our own experience and from the experience of those in our families. We know that someday we could find 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 you could know that is more than talk if her older sister had said in a phone call made at a stopping place on that flight home, “Oh, I’m just vacuuming the house.”

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 does 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 upon them:

“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” (v. 26). And may I add the words “in families.”

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:

“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).

That peace will come from the assurance that the Atonement has worked in our lives and the hope of eternal life that springs from it.

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:

“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.”

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 then will be what we practice in families bound together forever by covenants and by 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.

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.

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.

I testify that the Holy Ghost can fill us with hope and with perfect love.

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.

FIDELITY IN MARRIAGE

*Marriage itself
must be regarded as a sacred
covenant before God.*

—Elder Ezra Taft Benson

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Doctrine of Fidelity

Exodus 20:14

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

Alma 39:5

“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?”

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Now I move to another corrosive element that afflicts all too many marriages. It is interesting to me that two of the Ten Commandments deal with this: ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’ and ‘Thou shalt not covet’ (Exodus 20:14, 17). Ted Koppel, moderator of ABC’s ‘Nightline’ program, is reported as saying the following to a group of students at Duke University concerning slogans that were proposed to reduce drugs and immorality:

“We have actually convinced ourselves that slogans will save us. . . . But the answer is *NO!* Not because it isn’t cool or smart or because you might end up in jail or dying in an AIDS ward, but *NO* because it is wrong, because we have spent 5,000 years as a race of rational human beings, trying to drag ourselves out of the primeval slime by searching for truth and moral absolutes. In its purest form, truth is not a polite tap on the shoulder. It is a howling reproach. What Moses brought down from Mount Sinai were not *The Ten Suggestions*’ (address given at Duke University, 10 May 1987).

“Think about that for a moment. What Moses brought down were Ten Commandments, written by the finger of Jehovah on tablets of stone for the salvation and safety, for the security and happiness of the children of Israel and for all of the generations which were to come after them.

“Altogether too many men, leaving their wives at home in the morning and going to work, where they find attractively dressed and attractively made-up young women, regard themselves as young and handsome and as an irresistible catch. They complain that their wives do not look the same as they did twenty years ago when they married them. To which I say, ‘Who would, after living with you for twenty years?’

“The tragedy is that some men are ensnared by their own foolishness and their own weakness. They throw to the wind the most sacred and solemn of covenants, entered into in the house of the Lord and sealed under the authority of the holy priesthood. They set aside their wives who have been faithful, who have loved and cared for them, who have struggled with them in times of poverty only to be discarded in times of affluence. They have left their children fatherless. They have avoided with every kind of artifice the payment of court-mandated alimony and child support. . . .

“The complaint of a husband, after eighteen years of marriage and five children, that he no longer loves his wife is, in my judgment, a feeble excuse for the violation of covenants made before God and also the evasion of the responsibilities that are the very strength of the society of which we are a part” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 71–72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 51).

First Presidency—Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark Jr., David O. McKay

“The doctrine of this Church is that sexual sin—the illicit sexual relations of men and women—stands, in its enormity, next to murder.

“The Lord has drawn no essential distinctions between fornication, adultery, and harlotry or prostitution. . . .

“You husbands and wives who have taken on solemn obligations of chastity in the holy temples of the Lord and who violate those sacred vows by illicit sexual relations with others, you not only commit the vile and loathsome sin of adultery, but you break the oath you yourselves made with the Lord Himself before you went to the altar for your sealing.

You become subject to the penalties which the Lord has prescribed for those who breach their covenants with Him” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1942, 11).

Elder Ezra Taft Benson

“Marriage itself must be regarded as a sacred covenant before God. A married couple have an obligation not only to each other, but to God. He has promised blessings to those who honor that covenant.

“Fidelity to one’s marriage vows is absolutely essential for love, trust, and peace. Adultery is unequivocally condemned by the Lord” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 85; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 59).

Elder Robert D. Hales

“Rationalization that God should change His commandments to accommodate our transgressions leads to spiritual darkness, which only the light of the gospel can remove. To the woman taken in adultery, Christ did not soften the commandment to not commit adultery. Rather, He counseled her to ‘sin no more’ (John 8:11). He promises all of us forgiveness through repentance. It is we who must change, not the commandments” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 52; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 37).

Costs of Infidelity

Proverbs 5:3–4

“For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil:

“But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword.”

Malachi 3:5

“And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers.”

Galatians 6:7–8

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

“For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

Doctrine and Covenants 42:23–24

“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.

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

President Howard W. Hunter

“Be faithful in your marriage covenants in thought, word, and deed. Pornography, flirtations, and unwholesome fantasies erode one’s character and strike at the foundation of a happy marriage. Unity and trust within a marriage are thereby destroyed. One who does not control his thoughts and thus commits adultery in his heart, if he does not repent, shall not have the Spirit but shall deny the faith and shall fear (see D&C 42:23; 63:16)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“I am satisfied that a happy marriage is not so much a matter of romance as it is an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one’s companion.

A happy marriage is not so much a matter of romance as it is an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one’s companion.

“Selfishness so often is the basis of money problems, which are a very serious and real factor affecting the stability of family life. Selfishness is at the root of adultery, the breaking of solemn and sacred covenants to satisfy selfish lust. Selfishness is the antithesis of love. It is a cankering expression of greed. It destroys self-discipline. It obliterates loyalty. It tears up sacred covenants. It afflicts both men and women.

“Too many who come to marriage have been coddled and spoiled and somehow led to feel that everything must be precisely right at all times, that life is a series of entertainments, that appetites are to be satisfied without regard to principle. How tragic the consequences of such hollow and unreasonable thinking!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 73).

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley

“Was there ever adultery without dishonesty? In the vernacular, the evil is described as ‘cheating.’ And cheating it is, for it robs virtue, it robs loyalty, it robs

sacred promises, it robs self-respect, it robs truth. It involves deception. It is personal dishonesty of the worst kind, for it becomes a betrayal of the most sacred of human relationships, and a denial of covenants and promises entered into before God and man. It is the sordid violation of a trust. It is a selfish casting aside of the law of God, and like other forms of dishonesty its fruits are sorrow, bitterness, heart-broken companions, and betrayed children" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 92; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 61).

President Thomas S. Monson

"Because sexual intimacy is so sacred, the Lord requires self-control and purity before marriage, as well as full fidelity after marriage. . . . Tears inevitably follow transgression. Men, take care not to make women weep, for God counts their tears" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 47).

Elder Richard G. Scott

"Adultery, fornication, committing homosexual acts, and other deviations approaching these in gravity are not acceptable alternate lifestyles. They are serious sins. Committing physical and sexual abuse are major sins. Such grave sins require deep repentance to be forgiven. President Kimball taught: 'To every forgiveness there is a condition. The plaster must be as wide as the sore. The fasting, the prayers, the humility must be equal to or greater than the sin.' [*The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), p. 353] 'It is unthinkable that God absolves serious sins upon a few requests. He is likely to wait until there has been long, sustained repentance.' [*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, . . . p. 85]" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 103; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 77).

Precautions That Help Prevent Infidelity

1 Corinthians 7:2–3

"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."

President David O. McKay

"The sexual impurity of the world today is the result of the loss of true manhood through indulgence. Unchaste thoughts have bred unchaste words, and

unchaste words, unchaste acts. In the teachings of the Church, next to the crime of murder comes that of adultery, and sexual unchastity. If the members of the Church will remain true to their belief in chastity, and will develop true manhood through practicing self-control in other ways, they will stand as beacon lights whose rays will penetrate a sin-stained world" ("Christ, the Light of Humanity," *Improvement Era*, June 1968, 5).

President Spencer W. Kimball

"It is not enough to refrain from adultery. We need to make the marriage relationship sacred, to sacrifice and work to maintain the warmth and respect which we enjoyed during courtship. God intended marriage to be eternal, sealed by the power of the priesthood, to last beyond the grave. Daily acts of courtesy and kindness, conscientiously and lovingly carried out, are part of what the Lord expects" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1978, 7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 6).

President Ezra Taft Benson

"*Control your thoughts.* No one steps into immorality in an instant. The first seeds of immorality are always sown in the mind. When we allow our thoughts to linger on lewd or immoral things, the first step on the road to immorality has been taken. I especially warn you against the evils of pornography. . . . The Savior taught that even when a man looks upon a woman to lust after her, or in other words, when he lets his thoughts begin to get out of control, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart (see Matthew 5:28, D&C 63:16). . . .

". . . *If you are married, avoid flirtations of any kind.* . . .

". . . *If you are married, avoid being alone with members of the opposite sex whenever possible.* Many of the tragedies of immorality begin when a man and woman are alone in the office or at church or driving in a car. At first there may be no intent or even thought of sin. But the circumstances provide a fertile seedbed for temptation. . . . It is so much easier to avoid such circumstances from the start so that temptation gets no chance for nourishment" ("Law of Chastity," 51–52).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

"Stand above the sleaze and the filth and the temptation which is all about you.

"You women who are single, and some of you who are married, who are out in the workplace, may I give

you a word of caution. You work alongside men. More and more, there are invitations to go to lunch, ostensibly to talk about business. You travel together. You stay in the same hotel. You work together.

“Perhaps you cannot avoid some of this, but you can avoid getting into compromising situations. Do your job, but keep your distance. Don’t become a

factor in the breakup of another woman’s home. You are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You know what is expected of you. Stay away from that which is tempting. Avoid evil—its very appearance” (“Walking in the Light of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 99).

FINANCES

The possession of wealth or the acquisition of significant income is not a mark of heavenly favor, and their absence is not evidence of heavenly disfavor.

—Elder Dallin H. Oaks

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“The deceitfulness of riches can choke out the fruits of the gospel in many ways. A person who covets the wealth of another will suffer spiritually. A person who has wealth and then loses it and becomes embittered and hateful is also a victim of the deceitfulness of riches.

“Another victim is the person who becomes resentful of the wealth of the wicked. The prophet Jeremiah gave voice to the old question, ‘Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?’ (Jeremiah 12:1.) Those who brood over the prosperity or seeming happiness of the wicked put too much emphasis on material things. They can be deceived because their priorities are too concentrated on worldly wealth.

“Another victim of the deceitfulness of riches is the person who consciously or unconsciously feels guilt at having failed to acquire the property or prominence the world credits as the indicia of success.

“Those who preach the gospel of success and the theology of prosperity are suffering from ‘the deceitfulness of riches’ and from supposing that ‘gain is godliness’ (1 Timothy 6:5). The possession of wealth or the acquisition of significant income is not a mark of heavenly favor, and their absence is not evidence of heavenly disfavor. Riches can be among the blessings that follow right behavior—such as the payment of tithing (Malachi 3:9–12)—but riches can also be acquired through the luck of a prospector or as the fruits of dishonesty” (*Pure in Heart*, 75–76).

ONE FOR THE MONEY: GUIDE TO FAMILY FINANCE



Elder Marvin J. Ashton
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
Booklet

In the welfare session of the April 1975 general conference, Elder Marvin J. Ashton, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, delivered the address from which this booklet is adapted. President Spencer W. Kimball endorsed Elder Ashton’s message when in the same meeting he stood and said:

“I have been thinking of many things since we came to this meeting. I endorse what Brother Ashton has said. I think if I were starting with a young family, I would want to get the twelve points explained by Brother Ashton and follow them explicitly myself and teach my children and my family and everybody with whom I came in contact. It is basic. All my life from childhood I have heard the Brethren saying, ‘Get out of debt and stay out of debt.’ I was employed for some years in the banks and I saw the terrible situation that many people were in because they had ignored that important counsel.

“I agree with all that Brother Ashton has said . . . with regard to family financing in the home. Every family should have a budget. Why, we would not think of going one day without a budget in this Church or our businesses. We have to know approximately what we may receive, and we certainly must know what we are going to spend. And one of the successes of the Church would have to be that the Brethren watch these things very carefully, and we do not spend that which we do not have.”

Recently I had the opportunity to visit with a choice young couple. They were to be married within the week. Their eyes sparkled in anticipation of the important event and with evidence of their continuing love for one another. Both had the advantages of college education, good homes, and cultural experiences. It was delightful to share their personalities, plans, and potentials. Their courtship already seemed appropriately launched on an eternal basis.

During our interview, their responses to only one question gave me concern. I hope my anxieties and

suggestions caused them to reassess their pending partnership.

To the question, “Who is going to manage the money in your marriage?” she replied, “He is, I guess.” He responded, “We haven’t talked about that yet.” These comments surprised and shocked me.

How important are money management and finances in marriage and family affairs? May I respond, “Tremendously.” The American Bar Association has indicated that 89 percent of all divorces can be traced to quarrels and accusations over money. Others have estimated that 75 percent of all divorces result from clashes over finances. Some professional counselors indicate that four out of five families are strapped with serious money problems.

May I at this time hasten to emphasize the fact that these marriage tragedies are not caused simply by lack of money, but rather by the mismanagement of personal finances. A prospective wife could well concern herself not with the amount her husband-to-be can earn in a month, but rather with how he (and she) will manage the money that comes into their hands. Money management should take precedence over money productivity. A prospective husband who is engaged to a sweetheart who has everything would do well to take yet another look and see if she has money-management sense.

In the home, money management between husband and wife should be on a partnership basis, with both parties having a voice in decision- and policy-making. When children come along and reach the age of accountability, they too should be involved in money concerns on a limited partnership basis. Peace, contentment, love, and security in the home are not possible when financial anxieties and bickerings prevail. Whether we are anticipating marriage or are well into it, today is the time for all of us to review and repent as necessary to improve our money management skills and live within our means.

As proper money management and living within one’s means are essential in today’s world if we are to live abundantly and happily, may I make some recommendations for improved personal and family financial management. The following twelve points will help each of us achieve this goal, I believe.

Pay an Honest Tithing

Successful financial management in every LDS home begins with the payment of an honest tithe. If our

tithing and fast offerings are the first obligations met following the receipt of each paycheck, our commitment to this important gospel principle will be strengthened and the likelihood of financial mismanagement will be reduced. Paying tithing promptly to Him who does not come to check up each month will teach us and our children to be more honest with those physically closer at hand.

Learn to Manage Money Before It Manages You

A bride-to-be would do well to ask herself, “Can my sweetheart manage money? Does he know how to live within his means?” These are more important questions than, “Can he earn a lot of money?” Financial peace of mind is not determined by how much we make, but is dependent upon how much we spend.

New attitudes and relationships toward money should be developed constantly by all couples. After all, the partnership should be full and eternal. Management of family finances should be mutual between husband and wife in an attitude of openness and trust. Control of the money by one spouse as a source of power and authority causes inequality in the marriage and is inappropriate. Conversely, if a marriage partner voluntarily removes himself or herself entirely from family financial management, that is an abdication of necessary responsibility.

Learn Self-Discipline and Self-Restraint in Money Matters

Learning how to discipline oneself and exercise constraint where money is concerned can be more important than courses in accounting. Young couples should recognize that they cannot immediately maintain the same spending patterns and life-style as that to which they were accustomed as part of their parents’ family. Married couples show genuine maturity when they think of their partner’s and their family’s needs ahead of their own spending impulses. Money management skills should be learned together in a spirit of cooperation and love on a continuing basis. A disgusted husband once said, “I think that in life money talks, but when my wife gets hold of it, all it ever says is ‘good-bye.’” To the husband who says his wife is the poorest money manager in the world, I would say, “Look in the mirror and meet the world’s poorest teacher-trainer.”

Debt-Elimination Calendar

	Credit card	Dept. Store	Dentist	Piano loan	Auto loan
March	110	70	50	75	235
April	110	70	50	75	235
May	110	70	50	75	235
June	110	70	50	75	235
July		180	50	75	235
August		180	50	75	235
Sept.		180	50	75	235
Oct.			230	75	235
Nov.			230	75	235
Dec.				305	235
Jan.				305	235
Feb.					540
March					

We live in a self-indulgent, me-oriented, materialistic society. Advertisements entice young buyers by demonstrating how easy it is to get credit and buy on time. Interestingly, no ads focus on the glamour of paying the money back, nor do they mention how long or hard it is to do just that—especially with the unavoidable interest added on.

A debt-elimination calendar can help you reduce or eliminate unnecessary debt. Mark off several columns on a piece of paper. In the first column on the left, write the names of the months, beginning with the upcoming month. At the top of the next column, write the name of the creditor you want to pay off first. It may be the debt with the highest interest rate, or the earliest pay-off date. List the monthly payment for that creditor until the loan is repaid as shown in the illustration above. At the top of the next column, record the name of the second creditor you want to repay, and list payments due each month. After you have repaid the first creditor,

add the amount of that monthly payment to your payment to the second creditor. (In the example above, notice that the family finished making monthly payments on their credit card. They then added \$110 to the department store's \$70 payment, creating a new monthly payment of \$180.) Continue the process until all loans are repaid.

Use a Budget

Every family must have a predetermined understanding of how much money will be available each month and the amount to be spent in each category of the family budget. Checkbooks facilitate family cash management and record keeping. Carefully record each check when written and balance the checkbook with the monthly bank statement.

With the exception of buying a home, paying for education, or making other vital investments, avoid debt and the resulting finance charges. Buy consumer durables and vacations with cash. Avoid installment

credit, and be careful with your use of credit cards. They are principally for convenience and identification and should not be used carelessly or recklessly. The use of multiple credit cards significantly adds to the risk of excess debt. Buy used items until you have saved sufficiently to purchase quality new items. Purchasing poor-quality merchandise almost always ends up being very expensive.

Save and invest a specific percentage of your income. Liquid savings available for emergencies should be sufficient to cover at least three months of all essential family obligations. Every LDS family should file honest and timely tax returns.

BUDGET FOR _____ 19__		
INCOME	PLANNED	ACTUAL
Wages/Salaries (after taxes)		
Other income		
Total income		
EXPENDITURES		
Planned		
Actual		
Church donations		
Savings		
Food		
Mortgage or rent		
Utilities		
Transportation		
Debt payments		
Insurance		
Medical		
Clothing		
Other		
Total Expenditures		
Income less expenditures		

Please listen carefully to this—and if it makes some of you feel uncomfortable, it is on purpose: Latter-day Saints who ignore or avoid their creditors are entitled to feel the inner frustrations that such conduct

merits, and they are not living as Latter-day Saints should! Bankruptcy should be avoided, except only under the most unique and irreversible circumstances, and then utilized only after prayerful thought and thorough legal and financial consultation.

A budget helps you plan and evaluate your expenditures.

Budget for a specified period (such as weekly, biweekly, monthly), according to your pay schedule.

Balance income with expenditures, and spend less than you earn.

Teach Family Members Early the Importance of Working and Earning

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” is not outdated counsel. It is basic to personal welfare. One of the greatest favors parents can do for their children is to teach them to work. Much has been said over the years about children and monthly allowances, and opinions and recommendations vary greatly. I’m from the “old school.” I believe children should earn their money needs through service and appropriate chores. Some financial rewards to children may also be tied to educational effort and the accomplishment of other worthwhile goals. I think it is unfortunate for a child to grow up in a home where the seed is planted in the child’s mind that there is a family money tree that automatically drops “green stuff” once a week or once a month.

Teach Children to Make Money Decisions in Keeping with Their Capacities to Comprehend

Based upon appropriate teaching and individual experience, children should be responsible for the financial decisions affecting their own money and suffer the consequences of unwise spending. “Save your money” is a hollow pronouncement from a parent to a child. “Save your money for a mission, bicycle, doll house, trousseau, or car” makes understandable sense. Family unity comes from saving together for a common, jointly approved purpose. In our home we found it unifying to have a child save for a major project; then, when the amount was achieved, we matched it with a predetermined percentage. Incentives are a powerful force in motivating and achieving desired behavior.

Teach Each Family Member to Contribute to the Total Family Welfare

As children mature, they should understand the family financial position, budget and investment goals, and their individual responsibility within the family. Encourage inexpensive fun projects, understandable to the children, that contribute to a family goal or joy. Some families miss a tremendous financial and spiritual experience when they fail to sit together, preferably during family home evening, and each put in his share of the monthly amount going to the son or daughter, brother or sister, who is serving in the mission field. When this monthly activity is engaged in all at once, he or she becomes “our” missionary, with pride becoming a two-way street.

Make Education a Continuing Process

Complete as much formal, full-time education as possible, including trade schools and apprentice programs. This is money well invested. Based on potential lifetime earnings, the hours spent in furthering your education will be very valuable indeed. Use night school and correspondence classes to further prepare. Acquire some special skill or ability that could be used to avoid prolonged unemployment. The ability to do basic home and auto repairs can frequently be helpful, as well as a source of family savings. Periods of unexpected unemployment can happen to anyone. We should not allow ourselves, when we are out of work, to sit back and wait for “our type of job” if other honorable interim employment becomes available.

Work Toward Home Ownership

Home ownership qualifies as an investment, not consumption. Buy the type of home your income will support. Improve the home and beautify the landscape throughout the period you occupy the premises so that if you do sell it, you can use the accumulated equity and potential capital gain to acquire a home more suitable to family needs.

Appropriately Involve Yourself in an Insurance Program

It is most important to have sufficient medical, automobile, and homeowner’s insurance and an adequate life insurance program. Costs associated with illness, accident, and death may be so large

that uninsured families can be financially burdened for many years.

Understand the Influence of External Forces on Family Finances and Investments

Inflation continues to offset a major portion of average wage increases. A larger paycheck may not mean more purchasing power and should not be an excuse for extravagant purchases or additional debt. Beyond the emergency liquid savings, families should plan for and utilize a wise investment program preparing for financial security, possible disability, and retirement. Avoid all proposals for high-risk investments and get-rich-quick schemes.

Appropriately Involve Yourself in a Food Storage and Emergency Preparedness Program

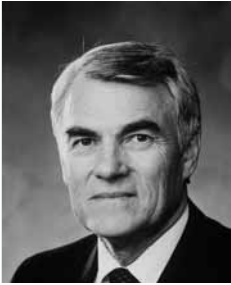
Accumulate your basic food storage and emergency supplies in a systematic and orderly way. Avoid going into debt for these purposes. Beware of unwise food storage promotional schemes. Planting and harvesting a garden annually is helpful to the family in many ways, including the food budget. Eat nutritious foods and exercise appropriately to improve health, thus avoiding many medical costs.

These few points and suggestions are not intended to be all-inclusive or exhaustive. Rather, it is hoped that a need has been brought to the surface for our serious consideration. We need to recognize and be aware of these basic guidelines for wise money management.

God help us to realize that money management is an important ingredient in proper personal welfare. Learning to live within our means should be a continuing process. We need to work constantly toward keeping ourselves free of financial difficulties. It is a happy day financially when time and interest are working for you and not against you.

Money in the lives of Latter-day Saints should be used as a means of achieving eternal happiness. Careless and selfish uses cause us to live in financial bondage. We can’t afford to neglect personal and family involvement in our money management. God will open the windows of heaven to us in these matters if we will but live close to him and keep his commandments.

GREED, SELFISHNESS, AND OVERINDULGENCE



Elder Joe J. Christensen

*Of the Presidency
of the Seventy*

*In Conference Report,
Apr. 1999, 8–11;
or Ensign, May
1999, 9–11*

They say the gospel is to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comforted. My purpose today is to speak to the comforted: the rich, the poor, and all of us in between.

The Lord has said, “Wo unto you rich men, . . . for your riches will canker your souls.” He has also said, “Wo unto you poor men, whose hearts are not broken, . . . [and] whose eyes are full of greediness.”¹

Many of you probably have heard this little prayer somebody wrote:

“Dear God,

“So far today I have done all right. I haven’t gossiped, haven’t lost my temper, haven’t been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or overly indulgent. But in a few minutes, Lord, I am going to get out of bed, and from then on, I am probably going to need a lot more help.”

When it comes to overcoming being greedy, selfish, and overly indulgent, we all need a lot more help. In his candid manner, President Brigham Young said: “The worst fear . . . I have about this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and His people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church. . . . My greater fear . . . is that they cannot stand wealth.”²

Our prosperity brings some real challenges because many are getting rich, more of us are waxing fat, and as a result of greed, selfishness, and overindulgence, we could lose the Spirit and literally kick ourselves out of the Church.

Materialism Consuming Our Thoughts

Money and material things are on the minds of almost everyone. As Morris Chalfant wrote: “The great [question] of the twentieth century is[,] ‘How

can I acquire wealth?’ No question occupies a larger place in the minds and . . . hearts of . . . people today than this. . . . This is true of men in every station and in every walk of life.”³

Money in and of itself is not an evil, but as Paul taught Timothy, it is the love of money that is the root of all evil.⁴ There are some of the wealthy who deal with their prosperity very well, using their resources to bless others and build the kingdom. For many, however, wealth presents major difficulties.

As we deal with the materialism that threatens us, here are four suggestions for each of us to consider.

Wants Are Not Needs

First, we should not confuse wants with needs.

My mother taught me an important lesson along these lines. For many years my father had a practice of trading for a new car every year. Then shortly after World War II when grain prices increased, we were surprised one day when Dad drove home in a more expensive car.

One morning my mother asked, “How much more did the new car cost than the other one?”

When Dad told her, my mother said, “Well, the other car has always been able to get me where I need to go. I think we ought to give the difference to someone who needs it more than we do.”

And so it was. The next year Dad returned to the less-expensive cars, and they continued their generous ways.

If we are not careful, it is easy for our wants to become needs. Remember the line “There, there, little luxury, don’t you cry. You’ll be a necessity by and by.”

Avoid Spoiling Children

Second, we should avoid spoiling children by giving them too much.

In our day many children grow up with distorted values because we as parents overindulge them. Whether you are well-to-do or, like most of us, of more modest means, we as parents often attempt to provide children with almost everything they want, thus taking away from them the blessing of anticipating, of longing for something they do not have. One of the most important things we can teach our children is to deny themselves. Instant

gratification generally makes for weak people. How many truly great individuals do you know who never had to struggle?

Elder Maxwell has voiced this concern when he said: “A few of our wonderful youth and young adults in the Church are unstretched. They have almost a free pass. Perks are provided, including cars complete with fuel and insurance—all paid for by parents who sometimes listen in vain for a few courteous and appreciative words. What is thus taken for granted . . . tends to underwrite selfishness and a sense of entitlement.”⁵

A wise young mother said: “I choose not to give our children what I can afford to give them. I hold back for their sake.”

In the words of Fred Gosman, “Children who always get what they want will want as long as they live.”⁶ And somewhere along the line it is important for the character development of our children to learn that “the earth still revolves around the sun” and not around them.⁷ Rather, we should train our children to ask themselves the question, How is the world a better place because they are in it?

We live in a world of entertainment in full color with a lot of fast action, a world in which many children grow up thinking that if it isn’t fun, it is boring and not worthwhile. Even in family activities, we need to strike a balance between play and work. Some of my most memorable experiences while growing up centered around family activities: learning how to shingle a roof, build a fence, or working in the garden. Rather than being all work and no play, for many of our children it is almost all play and very little work.

As a consequence of overindulgence, many children leave homes ill-prepared to meet the real world.

President Hinckley said: “Of course, we need to earn a living. The Lord told Adam that in the sweat of his face should he eat bread all the days of his life. It is important that we qualify ourselves to be self-reliant, particularly that every young man at the time of marriage be ready and able to assume the responsibilities of providing for his companion and for the children who may come to that home.”⁸

All too many enter marriage who have never learned to cook, sew, or develop other important life skills.

Ignorance of these needed skills, along with the lack of understanding of the management of money, sow the seeds for many failures in our children’s marriages.

I fear that in many cases we are rearing children who are slaves to expensive fads and fashions. Remember the scripture “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”⁹ How do we determine where our treasure is? To do so, we need to evaluate the amount of time, money, and thought we devote to something. Might it not be well to evaluate how much focus we place on shopping and spending?

This does not mean that our children should not dress in some of the appropriate clothing that is in fashion because that can be very important to them. But they don’t need a closet full. As members of the Church, we have a responsibility to present ourselves in a well-groomed, attractive, and modest manner. With good planning, this can be done without being driven to spend extravagantly on our clothing.

More than 10 times the prophets in the Book of Mormon warn us about the problems of pride related to the nature of our clothing. Here is one example of them: “And it came to pass . . . that the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen. . . . In all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel.”¹⁰

We would do well if in all these areas of material things we and our children would follow the oft-quoted motto of our pioneer forebears to “fix it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.”

Live Modestly and Avoid Debt

Third, as we have heard so often, live modestly and avoid debt as if it were a plague.

As a consequence of overindulgence, many children leave homes ill-prepared to meet the real world.

President Hinckley recently reminded us of President Heber J. Grant’s statement: “‘If there is any one thing that will bring peace and contentment into the human heart, and into the family, it is to live within our means. And if there is any one thing that is grinding and discouraging and disheartening, it is to have debts and obligations that one cannot meet.’ (Gospel Standards, comp. G. Homer Durham [1941], 111).”¹¹

Samuel Johnson said, “Do not accustom yourself to consider debt as an inconvenience, you will find it [to be] a calamity.”

How much house do we really need to accommodate our family comfortably? We should not endanger ourselves either spiritually or economically by acquiring homes which are ostentatious, feed our vanity, and go far beyond our needs.

If we are to be self-reliant and in a position to share, obviously we must acquire some resources. If we live within our means and avoid debt, resources can be accumulated. There are those with average incomes who, over a lifetime, do amass some means, and there are those who receive large salaries who do not. What is the difference? It is simply spending less than they receive, saving along the way, and taking advantage of the power of compound interest.

Financial consultants indicate that “most people have it all wrong about wealth. . . . Wealth is not the same as income. If you make a good income each year and spend it all, you are not getting wealthier. You are just living high. Wealth is what you accumulate, not what you spend.”¹²

Give Generously to Others

Finally, be generous in giving and sharing with others.

The more our hearts and minds are turned to assisting others less fortunate than we, the more we will avoid the spiritually cankering effects that result from greed, selfishness, and overindulgence. Our resources are a stewardship, not our possessions. I am confident that we will literally be called upon to make an accounting before God concerning how we have used them to bless lives and build the kingdom.

The prophet Jacob provides us with some excellent counsel about how riches can be acquired and for what they should be used:

“But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

“And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them . . . for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.”¹³

In addition to paying an honest tithing, we should be generous in assisting the poor. How much should we give? I appreciate the thought of C. S. Lewis on this subject. He said: “I am afraid the only safe rule

is to give more than we can spare. . . . If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, . . . they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditures excludes them.”¹⁴

There are many worthy individuals and causes to which we might contribute. We should give generously to the fast offering and humanitarian funds of the Church. And if we desire our families to live lives of depth and meaning, we must have the courage to examine honestly where our treasures lie and avoid the pitfalls that result from greed, selfishness, and overindulgence.

Let us each remember:

- First: Not to confuse wants with needs.
- Second: Avoid spoiling our children.
- Third: Live modestly and avoid debt.
- Fourth: Be generous in giving to others.

Giving really is at the heart of our faith. At this Easter time, we again commemorate that “God [our Heavenly Father] so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,”¹⁵ who came to the earth and could have possessed any material thing but rather chose to give to all of us an example of a simple life free from any shade of greed, selfishness, or overindulgence. May we strive daily to live more like He lived, the ultimate example of a life of depth and meaning.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ, this is His Church led by living prophets, and His tomb was literally empty on that third day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Doctrine and Covenants 56:16–17.
2. Reported in James S. Brown, *Life of a Pioneer* (1900), 122–23; see also Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young: The Man and His Work* (1936), 128.
3. Morris Chalfant, “The Sin of the Church,” *Wesleyan Methodist*, quoted by John H. Vandenberg in Conference Report, Oct. 1965, 131; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1965, 1154.
4. See 1 Timothy 6:10.
5. BYU devotional, 12 Jan. 1999.
6. *Spoiled Rotten: American Children and How to Change Them* (1992), 37.

7. *Spoiled Rotten*, inside front cover, 11.
8. "Thou Shalt Not Covet," *Ensign*, Mar. 1990, 2.
9. Matthew 6:21.
10. Alma 4:6.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 53.
12. Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko, *The Millionaire Next Door* (1996), 1.
13. Jacob 2:18–19.
14. *Mere Christianity* (1952), 67.
15. John 3:16.

FOUNDATIONS FOR ETERNAL MARRIAGE

Make your Eternal Father and His Beloved Son the most important priority in your life.

—Elder Richard G. Scott

SELECTED TEACHINGS

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

“Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“The most important principle I can share: Anchor your life in Jesus Christ, your Redeemer. Make your Eternal Father and His Beloved Son the most important priority in your life—more important than life itself, more important than a beloved companion or children or anyone on earth. Make their will your central desire. Then all that you need for happiness will come to you” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 43; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 34).

THE CONSTITUTION FOR A PERFECT LIFE



President Harold B. Lee

President of the Church

Stand Ye in Holy Places:
Selected Sermons and
Writings of President
Harold B. Lee, 341–48

You want to know the “steps” by which one can have his life patterned to that fulness which makes him a worthy citizen or “saint” in God’s kingdom. The best answer may be found by a study of the life of Jesus in the scriptures, for it has been said that “our gospels are not merely the record of oral teachings; they are the portraits of a living man.”

(Dean Inge.) Christ came not only into the world to make an atonement for the sins of mankind, but to set an example before the world of the standard of perfection of God’s law and of obedience to the Father. In His Sermon on the Mount the Master has given us somewhat of a revelation of His own character, which was perfect, or what might be said to be “an autobiography, every syllable of which He had written down in deeds,” and in so doing has given us a blueprint for our own lives. Anyone clearly understanding the true import of His words comes to the realization that an unworthy member of the Church, although he might be in the kingdom of God, yet would not be of the kingdom because of his unworthiness.

You may know you are living a full, rich life when you have the real joy of living, for “men are, that they might have joy.” (2 Nephi 2:25.) What is it, then, that gives you that high emotional ecstasy called joy? Does it come from the unusual or does it come from common things? He who is moved thus only by the unusual is as one who must flag a failing appetite with strong spices and flavorings that destroy the true sense of taste. You are making a serious error if you mistake an emotional thrill that passes with the moment for the upsurge of deep feelings that is the joy of living. If one feels strong surges of happiness and desire from the quiet of a happy home, from the unfolding of a beautiful life, from the revelation of divine wisdom, or from a love for the beautiful, the true and good, he is having a taste of the fulness of the joy that the living of a rich, full life only can bring.

In that matchless Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has given us eight distinct ways by which we might receive this kind of joy. Each of His declarations is begun by the word “blessed.” Blessedness is defined as being higher than happiness. “Happiness comes from without and is dependent on circumstances; blessedness is an inward fountain of joy in the soul itself, which no outward circumstances can seriously affect.” (*Dummelow’s Commentary*.) These declarations of the Master are known in the literature of the Christian world as the Beatitudes and have been referred to by Bible commentators as the preparation necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. For the purposes of this discussion may I speak of them as something more than that as they are applied to you and me. They embody, in fact, the constitution for a perfect life.

Let us consider them for a few moments. Four of them have to do with our individual selves, the living of our own inner, personal lives, if we would be perfect and find the blessedness of that inward joy.

Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Blessed are they that mourn.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Blessed are the pure in heart.

To be poor in spirit is to feel yourselves as the spiritually needy, even dependent upon the Lord for your clothes, your food, the air you breathe, your health, your life; realizing that no day should pass without fervent prayer of thanksgiving, for guidance and forgiveness and strength sufficient for each day's need. If a youth realizes his spiritual need, when in dangerous places where his very life is at stake, he may be drawn close to the fountain of truth and be prompted by the Spirit of the Lord in his hour of greatest trial. It is indeed a sad thing for one, because of his wealth or learning or worldly position, to think himself independent of this spiritual need. It is the opposite of pride or self-conceit. To the worldly rich it is that "he must possess his wealth as if he possessed it not" and be willing to say without regret, if he were suddenly to meet financial disaster, as did Job, "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21.) Thus, if in your humility you sense your spiritual need, you are made ready for adoption into the "church of the Firstborn," and to become "the elect of God."

To mourn, as the Master's lesson here would teach, one must show that "godly sorrow that worketh repentance" (2 Corinthians 7:10) and wins for the penitent a forgiveness of sins and forbids a return to the deeds of which he mourns. It is to see, as did the Apostle Paul, "glory in tribulations . . . knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope." (Romans 5:3-4.) You must be willing "to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light." (Mosiah 18:8.) You must be willing to mourn with those that mourn, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort. (Mosiah 18:9.) When a mother mourns in her loneliness for the return of a wayward daughter, you with compassion must forbid the casting of the first stone. It is the kind of mourning portrayed in the deep feelings of the marine on Saipan who wrote to us during World War II when his buddy was killed, "As I lay in my foxhole that night I wept bitterly." Your mourning

with the aged, the widow, and the orphan should lead you to bring the succor they require. In a word, you must be as the publican and not as the Pharisee. "God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18:13.) Your reward for so doing is the blessedness of comfort for your own soul through a forgiveness of your own sins.

Did you ever hunger for food or thirst for water when just a crust of stale bread or a sip of tepid water to ease the pangs that distressed you would seem to be the most prized of all possessions? If you have so hungered, then you may begin to understand how the Master meant we should hunger and thirst after righteousness. It's that hungering and thirsting that leads Latter-day Saints away from home to seek the fellowship with Saints in sacrament services and that induces worship on the Lord's day. It is that which prompts fervent prayers and leads our feet to holy temples and bids us be reverent therein. One who keeps the Sabbath Day will be filled with a lasting joy far more to be desired than the fleeting pleasures derived from activities indulged in contrary to God's commandments. If you ask with "a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest . . . truth . . . unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost," and by its power you "may know the truth of all things." (Moroni 10:4-5.) Build "each new temple nobler than the last . . . till thou at length are free," then "your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you. . . ." (D&C 88:67.)

If you would see God, you must be pure. There is in Jewish writings the story of a man who saw an object in the distance, an object that he thought was a beast. As it drew nearer he could perceive it was a man; as it came still closer he saw it was his friend. You can see only that which you have eyes to see. Some of the associates of Jesus saw Him only as a son of Joseph the carpenter. Others thought Him to be a winebibber or a drunkard because of His words. Still others thought He was possessed of devils. Only the righteous saw Him as the Son of God. Only if you are the pure in heart will you see God, and also in a lesser degree will you be able to see the "God" or good in man and love him because of the goodness you see in him. Mark well that person who criticizes and maligns the man of God or the Lord's anointed leaders in His Church. Such a one speaks from an impure heart. But in order to gain entrance into the kingdom of heaven we must not only be good, but we are also

required to do good and be good for something. So if you would walk daily toward that goal of perfection and fulness of life, you must be schooled by the remaining four articles in the Master's constitution for a perfect life. These beatitudes have to do with man's social relations with others:

Blessed are the meek.

Blessed are the merciful.

Blessed are the peacemakers.

Blessed are they which are persecuted.

A meek man is defined as one who is not easily provoked or irritated and is forbearing under injury or annoyance. The meek man is the strong, the mighty, the man of complete self-mastery. He is the one who has the courage of his moral convictions, despite the pressure of the gang or the club. In controversy his judgment is the court of last resort and his sobered counsel quells the rashness of the mob. He is humble-minded; he does not bluster. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty. . . ." (Proverbs 16:32.) He is a natural leader and is the chosen of army and navy, business and church, to lead where other men follow. He is the "salt" of the earth and shall inherit it.

Our salvation rests upon the mercy we show to others. Unkind and cruel words, or wanton acts of cruelty toward man or beast, even though in seeming retaliation, disqualify the perpetrator in his claims for mercy when he has need of mercy in the day of judgment before earthly or heavenly tribunals. Is there one who has never been wounded by the slander of another whom he thought to be his friend? Do you remember the struggle you had to refrain from retribution? Blessed are all you who are merciful, for you shall obtain mercy!

Peacemakers shall be called the children of God. The trouble-maker, the striker against law and order, the leader of the mob, the law-breaker are prompted by motives of evil; and unless they desist, they will be known as the children of Satan rather than God. Withhold yourselves from him who would cause disquieting doubts by making light of sacred things, for he seeks not for peace but to spread confusion. That one who is quarrelsome or contentious, and whose arguments are for other purposes than to

resolve the truth, is violating a fundamental principle laid down by the Master as an essential in the building of a full rich life. "Peace and goodwill to men on earth" was the angel song that heralded the birth of the Prince of Peace.

To be persecuted for righteousness' sake in a great cause where truth and virtue and honor are at stake is God-like. Always there have been martyrs to every great cause. The great harm that may come from persecution is not from the persecution itself but from the possible effect it may have upon the persecuted who may thereby be deterred in their zeal for the righteousness of their cause. Much of that persecution comes from lack of understanding, for men are prone to oppose that which they do not comprehend. Some of it comes from men intent upon evil. But from whatever cause, persecution seems to be so universal against those engaged in a righteous cause that the Master warns us, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." (Luke 6:26.)

May youth everywhere remember that warning when you are hissed and scoffed at because you refuse to compromise your standards of abstinence, honesty, and morality in order to win the applause of the crowd. If you stand firmly for the right, despite the jeers of the crowd or even physical violence, you shall be crowned with the blessedness of eternal joy. Who knows but that again in our day some of the saints or even apostles, as in former days, may be required to give their lives in defense of the truth. If that time should come, God grant they will not fail.

Gradually as we ponder prayerfully all these teachings, we will make what may be to some the startling discovery that after all, God's measure of our worth in His kingdom will not be the high positions we have held here among man, nor in His church, nor the honors we have won, but rather the lives we have led and the good we have done, according to the "constitution for a perfect life" revealed in the life of the Son of God.

May you make the Beatitudes the constitution of your own lives and thus receive the blessedness promised therein.

CORNERSTONES OF A HAPPY HOME



President Gordon B. Hinckley

*Second Counselor
in the First Presidency*

*Satellite broadcast fireside
for husbands and wives,
29 Jan. 1984*

More than half a century has passed, but I have never forgotten my father's tenderness toward my mother. She died when she was fifty, a relatively young woman. During the months of her illness he was constantly solicitous for her comfort. But this attitude was not expressed only after she became ill. It had been evident to us, their children, throughout our lives. In the happy home of our childhood, we knew—and that came of a feeling and not of any declaration—that they loved, respected, and honored one another. What a blessing that image has been. When we were children we felt a certain security because of it. As we grew older our thoughts and our actions were colored by that remembered example.

My own beloved companion and I have now been married for nearly half a century—forty-seven years to be exact. She too was blessed to come from a home where there was an environment of companionship, love, and trust. I know that most of you have come out of such homes; further, I know that most of you live in happiness and love in your own homes. But there are many, very many, who do otherwise.

Troubled Marriages

It is difficult for me to understand the tragic accounts of troubled marriages that come to me. They speak of abuse. They speak of dictatorial attitudes and of some husbands who are bullies in their own homes. They speak of violations of trust and of broken covenants. They speak of divorce and tears and heartache. Only the other day a letter came to my desk from a woman who wrote at length of her troubles. In a spirit of desperation she asked, "Does a woman have any promise of some day being a first class member of the human race? Will she always be a piece of chattel wrapped in a chuddar acting only by the permission of the man who stands at her head?" (A chuddar, incidentally, is a very simple shawl worn by women in India.) She then continued,

"To me the answers to these questions are no longer important, but I have daughters. If it is possible for a woman to look forward to an eternity of anything other than being barefoot and pregnant, I would like to be able to teach them this."

There is bitter tragedy in the lines of that letter. I fear there are many others who may feel that way. The situation is tragic because it is so extremely different from what our Father in Heaven would have for his daughters. Behind this woman's words I see the picture of a wife who is discouraged, starved for appreciation, ready to give up, and not knowing which way to turn. I see a husband who has defaulted on his sacred obligations, who is calloused in his feelings and warped in his perceptions, and who denies through his manner of living the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I do not doubt that there has been fault on her part as well as his, but I am inclined to think that his is the more serious.

Equality in Marriage

To men within the sound of my voice, wherever you may be, I say, if you are guilty of demeaning behavior toward your wife, if you are prone to dictate and exercise authority over her, if you are selfish and brutal in your actions in the home, then stop it! Repent! Repent now while you have the opportunity to do so.

To you wives who are constantly complaining and see only the dark side of life, and feel that you are unloved and unwanted, look into your own hearts and minds. If there is something wrong, turn about. Put a smile on your faces. Make yourselves attractive. Brighten your outlook. You deny yourselves happiness and court misery if you constantly complain and do nothing to rectify your own faults. Rise above the shrill clamor over rights and prerogatives, and walk in the quiet dignity of a daughter of God.

The time has come for all of us to put the past behind us in a spirit of repentance and live the gospel with new dedication. The time is now for husbands and wives who may have offended one another to ask forgiveness and resolve to cultivate respect and affection one for another, standing before the Creator as sons and daughters worthy of his smile upon us.

I should like to read words of the Lord, with a slight modification that does not alter the meaning. Said he: "He which made them at the beginning made

them male and female, . . . For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be *one*. . . . Wherefore they are no more twain, but *one*” (Matthew 19:4–6). God our Eternal Father ordained that we should be companions. That implies equality. Marriage is a joint venture. Of course, there are hazards and problems, but these are secondary to the greater opportunities and greater satisfactions that come of sublimating selfish interests to the good of the partnership.

Some years ago I clipped from the *Deseret News* a column by Jenkin Lloyd Jones, who said, in part: “There seems to be a superstition among many thousands of our young who hold hands . . . in the drive-ins that marriage is a cottage surrounded by perpetual hollyhocks, to which a perpetually young and handsome husband comes home to a perpetually young and beautiful wife. When the hollyhocks wither and boredom and bills appear, the divorce courts are jammed. . . . Life is like an old-time rail journey—delays, sidetracks, smoke, dust, cinders, and jolts interspersed only occasionally by beautiful vistas and thrilling bursts of speed. The trick is to thank the Lord for letting you have the ride.”

The trick, my brethren and sisters is to enjoy the journey, traveling hand in hand, in sunshine and storm, as companions who love one another. Anyone can do it with a disciplined effort to live the gospel. Remember, “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it” (Psalm 127:1).

Four Cornerstones

At the risk of repeating some things I have said before, I should like to suggest four cornerstones on which to establish and nurture your homes. I do not hesitate to promise that if you will do so, your lives will be enriched and be fruitful of great good, and your joy will be everlasting.

1. Mutual Respect

The first of these I choose to call mutual respect.

Each of us is an individual. Each of us is different. There must be respect for those differences, and while it is important and necessary that both the husband and the wife strive to ameliorate those differences, there must be some recognition that they

exist and that they are not necessarily undesirable. There must be respect one for another, notwithstanding such differences. In fact, the differences may make the companionship more interesting.

I have long felt that happiness in marriage is not so much a matter of romance as it is an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one’s companion. That involves a willingness to overlook weaknesses and mistakes.

One man has said, “Love is not blind—it sees more, not less. But because it sees more, it is willing to see less” (Julius Gordon, *Treasure Chest*, ed. Charles L. Wallis [New York: Harper and Row, 1965], p. 168).

Many of us need to stop looking for faults and begin to look for virtues. Booth Tarkington once remarked that “an ideal wife is any woman who has an ideal husband” (*Looking Forward and Others* [Garden City, N.Y.: Page and Co., 1926], p. 97). Unfortunately, some women want to remake their husbands after their own design. Some husbands regard it as their prerogative to compel their wives to fit their standards of what they think to be the ideal. It never works. It only leads to contention, misunderstanding, and sorrow.

There must be respect for the interests of one another. There must be opportunities and encouragement for the development and expression of individual talent. Any man who denies his wife the time and the encouragement to develop her talents, denies himself and his children a blessing which could grace their home and bless their posterity.

It is commonplace with us to say that we are sons and daughters of God. There is no basis in the gospel for inferiority or superiority as between the

husband and wife. Do you think that God our Eternal Father loves his daughters less than he loves his sons? No man can demean or belittle his wife as a daughter of God without giving offense to her Father in Heaven.

I am offended by the sophistry that the only lot of the Latter-day Saint woman is to be barefoot and pregnant. It’s a clever phrase, but it’s false. Of course we

believe in children. The Lord has told us to multiply and replenish the earth that we might have joy in our posterity, and there is no greater joy than the joy that comes of happy children in good families. But he did not designate the number, nor has the Church. That is a sacred matter left to the couple

There is no basis in the gospel for inferiority or superiority as between the husband and wife.

and the Lord. The official statement of the Church includes this language: "Husbands must be considerate of their wives, who have the greater responsibility not only of bearing children but of caring for them through childhood, and should help them conserve their health and strength. Married couples should exercise self-control in all of their relationships. They should seek inspiration from the Lord in meeting their marital challenges and rearing their children according to the teachings of the gospel" (*General Handbook of Instructions* [1983], p. 77).

Husbands, wives, respect one another. Live worthy of the respect of one another. Cultivate that kind of respect which expresses itself in kindness, forbearance, patience, forgiveness, true affection, without officiousness and without show of authority.

2. The Soft Answer

I pass now to the second cornerstone. For want of a better name I call it the soft answer.

The writer of Proverbs long ago declared, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).

I hear so many complaints from men and women that they cannot communicate with one another. Perhaps I am naive, but I do not understand this. Communication is essentially a matter of conversation. They must have communicated when they were courting. Can they not continue to speak together after marriage? Can they not discuss with one another in an open and frank and candid and happy way their interests, their problems, their challenges, their desires?

It seems to me that communication is essentially a matter of talking with one another. Let that talk be quiet for quiet talk is the language of love. It is the language of peace. It is the language of God. It is when we raise our voices that tiny mole hills of difference become mountains of conflict.

It seems to me that there is something significant in the description of Elijah's contest with the priests of Baal: "A great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks." That is a rather vivid description of some of the arguments that take place between husbands and wives but, notes the writer of the scripture, "The Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a

fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:11-12). The voice of heaven is a still small voice. The voice of peace in the home is a quiet voice.

There is need for much discipline in marriage, not of one's companion but of one's self. Husbands, wives, remember, "He [or she] that is slow to anger is better than the mighty" (Proverbs 16:32). Cultivate the art of the soft answer. It will bless your homes, it will bless your lives, it will bless your companionships, it will bless your children.

3. Financial Honesty

Cornerstone number three is financial honesty. I am satisfied that money is the root of more trouble in marriage than all other causes combined.

I am confident that there is no better discipline nor one more fruitful with blessings in the handling of our resources than obedience to the commandment given to ancient Israel through the Prophet Malachi, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, . . . and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). Those who live honestly with God are more likely to live honestly with one another and their associates. Further, as they budget for their tithes and offerings they will cultivate a discipline in the handling of their resources.

We live in an age of persuasive advertising and of skillful salesmanship, all designed to entice us to spend. An extravagant husband or wife can jeopardize any marriage. I think it is a good principle that each have some freedom and independence with everyday, necessary expenditures, while at the same time always discussing and consulting and agreeing on large expenditures. There would be fewer rash decisions, fewer unwise investments, fewer consequent losses, fewer bankruptcies if husbands and wives would counsel together on such matters and unitedly seek counsel from others.

Live honestly with the Lord. Live honestly with one another as companions. Live honestly with others. Make timely payment of obligations a cardinal principle of your lives. Consult with one another and be united in your decisions. The Lord will bless you as you do so.

4. Family Prayer

The final cornerstone on which to build your home is family prayer.

I know of no other practice that will have so salutary an effect upon your lives as will the practice of kneeling together in prayer. The very words, Our Father in Heaven, have a tremendous effect. You cannot speak them with sincerity and with recognition without having some feeling of accountability to God. The little storms that seem to afflict every marriage become of small consequence while kneeling before the Lord and addressing him as a suppliant son and daughter.

Your daily conversations with him will bring peace into your hearts and a joy into your lives that can come from no other source. Your companionship will sweeten through the years. Your love will strengthen. Your appreciation one for another will grow.

Your children will be blessed with a sense of security that comes of living in a home where dwells the Spirit of God. They will know and love parents who respect one another, and a spirit of respect will grow in their own hearts. They will experience the security of kind words quietly spoken. They will be sheltered by a father and mother who, living honestly with God, live honestly with one another and with their fellowmen. They will mature with a sense of appreciation, having heard their parents in prayer express gratitude for blessings great and small. They will grow with faith in the living God.

Your companionship will be one that will sweeten and strengthen through the years and that will endure through eternity. Your love and appreciation for one another will increase. . . .

God bless you, my brethren and sisters, husbands and wives, joined together as appreciative companions in sacred covenants of marriage, for time and eternity, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

CULTIVATING DIVINE ATTRIBUTES



Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

*Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

*In Conference Report,
Oct. 1998, 31–34;
or Ensign, Nov. 1998,
25–28*

As Latter-day Saints, “we believe all things, we hope all things. . . . If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.”⁶ What do we believe that will motivate us to move forward? What do we hope for? What are the virtuous, lovely, or praiseworthy things we should seek after? I believe we should strive to develop within ourselves the traits of the character of the Savior.

Faith, Hope, and Charity

The words of the Apostle Paul come to mind: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”⁷ These divine attributes should become fixed in our hearts and minds to guide us in all of our actions. We read in Moroni: “Cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all. . . . Whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.”⁸ Charity can be the outward expression of faith and hope. If sought and obtained, these three foundation elements of celestial character will abide with us in this life and beyond the veil into the next life. Remember that the “same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that [you] go out of this life . . . will have power to possess your body in [the] eternal world.”⁹ We should not wait a single day to intensify our personal efforts to strengthen these virtuous, lovely, and praiseworthy attributes.

When we keep the Lord’s commandments, faith, hope, and charity abide with us. These virtues “distil upon [our] soul as the dew from heaven,”¹⁰ and we prepare ourselves to stand with confidence before our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, “without blemish and without spot.”¹¹

As I read and ponder the scriptures, I see that developing faith, hope, and charity within ourselves is a step-by-step process. Faith begets hope, and together they foster charity. We read in Moroni,

“Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity.”¹² These three virtues may be sequential initially, but once obtained, they become interdependent. Each one is incomplete without the others. They support and reinforce each other. Moroni explained, “And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope.”¹³

These are the virtuous, lovely, praiseworthy characteristics we seek. We all are familiar with Paul’s teaching that “charity never faileth.”¹⁴ Certainly we need unfailing spiritual strength in our lives. Moroni recorded the revelation “that faith, hope and charity bringeth [us] unto [the Lord]—the fountain of all righteousness.”¹⁵

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the restored Church of the Lord on the earth today, guides us to the Savior and helps us develop, nurture, and strengthen these divine attributes. In fact, He revealed the qualifications required to labor in His service in these words: “No one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity.”¹⁶

Mormon taught that “charity is the pure love of Christ” and exhorted us to “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that [we] may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ.”¹⁷ Note that charity is given only to those who seek it, only to those who earnestly pray for it, only to those who are disciples of Christ. Before we can be filled with this pure love, we must start at the beginning with the first principle of the gospel. We must have “first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁸

Faith

“Now *faith* is the substance of things *hoped* for, the evidence of things not seen.”¹⁹ “Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if [we] have faith [we] hope for things which are not seen, which are true.”²⁰ Latter-day Saints can rejoice in the strength of our faith because we have the fulness of the gospel. If we study, ponder, and pray, our faith in the unseen but true things of God will grow. Even if we start with only “a particle of faith, . . . even if [we] can no more than desire to believe,”²¹ with nurturing attention a tiny seed of faith can grow into a vibrant, strong, fruitful tree of testimony.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ motivates us to repent. Through repentance, made possible by the Lord’s Atonement, we can feel the calming peace of forgiveness for our sins, weaknesses, and mistakes. With faith in a spiritual rebirth, we are baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

We strive to keep the commandments of God with faith that obedience will help us become like Him. By virtue of the Resurrection of our Savior, we have faith that death is not the end of life. We have faith that we once again will know the pleasant company and warm embrace of loved ones who have departed from mortality.

Hope

Mormon asked the Saints of his day, “And what is it that ye shall hope for?” He gave them this answer: “Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise.”²² In Ether we learn that “whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, [and] maketh an anchor to the souls of men.”²³

Even when the winds of adversity blow, our Father keeps us anchored to our hope. The Lord has promised, “I will not leave you comfortless,”²⁴ and He will “consecrate [our] afflictions for [our] gain.”²⁵ Even when our trials seem overwhelming, we can draw strength and hope from the sure promise of the Lord: “Be not afraid nor dismayed . . . ; for the battle is not yours, but God’s.”²⁶

Charity

Once faith grows into a firm, abiding testimony, giving us hope in our Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness; once we see through the eye of faith that we are children of a loving Father, who has given us the gift of His Son to redeem us, we experience a mighty change in our hearts.²⁷ We feel “to sing the song of redeeming love,”²⁸ and our hearts overflow with charity. Knowing that the love of God “is the most desirable [of] all things . . . and the most joyous to the soul,”²⁹ we want to share our joy with others. We want to serve them and bless them.

Family

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” states clearly the sacredness of the family and that a “husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children.”³⁰ Children should be taught at an early age of the sacredness of temples, and that their ultimate goal should be to go to the temple to enjoy the blessings that our Heavenly Father has in store for them. Even the tapestry of this sacred goal is given to children that will, in due time, realize this is the greatest blessing that could come to them in this life. . . .

I testify to you as a special witness that Jesus is the Christ and that through His prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, the Savior presides over His Church. May we cultivate, in preparation of His returning to this earth, His divine attributes is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes . . .

6. Articles of Faith 1:13.
7. 1 Corinthians 13:13.
8. Moroni 7:46–47.
9. Alma 34:34.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
11. 1 Peter 1:19.
12. Moroni 10:20.
13. Moroni 10:21.
14. 1 Corinthians 13:8.
15. Ether 12:28.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 12:8.
17. Moroni 7:47–48.
18. Articles of Faith 1:4.
19. Hebrews 11:1; italics added.
20. Alma 32:21.
21. Alma 32:27; see also verses 28–43.
22. Moroni 7:41.
23. Ether 12:4.
24. John 14:18.
25. 2 Nephi 2:2.
26. 2 Chronicles 20:15.
27. See Alma 5:14.
28. Alma 5:26.
29. 1 Nephi 11:22–23.
30. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

Marriage can be more an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive. This is within the reach of every couple, every person.

—President Spencer W. Kimball

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Marriage Brings Happiness and Joy

President David O. McKay

“In the teachings of the Church of Christ, the family assumes supreme importance in the development of the individual and of society. ‘Happy and thrice happy are they who enjoy an uninterrupted union and whose love, unbroken by any complaints, shall not dissolve until the last day.’ It will not dissolve when a worthy couple is sealed by the authority of the Holy Priesthood throughout all eternity. The marriage ceremony when thus sealed produces happiness and joy unsurpassed by any other experience in the world” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1966, 108).

“‘How, then,’ you ask, ‘may you tell whether or not there is any consanguinity [feelings of affection], that something which will make you at least congenial in each other’s company?’ ‘Is there,’ you ask, ‘some guide?’ Though love is not always a true guide, . . . yet certainly there is no happiness without love” (*Gospel Ideals*, 459).

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Honorable, happy, and successful marriage is surely the principal goal of every normal person. Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all the decisions and has the most far-reaching effects, for it has to do not only with immediate happiness, but also with eternal joys. . . .

“. . . Marriage can be more an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive. This is within the

reach of every couple, every person” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 3–4).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“As our family is our greatest source of joy in this life, so it may well be in the eternity” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1979, 48; or *Ensign*, May 1979, 33–34).

President Boyd K. Packer

“The ultimate purpose of all we teach is to unite parents and children in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage, linked to their generations, and assured of exaltation in the presence of our Heavenly Father” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 8).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“Some marriages do bend, and some will break, but we must not, because of this, lose faith in marriage nor become afraid of it.

“Broken marriages are not typical.

“Remember that trouble attracts attention! We travel the highway with thousands of cars moving in either direction without paying much attention to any of them. But should an accident occur, we notice immediately.

“If it happens again, we get the false impression that no one can go safely down the road.

“One accident may make the front page, while a hundred million cars that safely pass are not regarded as worth mentioning.

“Writers think that a happy, stable marriage does not have the dramatic appeal, the conflict worth featuring in a book or a play or a film. Therefore, we constantly hear about the ruined ones and we lose our perspective.

“I believe in marriage. I believe it to be the ideal pattern for human living. I know it to be ordained of God. The restraints relating to it were designed to protect our happiness.

“I do not know of any better time in all of the history of the world for a young couple who are of age and prepared and who are in love to think of marriage. There is no better time because it is *your* time.

“I know that these are very troubled times. Troubles like we have now are very hard on marriages.

“Do not lose faith in marriage. Not even if you have been through the unhappiness of a divorce and are surrounded with pieces of a marriage that has fallen apart” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 15–16; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 14–15).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“There is nothing in this world as important as the creation and perfection of family units” (“Salvation Is a Family Affair,” *Improvement Era*, June 1970, 43–44).

“The whole aim and purpose of the gospel is to enable men and women—united as one in the Lord—to create for themselves eternal family units in eternity. Celestial marriage prepares us for the greatest joy and happiness known to mortals and for eternal life in the realms ahead” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 82; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 55).

Elder James E. Faust

“Happiness in marriage and parenthood can exceed a thousand times any other happiness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 14; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 11).

Scripture Study

Identify the principles in the following scriptures that give us insights into happiness in marriage:

Job 6:25

Proverbs 15:1

Matthew 12:34–37

1 Nephi 1:20

Alma 41:10

Doctrine and Covenants 42:22–23; 50:28

Satan Tries to Destroy Happiness

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Perhaps our greatest concern is with families. The family is falling apart all over the world. 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. The love that led to marriage somehow evaporates, and hatred fills its place. Hearts are broken; children weep. Can we not do better? Of course we can. It is selfishness that brings about most of these tragedies. If there is forbearance, if there is forgiveness, if there is an anxious looking after the happiness of one’s companion, then love will flourish and blossom.

“As I look to the future, I see little to feel enthusiastic about concerning the family in America and across the world. Drugs and alcohol are taking a terrible toll, which is not likely to decrease. Harsh language one to another, indifference to the needs of one another—all seem to be increasing. There is so much of child abuse. There is so much of spouse abuse. There is growing abuse of the elderly. All of this will happen and get worse unless there is an underlying acknowledgment, yes, a strong and fervent conviction, concerning the fact that the family is an instrument of the Almighty. It is His creation. It is also the basic unit of society.

“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” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 69).

“There may be now and again a legitimate cause for divorce. I am not one to say that it is never justified. But I say without hesitation that this plague among us, which seems to be growing everywhere, is not of God, but rather is the work of the adversary of righteousness and peace and truth” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 97–98; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 74).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“The single purpose of Lucifer is to oppose the great plan of happiness, to corrupt the purest, most beautiful and appealing experiences of life: romance, love, marriage, and parenthood [2 Nephi 2:18; 28:20]. The specters of heartbreak and guilt follow him about [Alma 39:5; Moroni 9:9]. Only repentance can heal what he hurts” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 27–28; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 21).

“The ultimate purpose of the adversary, who has ‘great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time,’ [Revelation 12:12] is to disrupt, disturb, and destroy the home and the family. Like a ship without a rudder, without a compass, we drift from the family values which have anchored us in the past. Now we are caught in a current so strong that unless we correct our course, civilization as we know

it will surely be wrecked to pieces” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 24; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 19).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

“We live in a day when Lucifer’s influence is greater than we ever have known in our lifetimes. In terms of the sin, evil, and wickedness upon the earth, we could liken our time to the days of Noah before the flood. No one is immune to affliction and difficulty, whether it be economical, emotional, or spiritual. Immorality, violence, and divorce, with their

accompanying sorrows, plague society worldwide” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 5).

Elder Henry B. Eyring

“Looking for the path to safety in the counsel of prophets makes sense to those with strong faith” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 32; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 25).

HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE

*To seal is to ratify, to justify,
or to approve.*

—Elder Bruce R. McConkie

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“The *Holy Spirit of Promise* is the Holy Spirit *promised* the saints, or in other words the Holy Ghost. This name-title is used in connection with the sealing and ratifying power of the Holy Ghost, that is, the power given him to ratify and approve the righteous acts of men so that those acts will be binding on earth and in heaven. ‘All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations,’ must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, if they are to have ‘efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.’ (D. & C. 132:7.)

“To seal is to *ratify*, to *justify*, or to *approve*. Thus an act which is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise is one which is ratified by the Holy Ghost; it is one which is approved by the Lord; and the person who has taken the obligation upon himself is justified by the Spirit in the thing he has done.

“The ratifying seal of approval is put upon an act only if those entering the contract are worthy as a result of personal righteousness to receive the divine approbation. They ‘are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are *just and true*.’ (D. & C. 76:53.) If they are not just and true and worthy the ratifying seal is withheld.

“When any ordinance or contract is sealed by the Spirit, it is approved with a promise of reward, provided unrighteousness does not thereafter break the seal, remove the ratifying approval, and cause loss of the promised blessing. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, p. 55; vol. 2, pp. 94–99.) Seals are placed on contracts through righteousness.

“The operation and power of the Holy Spirit of Promise is best illustrated by the ordinance and contract of baptism. An unworthy candidate for baptism might deceive the elders and get the ordinance performed, but no one can lie to the Holy Ghost and get by undetected. Accordingly, the baptism of an unworthy and unrepentant person would not be sealed by the Spirit; it would not be ratified by the Holy Ghost; the unworthy person would not be justified by the Spirit in his actions. If thereafter he became worthy through repentance and obedience, the seal would then be put in force. Similarly, if a worthy person is baptized, with the ratifying approval of the Holy Ghost attending the performance, yet the seal may be broken by subsequent sin.

“These principles also apply to every other ordinance and performance in the Church. Thus if both parties are ‘just and true,’ if they are worthy, a ratifying seal is placed on their temple marriage; if they are unworthy, they are not justified by the Spirit and the ratification of the Holy Ghost is withheld. Subsequent worthiness will put the seal in force, and unrighteousness will break any seal.

“Even if a person progresses to that state of near-perfection in which his calling and election is made sure, in which he is ‘sealed up unto eternal life’ (D. & C. 131:5; 132:18–26), in which he receives ‘the promise . . . of eternal life’ (D. & C. 88:3–4), in which he is ‘sealed up unto the day of redemption’ (D. & C. 124:124; Eph. 1:13)—yet with it all, these great promises are secured only if the ‘performances’ are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 361–62).

An act which is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise . . . is one which is approved by the Lord.

INDEPENDENCE

Every individual should value his or her independence and labor with all his might to maintain it by being self-sustaining.

—Elder Marion G. Romney

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Couples do well to immediately find their own home, separate and apart from that of the in-laws on either side. The home may be very modest and unpretentious, but still it is an independent domicile. Your married life should become independent of her folks and his folks. You love them more than ever; you cherish their counsel; you appreciate their association; but you live your own lives, being governed by your decisions, by your own prayerful considerations after you have received the counsel from those who should give it” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 5).

President Marion G. Romney

“This scripture [D&C 29:34–35] tells us there is no such thing as a temporal commandment. It also tells us that man is to be ‘an agent unto himself.’ Man cannot be an agent unto himself if he is not self-reliant. Herein we see that independence and self-reliance are critical keys to our spiritual growth. Whenever we get into a situation which threatens our self-reliance, we will find our freedom threatened as well. If we increase our dependence, we will find an immediate decrease in our freedom to act” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 134; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 93).

Elder Ezra Taft Benson

“Another sterling virtue which builds manliness and independence is frugality or thrift. ‘Waste not, want not’ has long been the clarion call. In more recent years, however, this maxim has given way to so-called ‘deficit spending.’ Many have been teaching that we must spend our way into prosperity. How

do you regard this philosophy? Have you stopped to analyze its effect upon the independence, self-reliance, and character of the individual? And what of its possible effect upon the very existence of this nation as a haven for freedom-loving men and women?” (. . . *So Shall Ye Reap*, 165).

Elder Marion G. Romney

“First, every individual should value his or her independence and labor with all his might to maintain it by being self-sustaining. This the Lord enjoined upon us when from the Garden of Eden He sent forth our first parents under the stern command, ‘In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground’ (Gen. 3:19)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1943, 27).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“The principle of self-reliance or personal independence is fundamental to the happy life. In too many places, in too many ways, we are getting away from it.

“The substance of what I want to say is this: The same principle—self-reliance—has application to the spiritual and to the emotional. . . .

“We must not set up a network of counseling services without at the same time emphasizing the principle of emotional self-reliance and individual independence.

“If we lose our emotional and spiritual independence, our self-reliance, we can be weakened quite as much, perhaps even more, than when we become dependent materially.

“If we are not careful, we can lose the power of individual revelation. . . .

“Spiritual independence and self-reliance is a sustaining power in the Church. If we rob the members of that, how can they get revelation for themselves? How will they know there is a prophet of God? How can they get answers to prayers? How can they know for *sure* for themselves?” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 136–37; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 91–92).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“Temporal and economic *independence* is essential if there is to be absolute freedom of worship. . . . Anyone whose support comes from another person or agency is to a greater or lesser degree subject to

the will and control of the supporting power” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 378).

Elder James E. Faust

“The Lord said that it is important for the Church to ‘stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world’ (D&C 78:14). Members of the Church are also counseled to be independent. Independence means many things. It means being free of drugs that addict, habits that bind, and diseases that curse. It also means being free of personal debt and of the interest and carrying charges required by debt the world over” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 24–25; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 21).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“One of the last, subtle strongholds of selfishness is the natural feeling that we ‘own’ ourselves. Of course we are free to choose and are personally accountable. Yes, we have individuality. But those who have chosen to ‘come unto Christ’ soon realize that they do not ‘own’ themselves. Instead, they belong to Him. We are to become consecrated along with our gifts, our appointed days, and our very selves. Hence, there is a stark difference between stubbornly ‘owning’ oneself and submissively belonging to God. Clinging to the old self is not a mark of independence, but of indulgence!” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 18; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 16).

INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

Tenderness and respect—never selfishness—must be the guiding principles in the intimate relationship between husband and wife.

—President Howard W. Hunter

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, 739).

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 Boyd K. Packer

See quotation on pages 141–44.

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).

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE



Elder Boyd K. Packer
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
Things of the Soul,
105–17

We shall start at the very beginning. “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. 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.)

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. And . . . the sons and daughters of Adam began to divide two and two in the land, and to till the land, and to tend flocks, and they also begat sons and daughters.” (Moses 5:2–3.)

Commandment Never Rescinded

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, as through nothing else, 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 of happiness; it is the key—the very key.

The power to generate life emerges in the body of the male and the female as each grows to maturity, empowering a man to become a father and a woman to become a mother.

Constant in Mankind

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 there occurs, in a natural way, very personal feelings unlike any other physical experience. It is not without meaning that the process through which life is conceived should be accompanied by feelings of such depth and attraction that they draw the individual to seek a repetition of them.

Ideally, mating begins with romance. Though customs may vary, romance flourishes with all the storybook feelings of excitement and anticipation, and sometimes rejection. There are moonlight and roses, love letters, love songs, poetry, the holding of hands, and other worthy expressions of affection between a young man and a young woman.

The world disappears around a couple, and they experience feelings of joy. Every couple in love is

positive that no couple since Adam and Eve has felt quite the same as they do.

There are other patterns of romance which appear to be too sensible, too quiet, even dull. Nevertheless, they embody a depth of affection and romantic love that the deadly serious, silly senseless, or head-in-the-clouds ones will experience only as they mature.

Mature Love

And if you suppose that the full-blown rapture of young romantic love is the sum 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, separation, financial problems, family crises, illness; and all the while love grows stronger, the mature love enjoys a bliss not even imagined by newlyweds.

True love requires a mutual respect and that the couple reserve until after the marriage the sharing of that affection which unlocks those sacred powers in that fountain of life. It means avoiding pre-marriage situations in which physical desire might take control. Courtship is a time to measure integrity, moral strength, and worthiness. The invitation, "If you love me, you will let me," exposes a major flaw in character. It deserves the reply: "If you really loved me, you would never ask me to transgress. If you understood the gospel, you couldn't!"

Pure love presupposes that only after a pledge of eternal fidelity, a legal and a lawful ceremony, and ideally after the sealing ordinance in the temple are those procreative powers released for the full expression of love. They are to be shared only and solely with that one who is our companion in marriage.

Participation in the mating process offers an experience like nothing else in life. When entered into worthily, it combines the most exquisite and exalted physical, emotional, and spiritual feelings associated with the word *love*. Those feelings and the lifelong need for one another bind a husband and wife together in a marriage wherein all of the attributes of adult masculinity are complemented by the priceless feminine virtues of womanhood.

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 fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever" (D&C 132:19).

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 emerges in the miracle of birth, created in the image of its earthly father and mother, able to see and hear and feel and to perceive through physical senses. Within its mortal body is a spirit, able to feel and perceive spiritual things. Dormant in the mortal body of the child is the power to beget offspring in its own image.

"The spirit and the body are the soul of man" (D&C 88:15); hence there are spiritual and physical laws to obey if we are to be happy.

Moral and Natural Laws

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). There are spiritual laws which define the moral standard for mankind (see JST Romans 7:14–15; 2 Nephi 2:5; D&C 29:34; D&C 134:6). There are covenants that bind, seal, safeguard, and give promise of eternal blessings. There are physical or natural laws which govern attraction to a mate, love of offspring, and the instinct to protect them.

Thou Shalt Not Kill

Every time physical conditions are met, conception will take place, whether in wedlock or out. Once a life is conceived, to destroy that life, even before birth, is a major transgression, save conception results from rape, the mother's life hangs in the balance, or the life of the unborn is certified to be hopeless. We do not know all about when a spirit enters the body, but we do know that life, in any form, is very precious. While we are given the power to generate life and commanded to do so, we have no license to destroy it. "For the Lord . . . in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man" (Ether 8:19). And the commandment given at Sinai was renewed in this dispensation: "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13; see also 2 Nephi 9:35) "nor do anything like unto it" (D&C 59:6).

To Be Controlled

The eternal laws of the gospel of Jesus Christ do not prohibit our responding to inborn, God-given mating instincts. 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. Our passion is to be controlled—but not controlled by extermination, as with a plague of insects; not controlled by eradication, as with a disease. It is to be controlled as electricity is controlled, to generate power and life. When lawfully used, the power of procreation will bless and it will sanctify (see Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977], p. 309).

The gospel tells us when and with whom these sacred powers may be safely experienced. As with all things, the scriptures do not contain page after page of detailed commandments covering every possible application of the law of life. Rather they speak in general terms, leaving us free to apply the principles of the gospel to meet the infinite variety of life.

We are free to ignore the counsels and commandments of the scriptures, but when the revelations speak in such blunt terms, such as “thou shalt not,” we had better pay attention. When we obey, we can enjoy these life-giving powers in the covenant of marriage, and from our fountains of life will spring our children, our family! Love between husband and wife can be constant and bring fulfillment and contentment all the days of their lives.

Children of God

No greater ideal has been revealed than the supernal truth that we are the children of God, and that by virtue of our creation we differ from all other living things (see Moses 6:8–10, 22, 59). “All flesh,” the scriptures teach, “is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts” (1 Corinthians 15:39).

Men and women have unique responsibility in begetting life. The scriptures tell us that “men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil. And the law is given unto men.” (2 Nephi 2:5.) We are intelligent beings and we are accountable for our actions, even for our thoughts (see Alma 12:14).

Creatures in the animal kingdom are drawn together in season by the compelling instinct to mate. Once impregnation takes place, they separate, ordinarily leaving the mother alone to protect and provide for

her offspring, for that is the way of the animal. But it is not the way of mankind. Family life among animals is a rarity and even then is generally temporary. Except for rare examples, for instance among birds, the bond between animal parents is transitory; between sire and offspring, almost nonexistent.

Animals cannot be accountable for the standards of morality by which mankind is judged. They are ruled by the physical laws of nature. Animals by and large are promiscuous in responding to their mating instincts. Nevertheless, their mating rituals follow set patterns and have rigid limitations. For instance, animals do not pair up with their own gender to satisfy their mating instincts. Nor are these mating instincts expressed in the molestation of their own offspring.

Children of God can willfully surrender to their carnal nature and, seemingly without remorse, defy the laws of morality and degrade themselves even below the beasts.

The Tempter

Temptations are ever present in mortal life. The adversary is jealous toward all who have power to beget life. He cannot beget life; he is impotent. He and those who followed him were cast out of heaven and forfeited the right to a mortal body. He will, if he can, take possession of *your* body, direct how you use it. His angels even begged to inhabit the bodies of swine (see Matthew 8:31). He knows the supernal value of our power of procreation and jealously desires to rule those who have it. And, the revelations tell us, “he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27). He will tempt you, if he can, to degrade, to corrupt, if possible to destroy this gift by which we may, if we are worthy, have eternal increase (see D&C 132:28–31).

The Obsession

The rapid and sweeping deterioration of values in society is characterized now by a preoccupation—even an obsession—with the procreative act. Abstinence before marriage and fidelity within it are openly scoffed at as being out of date; marriage and parenthood are ridiculed as burdensome and unnecessary. Modesty, a virtue present in a refined individual or society, is all but gone.

Morality is no longer a measure of character for prominent role models for our youth—the politicians,

the athletes, the entertainers. With ever fewer exceptions, what we see and read and hear has the mating act as the central theme. Censorship of any kind is forced offstage as a violation of individual freedom. That which should be absolutely private is disrobed and acted out center stage. In the shadows backstage wait addiction, pornography, perversion, infidelity, abortion, and—the ugliest of them all—incest and molestation. And all of them are on the increase. In company with them now is the pestilent disease, which, like a biblical plague, threatens races of mankind. In fact, all of mankind.

The philosophies which now converge all have one thing in common: either by insinuation or by declaration they reject God as our creator, as our Father, as our lawgiver.

The Evil Idea

The knowledge that we are the children of God is a refining, even an exalting truth. On the other hand, no idea has been more destructive of happiness, no philosophy has produced more sorrow, more heartbreak, more suffering and mischief, no idea has contributed more to the erosion of the family than the idea that we are not the offspring of God, but only advanced animals. There flows from that idea the not too subtle perception that we are compelled to yield to every carnal urge, are subject to physical but not to moral law.

The man-from-animal theory has been passed about enough to be pronounced true on the basis of general acceptance. Because it seems to offer logical explanations for *some* things, it is widely taught and generally accepted as the solution to the mystery of life.

I know there are two views on the subject. But it is one thing to measure this theory solely against intellectual or academic standards, quite another to measure it against moral or spiritual or doctrinal standards.

When the theory that man is the offspring of animals is planted in young minds, it should be accompanied by careful instruction to set it in isolation in the garden of the mind until faith is well rooted. Otherwise, seeds of doubt may spring up and choke out the seedling of faith, and the harvest will be bitter fruit and the giver will have served the wrong master.

Freedom to Choose

Lehi taught that men are free and must be free, free “to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day” (2 Nephi 2:26).

Society now excuses itself from any responsibility for the high incidence of sexual immorality in young people except for teaching children in school the physical process of human reproduction in order to prevent pregnancy or disease, and providing teenagers with devices which are supposed to protect them against both. When any effort is made to include in these courses basic universal values—not just values of the Church but those of civilization, of society itself—the protest arises, “You are imposing religion upon us, infringing upon our freedom.”

It is interesting how one virtue, when given exaggerated or fanatical emphasis, can be used to batter down another. How clever the deception when freedom—the virtue—is invoked to justify vice!

The advocates for lifting all restraints excuse themselves from responsibility by saying, “I do not intend to do any of these things myself, but I think everyone should be free to choose what they want to do without any moral or legal interference.” With that same logic, one could argue that all traffic signs and barriers set to keep the careless from falling to their death should be pulled down on the theory that each individual has the moral right to choose how close to the edge he will go.

The knowledge that we are the children of God is a refining, even an exalting truth.

There Are Higher Laws

Anyone who has been taught the plan of salvation understands that to advocate freedom from all moral restraints is to preach what is contrary to God’s will. The phrase “free agency” does not appear in the scriptures. The only agency spoken of there is *moral* agency—“which,” the Lord said, “I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment” (D&C 101:78).

Civilizations of the past—Sodom and Gomorrah, for example—have destroyed themselves by disobedience to the laws of morality. “For the Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man. And when the Spirit ceaseth to strive with man then cometh

speedy destruction.” (2 Nephi 26:11; see also Genesis 6:3; Ether 2:15; D&C 1:33; Moses 8:17.)

If we pollute our fountains of life or lead others to transgress in that way, there will be penalties more “exquisite” and “hard to bear” (see D&C 19:15) than all the physical pleasure could ever be worth. 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 do not escape the consequences when we transgress.

The only legitimate employment of the powers of procreation is between husband and wife who have been legally and lawfully married. Anything other than this violates the commandments of God himself. And as Alma said, “I say unto you, if ye speak against it, it matters not, for the word of God must be fulfilled” (Alma 5:58).

You who are married will know the joy of parenthood and feel the responsibility which comes with family life. Always keep in mind and make a central part of your lives the rearing of your children in light and truth. Give to these precious souls the best that you are learning from life. And accept this caution. A married couple may be tempted to introduce things into their relationship that are unworthy. Do not, as the scriptures warn, “change the natural use into that which is against nature” (Romans 1:26). If you do, the tempter will drive a wedge between you. If something unworthy has become part of your relationship, be wise and don’t ever do it again.

Exceptions

When we speak of marriage, family life, there inevitably comes to mind, “What about the exceptions? There are always exceptions!” Some are born with limitations and cannot beget children. Some innocent ones have their marriage wrecked because of the infidelity of their spouses. Others do not marry and live lives of single worthiness, while at once the wayward and the wicked seem to enjoy it all.

For now, I offer this comfort: God is our Father! All the love and generosity manifest in the ideal earthly father is magnified, beyond the capacity of mortal mind to comprehend, in Him who is our Father and our God. His judgments are just, His mercy without limit, His power to compensate beyond any earthly comparison.

Remember that mortal life is a brief moment, for we will live eternally. There will be ample—I almost used the word *time*, but time does not apply here—there will be ample opportunity for all injustices, all inequities to be made right, all loneliness and deprivation compensated, and all worthiness rewarded when we keep the faith. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19). It does not all end with mortal death; it just begins.

Repentance

Already I have warned that the awesome powers of the adversary will be employed to entice all mankind to sinfully use the sacred power of procreation. Do not yield, for every debt of transgression must be paid “till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing” (Matthew 5:26). The law of justice demands it, and “. . . your sufferings [will] be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not” (D&C 19:15).

In the universal battle for human souls, the adversary takes enormous numbers of prisoners. Many, knowing of no way to escape, are pressed into his service. Every soul confined in a concentration camp of sin and guilt has a key to the gate. The key is labeled Repentance. The adversary cannot hold them, if they know how to use it. The twin principles of repentance and forgiveness exceed in strength the awesome power of the tempter.

The world being what it is, if you have already made a mistake it can certainly be understood. It cannot, under the law, be condoned, but it can be understood. You must stop conduct that is immoral. You must stop it now!

Nowhere is the generosity and kindness and mercy of God more manifest than in repentance. Do you understand the consummate cleansing power of the atonement made by the Son of God, our Savior, our Redeemer, who said, “I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent”? (D&C 19:16.) I know of no sin connected with transgression of the moral law which cannot be forgiven, assuming, of course, full and complete repentance. I do not exempt abortion.

The formula is stated in forty words: “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more. By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold,

he will confess them and forsake them.” (D&C 58:42–43.) I know of no more beautiful words in all of revelation than these. “The same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.”

Confession—The Bishop

The formula for repentance requires that we confess. Our first confession is to the Lord in prayer. When our mistakes are not grievous ones, and if they are personal, that may be all that is required by way of confession.

If our transgression includes tampering with the procreative capacities of another of either gender, then there is a necessary confession beyond prayer. From His priesthood the Lord has designated the bishop to be the common judge. If your transgression is serious, and your conscience will tell you whether it is or not, seek out the bishop.

The bishop represents the Lord in extending forgiveness for the Church. At times he must administer bitter medicine. Alma told Corianton, “Now, repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment” (Alma 42:16). I would not want to live in a world where there was no repentance, and if punishment is a condition of that, I will willingly accept that. There is the idea abroad that one can send a postcard of prayer and receive in return full forgiveness and be ready at once for a mission or for marriage in the temple. Not so. There are payments to be made. If a bishop offers comfort only and, in misguided kindness, seeks to relieve you of the painful but healing process in connection with repentance, he will not serve you well.

Forgiveness from the Lord is earned through great personal effort. It takes courage to face the reality of your transgression, accept whatever penalty is required, and allow sufficient time for the process to work. When that is done, you will be *innocent* again. The Lord said: “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (Isaiah 43:25).

He Will Remember Our Sins No More

“This is the covenant that I will make with them . . . , I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 10:16–17).

Alma, who in his youth had a rebellious spirit, spoke from his own experience about the great relief repentance brings: “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. 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. 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 36:18–20.)

Sometimes, even after confession and penalties, the most difficult part of repentance is to forgive oneself. President Joseph Fielding Smith told of a woman who had repented of immoral conduct and was struggling to find her way. She asked him what she should do now. In turn, he asked her to read to him from the Old Testament the account of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Lot, and of Lot’s wife, who was turned to a pillar of salt (see Genesis 19:26). Then he asked her what lesson those verses held for her.

She answered, “The Lord will destroy those who are wicked.”

“Not so,” President Smith told this repentant woman. “The lesson for *you* is ‘Don’t look back!’”

The Temple

Reverently now I use the word *temple*. As I do, there comes to mind the words: “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5). I envision a sealing room and an altar, with a young couple kneeling there, or perhaps a more mature couple who joined the Church a year ago. This sacred temple ordinance is more, much more, than a wedding, for this marriage is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, and the scriptures promise that the participants, if they remain worthy, “shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions” (D&C 132:19).

I think of the words of the sealing ordinance, which cannot be written here. I understand, in a small measure at least, the sacred nature of the fountain of life which is in us. And I see the joy that awaits those who accept this supernal gift and use it worthily.

JESUS CHRIST

*Jesus is the Living Christ, the
immortal Son of God.*

—The First Presidency and
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

THE LIVING CHRIST: THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES

*The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
1 January 2000*

As we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ two millennia ago, we offer our testimony of the reality of His matchless life and the infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice. None other has had so profound an influence upon all who have lived and will yet live upon the earth.

He was the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the New. Under the direction of His Father, He was the creator of the earth. “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3). Though sinless, He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. He “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38), yet was despised for it. His gospel was a message of peace and goodwill. He entreated all to follow His example. He walked the roads of Palestine, healing the sick, causing the blind to see, and raising the dead. He taught the truths of eternity, the reality of our premortal existence, the purpose of our life on earth, and the potential for the sons and daughters of God in the life to come.

He instituted the sacrament as a reminder of His great atoning sacrifice. He was arrested and condemned on spurious charges, convicted to satisfy a mob, and sentenced to die on Calvary’s cross. He gave His life to atone for the sins of all mankind. His was a great vicarious gift in behalf of all who would ever live upon the earth.

We solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world.

He rose from the grave to “become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20). As Risen Lord, He visited among those He had loved in life. He also ministered among His “other sheep” (John 10:16) in ancient America. In the modern world, He and His Father appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, ushering in the long-promised “dispensation of the fulness of times” (Ephesians 1:10).

Of the Living Christ, the Prophet Joseph wrote: “His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying:

“I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father” (D&C 110:3–4).

Of Him the Prophet also declared: “And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“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—

“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” (D&C 76:22–24).

We declare in words of solemnity that His priesthood and His Church have been restored upon the earth —“built upon the foundation of . . . apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20).

We testify that He will someday return to earth. “And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isaiah 40:5). He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords, and every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before Him. Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desires of our hearts.

We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son.

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

Gordon B. Hinckley
Thomas S. Monson James E. Faust

THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE

Boyd K. Packer	M. Russell Ballard
L. Tom Perry	Joseph B. Wirthlin
David B. Haight	Richard G. Scott
Neal A. Maxwell	Robert D. Hales
Russell M. Nelson	Jeffrey R. Holland
Dallin H. Oaks	Henry B. Eyring

KNOWLEDGE OF SPIRITUAL THINGS

As spiritual knowledge unfolds, it must be understood, valued, obeyed, remembered, and expanded.

—Elder Richard G. Scott

ACQUIRING SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE



Elder Richard G. Scott

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

In Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 117–20; or Ensign, Nov. 1993, 86–88

You wonderful, righteous members of this church constantly inspire and motivate me. Thank you for your zest for life, your generous giving of self, your devotion, and your determination to live worthily. I also express gratitude to our many friends who have joined us through these conference sessions. May the messages given bless your lives.

Importance of Spiritual Knowledge

Recently in South America a youth inquired, “Can you give us suggestions that will help us know the Savior better and be able to constantly follow His example?” That meaningful question and others like it have prompted this message on acquiring spiritual knowledge.

President Ezra Taft Benson emphasized the importance of spiritual knowledge, saying:

“We should make daily study of the scriptures a lifetime pursuit. . . .

“ . . . The most important [thing] you can do . . . is to immerse yourselves in the scriptures. Search them diligently. . . . Learn the doctrine. Master the principles. . . .

“You must . . . see that . . . searching the scriptures is not a burden laid upon [us] by the Lord, but a marvelous blessing and opportunity” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, p. 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 47).

President Spencer W. Kimball commented:

“Spiritual learning takes precedence. The secular without the foundation of the spiritual is . . . like the foam upon the milk, the fleeting shadow. . . . One need not choose between the two . . . for there is opportunity to get both simultaneously” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, . . . p. 390).

How to Acquire Spiritual Knowledge

As you seek spiritual knowledge, search for principles. Carefully separate them from the detail used to explain them. Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application to a wide variety of circumstances. A true principle makes decisions clear even under the most confusing and compelling circumstances. It is worth great effort to organize the truth we gather to simple statements of principle. I have tried to do that with gaining spiritual knowledge. The result is now shared in hope that it will be a beginning place for your study. That statement of principle is:

To acquire spiritual knowledge and to obey it with wisdom, one must—

- *In humility, seek divine light.*
- *Exercise faith in Jesus Christ.*
- *Hearken to His counsel.*
- *Keep His commandments.*

As spiritual knowledge unfolds, it must be *understood, valued, obeyed, remembered, and expanded.*

I will explain that statement using examples from the scriptures, the prophets, and the precious, though difficult, laboratory of personal experience. My desire is that the suggestions given will help you in your quest for spiritual truth throughout your life. Then, in time, you may accomplish this objective given by President Joseph F. Smith:

“The greatest achievement mankind can make in this world is to familiarize themselves with divine truth, so thoroughly, so perfectly, that the example or conduct of no creature living in the world can ever turn them away from the knowledge that they have obtained. . . .

“From my boyhood I have desired to learn the principles of the gospel in such a way . . . that it would matter not to me who might fall from the truth, . . . my foundation would be . . . certain in the truths that I have learned” (*Gospel Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], pp. 3–4).

Like President Smith, you and I need that kind of secure anchor to keep our life centered in righteousness and to avoid being swept away by the ruthless waves of worldliness.

Humbly Seek Divine Light

The following scriptures teach why we should *seek divine light*:

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a *light* unto my path” (Psalm 119:105; italics added).

“I, the Lord, . . . will be a *light* unto them forever, that hear my words” (2 Nephi 10:14; italics added).

“It is I that speak; . . . I am the *light* which shineth in darkness, and by my power I give these words unto thee.

“. . . Put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit.

“. . . I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy;

“And . . . by this shall you know, all things whatsoever you desire of me, which are pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive” (D&C 11:11–14; italics added).

Analogies with physical light help us understand the power of spiritual light. A bulb ignited in a dark room overpowers darkness. Yet if the darkness is too intense, it can overpower light, as with a bulb plunged into a bucket of black ink. Spiritual light overcomes the darkness of ignorance and disbelief. When transgression severely clouds a life, the focused spiritual truths of repentance cut the blackness as a laser penetrates the darkest ink.

Humility is essential to the acquiring of spiritual knowledge. To be humble is to be teachable. Humility permits you to be tutored by the Spirit and to be taught from sources inspired by the Lord, such as the scriptures. The seeds of personal growth and understanding germinate and flourish in the fertile soil of humility. Their fruit is spiritual knowledge to guide you here and hereafter.

A proud individual cannot know the things of the Spirit. Paul taught this truth, saying:

“The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. . . .

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:11, 14).

Since it requires much personal effort to gain and use worthwhile knowledge, you cannot endlessly sample from every fascinating arena of life. Therefore, you should select carefully a few vital areas where you can focus energy to learn and share vital truths. I know that to gain knowledge of great worth requires extraordinary personal effort. This is particularly true when our desire is to obtain spiritual knowledge. President Kimball said it this way:

“The treasures of both secular and spiritual knowledge are hidden ones—but hidden from those who do not properly search and strive to find them. . . . Spiritual knowledge is not available merely for the asking; even prayers are not enough. It takes persistence and dedication of one’s life. . . . Of all treasures of knowledge, the most vital is the knowledge of God” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, pp. 389–90).

Brigham Young learned truth by carefully listening to Joseph Smith and striving to understand everything that was taught by word, example, or the Spirit. The resulting tutoring has blessed generations. It conditioned Brigham Young to learn additional truths and to share far more than he had received personally from Joseph Smith. Follow his example.

Exercise Faith and Harken to Jesus’ Counsel

The need to *exercise faith in Jesus Christ* is absolutely essential. It is the foundation of the plan of salvation. When that exercise of faith is coupled with sincere effort based upon a willingness to *hearken to His counsel*, great personal growth and blessings follow. The Savior declared:

“I now give unto you a commandment . . . to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.

“For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.

“For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is *light*, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

“And the Spirit giveth *light* to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.

“And every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto . . . the Father” (D&C 84:43–47; italics added).

Obey the Commandments

The role of *obedience* in gaining spiritual knowledge is crucial, as this comment of President Joseph Fielding Smith confirms:

“Now the Lord would give us gifts. He will quicken our minds. He will give us . . . a knowledge that will be so deeply rooted in our souls that [it] can never be rooted out, if we will just seek for the light . . . and the understanding which is promised to us, and which we can receive if we will only be true and faithful to every covenant and obligation pertaining to the gospel of Jesus Christ” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1958, p. 22).

To keep the commandments, you must know them. The best single source for learning them is the scriptures. President Joseph Fielding Smith gave this admonition:

“Today we are troubled by evil-designing persons who [endeavor] to destroy the testimonies of members of the Church, and many . . . are in danger because of lack of understanding and because they have not sought the guidance of the Spirit. . . . It is a commandment from the Lord that members . . . be diligent . . . and study . . . the fundamental truths of the gospel. . . . Every baptized person [can] have an abiding testimony . . . , but [it] will grow dim and eventually disappear [without] study, obedience, and diligent seeking to know and understand the truth” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, p. 22; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1963, p. 1062).

Profound spiritual truth cannot simply be poured from one mind and heart to another. It takes faith and diligent effort. Precious truth comes a small piece at a time through faith, with great exertion, and at times wrenching struggles. The Lord intends it be that way so that we can mature and progress. Moroni said, “Dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith” (Ether 12:6). To explain that truth, President Harold B. Lee gave this wise instruction:

“The Savior’s blood, His atonement, will save us, but only after we have done all we can to save ourselves by keeping His commandments. All of the principles of the gospel are principles of promise by which the plans of the Almighty are unfolded to us” (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], p. 246).

Apply Spiritual Knowledge

As packets of knowledge unfold, they must be *understood, valued, obeyed, remembered, and expanded*. I’ll explain:

- *Understood.* As each element of truth is encountered, you must carefully examine it in the light of prior knowledge to determine where it fits. Ponder it; inspect it inside out. Study it from every vantage point to discover hidden meaning. View it in perspective to confirm you have not jumped to false conclusions. Prayerful reflection yields further understanding. Such evaluation is particularly important when the truth comes as an impression of the Spirit.
- *Valued.* You show knowledge is valued by expressing appreciation for it, especially in heartfelt prayers of gratitude. The Lord said, “He who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more” (D&C 78:19).
- *Obeyed.* Obedient application of truth is the surest way of making it eternally yours. The wise use of knowledge will permeate your life with its precious fruit.
- *Remembered.* Powerful spiritual direction in your life can be overcome or forced into the background unless you provide a way to retain it. Brigham Young declared, “If you love the truth you can remember it” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 10). Knowledge carefully recorded is knowledge available in time of need. Spiritually sensitive information should be kept in a sacred place that communicates to the Lord how you treasure it. That practice enhances the likelihood of your receiving further light.
- *Expanded.* This thought refers to rich benefits that come from your efforts to enlarge, extend, and increase your understanding of truth. Use the scriptures and the declarations of the prophets to

expand your knowledge. You will find that efforts to share knowledge are often rewarded with more understanding as additional light flows into your mind and heart (see D&C 8:2–3).

Study and Apply Conference Messages

We have come to the end of a great conference. Through its messages, you have been given inspired truth without much effort on your part. Make these truths yours through study and thoughtful application and by emulating a prophet of God, Spencer W. Kimball, who at the conclusion of a conference, taught:

“While sitting here, I have made up my mind that when I go home from this conference this night there are many, many areas in my life that I can perfect. I have made a mental list of them, and I expect to go to work as soon as we get through with conference” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1975, p. 164; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, p. 111).

The privilege of learning absolute truth is sacred to me. I stand in awe that our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son are willing, even anxious for us to learn from them. Please use what I have shared with sensitivity for the wondrous privilege given each of us, willing to obey, to be taught eternal truth. Gaining spiritual knowledge is not a mechanical process. It is a sacred privilege based upon spiritual law. I testify that you can receive inspired help. Humbly ask your Eternal Father. Seek divine light. Exercise faith in the Savior. Strive to hearken to His counsel and obey His commandments. He will bless and lead you as you move through this sometimes treacherous world.

I solemnly testify that Jesus Christ guides this, His church. He knows and loves you personally. As you walk in faithful obedience, He will bless you, inspire you, and lead you to greater knowledge and capacity. I certify that He lives, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

LIVING TOGETHER WITHOUT MARRIAGE

*Living together without marriage
destroys something inside
all who participate.*

—Elder Boyd K. Packer

Related Scripture

Proverbs 6:27–33

“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.”

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Not all sins of this permissive world are with the youth. I was shocked recently when I read a magazine article. The man spoke of marriage as a legalistic, paper-signing institution, and said: ‘It should be abolished. Without the social pressures in the state, it could be utopia.’ He asked the woman. She said: ‘Marriage should be done away with. I already know people who are living quietly together without marriage, but I haven’t yet seen the effect of this on children as they grow up in such a society.’

“These are not the only ones who are advocating living together without marriage. We call this to the attention of our people with all the strength we possess.

“We say again: We members of the Church marry. All normal people should marry. (There could be a few exceptions.) All normal married couples should become parents” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, 9; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 8).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“God-sanctioned marriage between a man and a woman has been the basis of civilization for thousands of years. There is no justification to redefine what marriage is. Such is not our right, and those who try will find themselves answerable to God” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 54).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“There is a practice, now quite prevalent, for unmarried couples to live together, a counterfeit of marriage. They suppose that they shall have all that marriage can offer without the obligations connected with it. They are wrong!

“However much they hope to find in a relationship of that kind, they will lose more. Living together without marriage destroys something inside all who participate. Virtue, self-esteem, and refinement of character wither away.

“Claiming that it will not happen does not prevent the loss; and these virtues, once lost, are not easily reclaimed.

“To suppose that one day they may nonchalantly change their habits and immediately claim all that might have been theirs had they not made a mockery of marriage is to suppose something that will not be.

“One day, when they come to themselves, they will reap disappointment.

“One cannot degrade marriage without tarnishing other words as well, such words as *boy, girl, manhood, womanhood, husband, wife, father, mother, baby, children, family, home*.

“Such words as *unselfishness* and *sacrifice* will then be tossed aside. Then self-respect will fade and love itself will not want to stay.

“If you have been tempted to enter such a relationship or if you now live with another without marriage, leave! Withdraw from it! Run away from it! Do not continue with it! Or, if you can, make a marriage out of it” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 14–15; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 13).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Marriage “is a union of such completeness that we use the word *seal* to convey its eternal promise. The Prophet Joseph Smith once said we perhaps could

render such a sacred bond as being ‘welded’ [see D&C 128:18] one to another.

“But such a total union, such an unyielding commitment between a man and a woman, can only come with the proximity and permanence afforded in a marriage covenant, with solemn promises and the pledge of all they possess—their very hearts and minds, all their days and all their dreams.

“Can you see the moral schizophrenia that comes from *pretending* you are one, pretending you have made solemn promises before God, sharing the physical symbols and the physical intimacy of your counterfeit union but then fleeing, retreating, severing all such other aspects of what was meant to be a total obligation?

“In matters of human intimacy, you must wait! You must wait until you can give everything, and you cannot give everything until you are legally and lawfully married. 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 self is emotional Russian roulette. If you persist in pursuing physical satisfaction without the sanction of heaven, you run the terrible risk of such spiritual, psychic damage that you may undermine both your longing for physical intimacy and your ability to give wholehearted devotion to a later, truer love” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 100; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 76–77).

LOVE

*If one really loves another,
one would rather die for that
person than to injure him.*

—Elder Spencer W. Kimball

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Related Scriptures

Matthew 6:24

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Romans 8:35, 39

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . .

“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 13:10

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Ephesians 5:2, 25, 33

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. . . .

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

“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

Doctrine and Covenants 42:22–23

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

“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.”

What Is True Love?

President David O. McKay

“‘Well,’ you may ask, ‘how may I know when I am in love?’

“. . . George Q. Morris [who later became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, gave this reply]: ‘My mother once said that if you meet a girl in whose presence you feel a desire to achieve, who inspires you to do your best, and to make the most of yourself, such a young woman is worthy of your love and is awakening love in your heart.’

“I submit that . . . as a true guide. In the presence of the girl you truly love you do not feel to grovel; in her presence you do not attempt to take advantage of her; in her presence you feel that you would like to be everything that a Master Man should become, for she will inspire you to that ideal. And I ask you young women to cherish that same guide” (“As Youth Contemplates an Eternal Partnership,” *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1938, 139).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“If we would truly seek to be more like our Savior and Master, learning to love as He loves should be our highest goal” (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 275).

Elder John A. Widtsoe

“Love is the foundation of marriage, but love itself is a product of law and lives by law. True love is law-abiding, for the highest satisfactions come to a law-abiding life. . . .

“. . . Marriage that lasts only during earth life is a sad one, for the love established between man and woman, as they live together and rear their family, should not die, but live and grow richer with the eternal years. True love hopes and prays for an endless continuation of association with the loved one. To those who are sealed to each other for all existence, love is ever warm, more hopeful, believing, courageous, and fearless. Such people live the richer, more joyful life. To them happiness and the making of it have no end. . . .

“Above physical charm, love is begotten by qualities, often subtle, of mind and spirit. The beautiful face

may hide an empty mind; the sweet voice may utter coarse words; the lovely form may be ill-mannered; the woman of radiant beauty and the man of kingly form may be intolerable bores on nearer acquaintanceship; or, the person who looks attractive may really have no faults, may excel us in knowledge and courtesy, yet he is not of our kind, his ways are not ours. Under either condition, love wilts in its first stage. 'Falling in love' is always from within, rather than from without. That is, physical attractiveness must be reinforced with mental and spiritual harmony if true love is to be born and have long life—from the Latter-day Saint point of view, to last throughout the eternities" (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 297, 299, 302).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

"What is love? Many people think of it as mere physical attraction and they casually speak of 'falling in love' and 'love at first sight.' This may be Hollywood's version and the interpretation of those who write love songs and love fiction. True love is not wrapped in such flimsy material. One might become immediately attracted to another individual, but love is far more than physical attraction. It is deep, inclusive and comprehensive. Physical attraction is only one of the many elements, but there must be faith and confidence and understanding and partnership. There must be common ideals and standards. There must be a great devotion and companionship. Love is cleanliness and progress and sacrifice and selflessness. This kind of love never tires nor wanes, but lives through sickness and sorrow, poverty and privation, accomplishment and disappointment, time and eternity" (*Love versus Lust*, 18).

"If one really loves another, one would rather die for that person than to injure him" (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 279).

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley

"May I quickly suggest four cornerstones upon which to build that house? There are others, but I choose to emphasize these. . . .

"The first of these I call *Respect for One Another*, the kind of respect that regards one's companion as the most precious friend on earth and not as a possession or a chattel to be forced or compelled to suit one's selfish whims.

"Pearl Buck has observed, 'Love cannot be forced. . . . It comes out of heaven, unasked and unsought.' (*The Treasure Chest*, p. 165.)

"This respect comes of recognition that each of us is a son or daughter of God, endowed with something of his divine nature, that each is an individual entitled to expression and cultivation of individual talents and deserving of forbearance, of patience, of understanding, of courtesy, of thoughtful consideration. True love is not so much a matter of romance as it is a matter of anxious concern for the well being of one's companion" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 81–82; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 71).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

See quotation on page 142.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

"The world is filled with too many of us who are inclined to indicate our love with an announcement or declaration.

"True love is a process. True love requires personal action. Love must be continuing to be real. Love takes time. Too often expediency, infatuation, stimulation, persuasion, or lust are mistaken for love. How hollow, how empty if our love is no deeper than the arousal of momentary feeling or the expression in words of what is no more lasting than the time it takes to speak them. . . .

"We must at regular and appropriate intervals speak and reassure others of our love and the long time it takes to prove it by our actions. Real love does take time. The Great Shepherd had the same thoughts in mind when he taught, 'If ye love me, *keep* my commandments' (John 14:15; italics added) and 'If ye love me *feed* my sheep' (John 21:16; italics added). Love demands action if it is to be continuing. Love is a process. Love is not a declaration. Love is not an announcement. Love is not a passing fancy. Love is not an expediency. Love is not a convenience. 'If ye love me, keep my commandments' and 'If ye love me feed my sheep' are God-given proclamations that should remind us we can often best show our love through the processes of *feeding* and *keeping*.

"Love of God takes time. Love of family takes time. Love of country takes time. Love of neighbor takes time. Love of companion takes time. Love in courtship takes time. Love of self takes time" (in

Conference Report, Oct. 1975, 160, 163; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 108, 110).

“One who loves has and feels responsibility. Paul in 1 Corinthians says love thinketh no evil, is not self-seeking, is long-suffering, and is kind. (See 1 Cor. 13:4–5.) If we look at love between two who are preparing for temple marriage, we see the elements of sacrifice and of serving each other’s best interests, not a shortsighted ‘me’ interest. True love and happiness in courtship and marriage are based upon honesty, self-respect, sacrifice, consideration, courtesy, kindness, and placing ‘we’ ahead of ‘me.’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 30; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 23).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Perfect love is perfectly patient” (*All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, 69).

“Unlike our love, Jesus’ love consists of active restraint as well as pressing encouragement. His perfect love of each and all spares Him the need to accept us as we now are, for He knows perfectly what we have the possibility to become” (*Even As I Am*, 18).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“Love, as defined by the Lord, elevates, protects, respects, and enriches another. It motivates one to make sacrifices for another” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 43; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 35).

Elder Joe J. Christensen

“Be quick to say, ‘I’m sorry.’ As hard as it is to form the words, be swift to say, ‘I apologize, and please forgive me,’ even though you are not the one who is totally at fault. True love is developed by those who are willing to readily admit personal mistakes and offenses” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 86; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 65).

What Are Some of the Counterfeits of True Love?

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

“At the hour of sin, pure love is pushed out of one door while lust sneaks in the other. Affection has then been replaced with desire of the flesh and uncontrolled passion. Accepted has been the doctrine which the devil is so eager to establish, that illicit sex relations are justified” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 279).

“If anyone feels that petting or other deviations are demonstrations of love, let him ask himself: ‘If this beautiful body which I have misused suddenly became deformed, or paralyzed, would my reactions be the same? If this lovely face were scarred by flames, or this body which I have used suddenly became rigid, or this keen mind which I have enjoyed were suddenly to become blank, would I be such an ardent lover? If senility or any of its approaches suddenly fell upon my sweetheart, what would my attitudes be?’ Answers to these questions might test one to see if he really is in love or if it is only physical attraction which encouraged the improper physical contacts. The young man who protects his sweetheart against all *use* or *abuse*, against insult and infamy from himself or others, could be expressing true love.

“But the young man who *uses* his companion as a biological toy to give himself temporary satisfaction—that is *lust*, and is at the other end of the spectrum from love. A young woman conducts herself to be attractive spiritually, mentally and physically but will not by word nor dress nor act stir nor stimulate to physical reactions the companion beside her. That could be true love. That young woman who must touch and stir and fondle and tempt and use knows not love. That is lust and exploitation” (*Love versus Lust*, 18–19).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“The greatest deception foisted upon the human race in our day is that overemphasis of physical gratification as it is related to romantic love. It is merely a repetition of the same delusion that has been impressed on every generation in ages past. When we learn that physical gratification is only incident to, and not the compelling force of love itself, we have made a supreme discovery. If only physical gratification should interest you, you need not be selective at all. This power is possessed by almost everyone. Alone, without attendant love, this relationship becomes nothing—indeed, less and worse than nothing” (*Eternal Love*, 15).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“Satan promotes counterfeit love, which is lust. It is driven by a hunger to appease personal appetite. One who practices this deception cares little for the pain and destruction caused another. While often camouflaged by flattering words, its motivation is

self-gratification. You know how to be clean and live a righteous life. We trust you to do it. The Lord will bless you richly and will help you keep clean and pure” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 43–44; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 35).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

“May I suggest that human intimacy, that sacred, physical union ordained of God for a married couple, deals with a *symbol* that demands special sanctity. 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 ought to 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 (see D&C 128:18).

“But such a total, virtually unbreakable union, such an unyielding commitment between a man and a woman, can only come 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. . . .

“Can you see then the moral schizophrenia 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?” (*Speaking Out on Moral Issues*, 158–59; see also Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 100).

How Does Our Love for God Influence Our Ability to Love Others?

Elder Orson Pratt

“The more righteous a people become the more they are qualified for loving others and rendering them happy. A wicked man can have but little love for his

wife; while a righteous man, being filled with the love of God, is sure to manifest this heavenly attribute in every thought and feeling of his heart, and in every word and deed. Love, joy, and innocence will radiate from his very countenance, and be expressed in every look. This will beget confidence in the wife of his bosom, and she will love him in return; for love begets love; happiness imparts happiness; and these heaven born emotions will continue to increase more and more, until they are perfected and glorified in all the fulness of eternal love itself” (“Celestial Marriage,” *The Seer*, Oct. 1853, 156).

Elder John A. Widtsoe

“True love of man for woman always includes love of God from whom all good things issue” (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 297).

Elder Russell M. Nelson

“Without a strong commitment to the Lord, an individual is more prone to have a low level of commitment to a spouse. Weak commitments to eternal covenants lead to losses of eternal consequence” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 98; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 72).

What Types of Conduct Help Develop True Love in Relationships?

President Joseph Fielding Smith

“If a man and his wife were earnestly and faithfully observing all the ordinances and principles of the gospel, there could not arise any cause for divorce. The joy and happiness pertaining to the marriage relationship would grow sweeter, and husband and wife would become more and more attached to each other as the days go by. Not only would the husband love the wife and the wife the husband, but children born to them would live in an atmosphere of love and harmony. The love of each for the others would not be impaired, and moreover the love of all towards our Eternal Father and his Son Jesus Christ would be more firmly rooted in their souls” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1965, 11).

President Ezra Taft Benson

The Lord “said, ‘Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else’ (D&C 42:22). . . .

“This kind of love can be shown for your wives in so many ways. First and foremost, nothing except God Himself takes priority over your wife in your life—not work, not recreation, not hobbies. . . .

“What does it mean to love someone with all your heart? It means to love with all your emotional feelings and with all your devotion. . . . You cannot demean her, criticize her, find fault with her. . . .

“What does it mean to ‘cleave unto her’? It means to stay close to her, to be loyal and faithful to her, to communicate with her, and to express your love for her.

“Love means being sensitive to her feelings and needs. . . .

“Husbands, recognize your wife’s intelligence and her ability to counsel with you. . . .

“Give her the opportunity to grow intellectually, emotionally, and socially as well as spiritually.

“Remember, brethren, love can be nurtured and nourished by little tokens. Flowers on special occasions are wonderful, but so is your willingness to help with the dishes, change diapers, get up with a crying child in the night, and leave the television or the newspaper to help with the dinner. Those are the quiet ways we say ‘I love you’ with our actions. They bring rich dividends for such little effort” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 61–62; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 50).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

“If two people love the Lord more than their own lives and then love each other more than their own lives, working together in total harmony with the gospel program as their basic structure, they are sure to have this great happiness. When a husband and wife go together frequently to the holy temple, kneel in prayer together in their home with their family, go hand in hand to their religious meetings, keep their lives wholly chaste—mentally and physically—so that their whole thoughts and desires and loves are all centered in the one being, their companion, and both work together for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, then happiness is at its pinnacle” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 5).

“HOW DO I LOVE THEE?”



Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

*Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

Brigham Young University
1999–2000 Speeches,
158–62

I wish to speak to you this morning about Christlike love and what I think it can and should mean in your friendships, in your dating, in serious courtship, and, ultimately, in your marriage.

I approach the subject knowing full well that, as a newly engaged young woman said to me just last month, “There is certainly a lot of advice out there!” I don’t want to add needlessly to this rhetoric on romance, but I believe that second only to your membership in the Church, your “membership in a marriage” is the most important association you will have in time and eternity—and to the faithful what doesn’t come in time *will* come in eternity. So perhaps all of you will forgive me for offering, yes, more advice. But I wish it to be scriptural advice, gospel advice. Advice, if you will, that is as basic to life as it is to love—counsel that is equally applicable to men and to women. It has nothing to do with trends or tides of the time or tricks of the trade but has everything to do with the truth.

So may I put your friendships and dates and eventually your marriages in a scriptural context this morning and speak to you of what I will try to communicate as *true* love.

After a long wonderful discourse by Mormon on the subject of charity, the seventh chapter of Moroni tells us that this highest of Christian virtues is more accurately labeled “the pure love of Christ.”

And it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him [and her].

Wherefore, . . . 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; that ye may become the sons [and daughters] of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; . . . that we may be purified even as he is pure. [Moroni 7:47–48]

True charity, the absolutely pure, perfect love of Christ, has really been known only once in this world—in the form of Christ Himself, the living Son of the living God. It is Christ’s love that Mormon goes to some length to describe for us and that Paul the Apostle did as well some years before, writing to the Corinthians in New Testament times. As in everything, Christ is the only one who got it all right, did it all perfectly, loved the way we are all to try to love. But even though we fall short, that divine standard is there for us. It is a goal toward which we are to keep reaching, keep striving—and, certainly, a goal to keep appreciating.

And as we speak of this, may I remind you, as Mormon explicitly taught, that this love, this ability, capacity, and reciprocation we all so want, is a gift. It is “bestowed”—that is Mormon’s word. It doesn’t come without effort and it doesn’t come without patience, but, like salvation itself, in the end it is a gift, given by God to the “true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ.” The solutions to life’s problems are always gospel solutions. Not only are *answers* found in Christ, but so is the power, the gift, the bestowal, the miracle of giving and receiving those answers. In this matter of love, no doctrine could be more encouraging to us than that.

I have taken for a title to my remarks Mrs. Browning’s wonderful line “How do I love thee?” (Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Sonnets from the Portuguese* [1850], no. 43.) I am not going to “count the ways” this morning, but I am impressed with her choice of adverb—not *when* do I love thee nor *where* do I love thee nor *why* do I love thee nor *why don’t* you love me, but, rather, *how*. *How* do I demonstrate it, *how* do I reveal my true love for you? Mrs. Browning was correct. Real love is best shown in the “how,” and it is with the how that Mormon and Paul help us the most.

The first element of divine love—pure love—taught by these two prophets is its kindness, its selfless quality, its lack of ego and vanity and consuming self-centeredness. “Charity suffereth long, and is kind, [charity] envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own” (Moroni 7:45). I have heard President Hinckley teach publicly and privately what I suppose all leaders have said—that most problems in love and marriage ultimately start with selfishness. In outlining ideal love in which Christ, the most unselfish man

who ever lived, is the great example, it is not surprising that this scriptural commentary starts here.

There are many qualities you will want to look for in a friend or a serious date—to say nothing of a spouse and eternal companion—but surely among the very first and most basic of those qualities will be those of care and sensitivity toward others, a minimum of self-centeredness that allows compassion and courtesy to be evident. “That best portion of a good man’s life [is] his . . . kindness,” said Mr. William Wordsworth (*Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* [1798], lines 33–35). There are lots of limitations in all of us that we hope our sweethearts will overlook. I suppose no one is as handsome or as beautiful as he or she wishes, or as brilliant in school or as witty in speech or as wealthy as we would like, but in a world of varied talents and fortunes that we can’t always command, I think that makes even more attractive the qualities we *can* command—such qualities as thoughtfulness, patience, a kind word, and true delight in the accomplishment of another. These cost us *nothing*, and they can mean *everything* to the one who receives them.

The solutions to life’s problems are always gospel solutions.

I like Mormon and Paul’s language that says one who truly loves is not “puffed up.” Puffed up! Isn’t that a great image? Haven’t you ever been with someone who was so conceited,

so full of themselves that they seemed like the Pillsbury Doughboy? Fred Allen said once that he saw such a fellow walking down Lovers’ Lane holding his own hand. True love blooms when we care more about another person than we care about ourselves. That is Christ’s great atoning example for us, and it ought to be more evident in the kindness we show, the respect we give, and the selflessness and courtesy we employ in our personal relationships.

Love is a fragile thing, and some elements in life can try to break it. Much damage can be done if we are not in tender hands, caring hands. To give ourselves totally to another person, as we do in marriage, is the most trusting step we take in any human relationship. It is a real act of faith—faith all of us must be willing to exercise. If we do it right, we end up sharing everything—all our hopes, all our fears, all our dreams, all our weaknesses, and all our joys—with another person.

No serious courtship or engagement or marriage is worth the name if we do not fully invest *all* that we have in it and in so doing trust ourselves totally to the one we love. You cannot succeed in love if you keep one foot out on the bank for safety's sake. The very nature of the endeavor requires that you hold on to each other as tightly as you can and jump in the pool together. In that spirit, and in the spirit of Mormon's plea for pure love, I want to impress upon you the vulnerability and delicacy of your partner's future as it is placed in your hands for safekeeping—male and female, it works both ways.

Sister Holland and I have been married for nearly 37 years, just a half-dozen or so years short of *twice* as long as we have lived without each other. I may not know everything about her, but I know 37 years' worth, and she knows that much of me. I know her likes and dislikes, and she knows mine. I know her tastes and interests, hopes and dreams, and she knows mine. As our love has grown and our relationship has matured, we have been increasingly free with each other about all of that.

The result is that I know much more clearly now how to help her, and, if I let myself, I know exactly what will hurt her. In the honesty of our love—love that can't truly be Christlike without such total devotion—surely God will hold me accountable for any pain I cause her by intentionally exploiting or hurting her when she has been so trusting of me, having long since thrown away any self-protection in order that we could be, as the scripture says, "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). To impair or impede her in *any way* for my gain or vanity or emotional mastery over her should disqualify me on the spot to be her husband. Indeed, it should consign my miserable soul to eternal incarceration in that large and spacious building Lehi says is the prison of those who live by "vain imaginations" and the "pride of the world" (1 Nephi 11:36, 12:18). No wonder that building is at the opposite end of the field from the tree of life representing the love of God! In all that Christ was, He was not *ever* envious or inflated, never consumed with His own needs. He did not once, *not ever*, seek His own advantage at the expense of someone else. He delighted in the happiness of others, the happiness He could bring them. He was forever kind.

In a dating and courtship relationship, I would not have you spend five minutes with someone who belittles you, who is constantly critical of you, who is cruel at your expense and may even call it humor.

Life is tough enough without having the person who is supposed to love you leading the assault on your self-esteem, your sense of dignity, your confidence, and your joy. In this person's care you deserve to feel physically safe and emotionally secure.

Members of the First Presidency have taught that "any form of physical or mental abuse to any woman is not worthy of any priesthood holder" and that no "man who holds the priesthood of God [should] abuse his wife in any way, [or] demean or injure or take undue advantage of [any] woman"—and that includes friends, dates, sweethearts, and fiancées, to say nothing of wives (James E. Faust, "The Highest Place of Honor," *Ensign*, May 1988, 37, and Gordon B. Hinckley, "Reach Out in Love and Kindness," *Ensign*, November 1982, 77).

If you are just going for pizza or to play a set of tennis, go with anyone who will provide good, clean fun. But if you are serious, or planning to be serious, please find someone who brings out the best in you and is not envious of your success. Find someone who suffers when you suffer and who finds his or her happiness in your own.

The second segment of this scriptural sermon on love in Moroni 7:45 says that true charity—real love—"is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity." Think of how many arguments could be avoided, how many hurt feelings could be spared, how many cold shoulders and silent treatments could be ended, and, in a worst-case scenario, how many breakups and divorces could be avoided if we were not so easily provoked, if we thought no evil of one another, and if we not only did not rejoice in iniquity but didn't rejoice even in little mistakes.

Temper tantrums are not cute even in children; they are despicable in adults, especially adults who are supposed to love each other. We are too easily provoked; we are too inclined to think that our partner meant to hurt us—meant to do us evil, so to speak; and in defensive or jealous response we too often rejoice when we see *them* make a mistake and find *them* in a fault. Let's show some discipline on this one. Act a little more maturely. Bite your tongue if you have to. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32). At least one difference between a tolerable marriage and a great one may be that willingness in the latter to allow some things to pass without comment, without response.

I mentioned Shakespeare earlier. In a talk on love and romance you might well expect a reference to Romeo and Juliet. But let me refer to a much less virtuous story. With Romeo and Juliet the outcome was a result of innocence gone awry, a kind of sad, heartbreaking mistake between two families that should have known better. But in the tale of Othello and Desdemona the sorrow and destruction is calculated—it is maliciously driven from the beginning. Of all the villains in Shakespeare’s writing, and perhaps in all of literature, there is no one I loathe so much as I loathe Iago. Even his name sounds evil to me, or at least it has become so. And what *is* his evil, and Othello’s tragic, near-inexcusable susceptibility to it? It is the violation of Moroni 7 and 1 Corinthians 13. Among other things, they sought for evil where none existed, they embraced imaginary iniquity. The villains here rejoiced not “in the truth.” Of the innocent Desdemona, Iago said, “I turn her virtue into pitch; / And out of her own goodness make the net / That shall enmesh them all” (William Shakespeare, *Othello*, act 2, scene 3, lines 366–68). Sowing doubt and devilish innuendo, playing on jealousy and deceit and finally murderous rage, Iago provokes Othello into taking Desdemona’s life—virtue turned into pitch, goodness twisted into a fatal net.

Now, thank heavens, here in Happy Valley this morning we are not talking of infidelity, real or imagined, or of murder; but in the spirit of a university education, let’s learn the lessons being taught. Think the best of each other, especially of those you say you love. Assume the good and doubt the bad. Encourage in yourself what Abraham Lincoln called “the better angels of our nature” (First Inaugural Address, 4 March 1861). Othello could have been saved even in the last moment when he kissed Desdemona and her purity was so evident. “That [kiss] dost almost persuade / Justice to break her sword!” he said (act 5, scene 2, lines 16–17). Well, he would have been spared her death and then his own suicide if he had broken what he considered justice’s sword right then and there rather than, figuratively speaking, using it on her. This tragically sad Elizabethan tale could have had a beautiful, happy ending if just one man, who then influenced another, had thought no evil, had rejoiced not in iniquity, but had rejoiced in the truth.

Thirdly and lastly, the prophets tell us that true love “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all

things, endureth all things” (1 Corinthians 13:7). Once again that is ultimately a description of Christ’s love—He is the great example of one who bore and believed and hoped and endured. We are invited to do the same in our courtship and in our marriage to the best of our ability. Bear up and be strong. Be hopeful and believing. Some things in life we have little or no control over. These have to be endured. Some disappointments have to be lived with in love and in marriage. These are not things anyone wants in life, but sometimes they come. And when they come, we have to bear them; we have to believe; we have to hope for an end to such sorrows and difficulty; we have to endure until things come right in the end.

One of the great purposes of true love is to help each other in these times. No one ought to have to face such trials alone. We can endure almost anything if we have someone at our side who truly loves us, who is easing the burden and lightening the load. In this regard, a friend from our BYU faculty, Professor Brent Barlow, told me some years ago about Plimsoll marks.

As a youth in England, Samuel Plimsoll was fascinated with watching ships load and unload their cargoes. He soon observed that, regardless of the cargo space available, each ship had its maximum capacity. If a ship exceeded its limit, it would likely sink at sea. In 1868 Plimsoll entered Parliament and passed a merchant shipping act that, among other things, called for making calculations of how much a ship could carry. As a result, lines were drawn on the hull of each ship in England. As the cargo was loaded, the freighter would sink lower and lower into the water. When the water level on the side of the ship reached the Plimsoll mark, the ship was considered loaded to capacity, regardless of how much space remained. As a result, British deaths at sea were greatly reduced.

Like ships, people have differing capacities at different times and even different days in their lives. In our relationships we need to establish our own Plimsoll marks and help identify them in the lives of those we love. Together we need to monitor the load levels and be helpful in shedding or at least readjusting some cargo if we see our sweetheart is sinking. Then, when the ship of love is stabilized, we can evaluate long-term what has to continue, what can be put off until another time, and what can be put off permanently. Friends, sweethearts, and spouses need to be able to monitor each other’s stress and

recognize the different tides and seasons of life. We owe it to each other to declare some limits and then help jettison some things if emotional health and the strength of loving relationships are at risk. Remember, pure love “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,” and helps loved ones do the same.

Let me close. In Mormon’s and Paul’s final witnesses, they declare that “charity [pure love] never faileth” (Moroni 7:46, 1 Corinthians 13:8). It is there through thick and thin. It endures through sunshine and shadow, through darkest sorrow and on into the light. It *never* fails. So Christ loved us, and that is how He hoped we would love each other. In a final injunction to all his disciples for all time, He said, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; *as I have loved you*” (John 13:34; emphasis added). Of course such Christlike staying power in romance and marriage requires more than any of us really have. It requires something more, an endowment from heaven. Remember Mormon’s promise: that such love—the love we each yearn for and cling to—is “bestowed” upon “true followers of Christ.” You want capability, safety, and security in dating and romance, in married life and eternity? Be a true disciple of Jesus. Be a genuine, committed, word-and-deed Latter-day Saint. Believe that your faith has *everything* to do with your romance, because it does. You separate dating from discipleship at your peril. Or, to phrase that more positively, Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, is the only lamp by which you can successfully see the path of love and happiness for you *and* for your sweetheart. How *should* I love thee? As He does, for that way “never faileth.” I so testify and express my love for you and for Him, in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

A UNION OF LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING



Elder Marlin K. Jensen

*Of the Quorum
of the Seventy*

*Ensign, Oct. 1994,
46–51*

Of the many opportunities for service that come with my calling, in my estimation none exceeds the

privilege of performing a sealing ceremony in one of the Lord’s temples. Whenever I am in a beautifully appointed sealing room, facing a wholesome and anxious young couple about to make the most sacred of vows with God and with each other, I have the feeling that nothing I might say could do justice to the significance of that occasion in their lives.

At such times I frequently remember my own wedding day nearly twenty-six years ago and the strong feelings of love I had for my wife. I remember also our high expectations for the future. Kathy and I had an ideal in mind that was not necessarily peculiar to us: we were about to begin a companionship together that would be unparalleled in the romantic history of Western civilization!

Nevertheless, despite our best intentions and efforts, our ideal began to collide with reality shortly after our brief, inexpensive honeymoon. I cannot speak for Kathy, but I soon began to feel a small sense of disillusionment, a feeling that there was something more to marriage than I seemed capable of producing.

One small example from those early days of our marriage will illustrate the challenges we faced. We were living in Salt Lake City, where I was attending law school and Kathy was teaching first grade. Under the stress of being new to the city, our respective schools, and each other, our relationship became a bit testy. One night at about dinnertime, we had a quarrel that convinced me that I need not hope for nourishment at home. So I left our modest apartment and walked to the nearest fast-food restaurant, a block away. As I entered the north door of the establishment, I looked to my right—and much to my surprise, I saw Kathy entering through the south door! We exchanged angry glances and advanced to opposing cash registers to place our orders. We continued to ignore each other as we sat alone on opposite ends of the restaurant, sullenly eating our evening meals. We then left as we had entered and took our separate routes home. It wasn’t until later that we reconciled and laughed together about how infantile we had been.

I realize now that such little tiffs are not uncommon in the early stages of most marriages. However, I believe they are representative of the many obstacles that can frequently interfere with the tremendous potential for fulfillment and happiness that exists in an eternal marriage, potential that too often goes unrealized.

As the Restoration unfolded, the Prophet Joseph Smith did not teach the doctrine of eternal marriage until several years after the organization of the Church. When he began to do so, it was selectively. Elder Parley P. Pratt, who had been married civilly thirteen years earlier, first heard about the concept of eternal marriage from the Prophet in Philadelphia in 1839. His reaction, as recorded in his autobiography, may be difficult to understand for those of us who have grown up with the anticipation of marrying in a temple for time and all eternity. This concept was completely new to Elder Pratt, however, and he was overwhelmed by it:

“I received from [Joseph] the first idea of eternal family organization, and the eternal union of the sexes in those inexpressibly endearing relationships which none but the highly intellectual, the refined and pure in heart, know how to prize, and which are at the very foundation of everything worthy to be called happiness.

“Till then I had learned to esteem kindred affections and sympathies as appertaining solely to this transitory state, as something from which the heart must be entirely weaned, in order to be fitted for its heavenly state.

“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.

“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. It was from him that I learned that we might cultivate these affections, and grow and increase in the same to all eternity; while the result of our endless union would be an offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, or the sands of the sea shore. . . .

“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. I felt that God was my heavenly Father indeed; that Jesus was my brother, and that the wife of my bosom was an immortal, eternal companion; a kind ministering angel, given to me as a comfort, and a crown of glory for ever and ever. In short, I could now love with the spirit and with the

understanding also” (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, pp. 297–98).

In all of Latter-day Saint literature, I know of no more beautiful or powerful statement than this concerning the potential for fulfillment and happiness we have as we begin marriage together in the Lord’s way. The opportunity for such a companionship will eventually come to all who live worthy of it. Think of the implications of being able to love “with the spirit and with the understanding also.” Consider the power of the idea that of all people on earth, we Latter-day Saints know the most about genuine romantic love and have the greatest opportunity to achieve truly happy and enduring marriages. Will it not be a memorable day when as a people we are best known not just for our large families but for our truly exceptional marriages?

What are the eternal gospel principles that permit us to court one another and eventually establish marriages that are happy, fulfilling, and enduring? I will discuss a few truths that I feel are most vital. All of them are closely related to the Savior, his teachings, and the central role he plays in the gospel plan. In fact, if we want to make ourselves into worthy eternal companions, we can first concentrate on becoming unwavering disciples of the Master.

Developing Our Capacity to Love

The teachings of Christ suggest that we should begin our search for an eternal companion with greater concern about our ability to give love than about our need to receive it. Of the Savior, John wrote: “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Indeed, it may be our own capacity to give love that makes us most lovable. The greater our own personal substance is and the deeper our own mental, emotional, and spiritual reserves are, the greater will be our capacity to nurture and love others, especially our companion. President Marion G. Romney of the First Presidency posed a question that puts our ability to genuinely care about others in perspective: “How can we give if there is nothing there? Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves. Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the emotionally starved. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned. And most important of all, spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 93).

Very little love can come from one who is not at peace with himself or herself and God. As Enos learned, no one can be concerned about the welfare of someone else and give love to another until he or she has taken care of his or her own soul. Thus, our preparation for an eternal marriage must include repenting, learning, acquiring faith, and developing the security that comes with a vision of our potential as children of a Heavenly Father. Only when we love God above all others, as the Savior taught (see Matt. 22:34–40), will we be capable of offering pure, Christlike love to our companions for all eternity.

Virtue Loveth Virtue

A very natural and wonderful consequence of becoming a person capable of great love is described in this passage: “For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light” (D&C 88:40).

If we pursue the goal of an eternal marriage with purity and with both our hearts and our minds, I believe in most cases we will eventually be rewarded with a companion who is at least our spiritual equal and who will cleave unto intelligence and light as we do, who will receive wisdom as we receive it, who will embrace truth as we embrace it, and who will love virtue as we love it. To spend the eternities with a companion who shares the most important fundamental values with us and who will discuss them, live them, and join in teaching them to children is among the most soul-satisfying experiences of true romantic love. To know that there will be someone who walks a parallel path of goodness and growth with us and yearns for the same eternal values and happiness is of great comfort.

I witnessed a powerful example of this principle recently as I sealed a young couple in the Salt Lake Temple. After I had performed the sealing ceremony and the couple had exchanged rings and embraces, I asked them to share their feelings about each other and the Lord. The new bride spoke first. Her brief remarks expressed both gratitude and emotion as she told how from her very youngest years she had desired to keep herself virtuous and had hoped to find a companion who shared her values and righteous aspirations. She confirmed the goodness

Very little love can come from one who is not at peace with himself or herself and God.

of her new husband by witnessing that he was all she had hoped for and more.

Then the young husband spoke. He, too, was tearful as he shared how at age fourteen he had begun to pray to the Lord that the wife of his future, whoever she might be, would be protected and would keep herself virtuous while preparing for an eternal marriage. He also told how he had committed himself again and again over the years to that same path. Then he expressed his great joy at having met this wife of his prayers, and he mentioned his high hopes for a truly exceptional marriage.

This is the kind of relationship that our Heavenly Father wishes for all of his children. None of his faithful children will miss out on the opportunity for eternal marriage with one who is equally prepared for eternal life. Virtue loveth virtue! Truth embraceth truth!

Bridling Passions

The seeds of fulfilling romantic love are planted during courtship. During this time we should be mindful and appreciative of the truth and level of understanding reflected in Alma’s timeless counsel to his son, Shiblon: “See that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love” (Alma 38:12).

Those of you who have grown up around horses, saddles, and bridles will perceive that Alma was not suggesting to Shiblon that he eradicate his passions but rather that he control or channel them for the very worthwhile purpose of being filled with love. During courtship, this control means deferring physical relations until they can properly blossom in marriage. But restraint and moderation are needed even in marriage, for the gospel teaches that “unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions” (D&C 88:38).

Married Latter-day Saints must remember that not everything the world condones and encourages in the expressing of romantic love has a place in an eternal marriage. In the words of Elder Boyd K. Packer, “the greatest deception foisted upon the human race in our day is . . . overemphasis of physical gratification as it is related to romantic love. It is merely a repetition of the same delusion that has been impressed on every generation in ages past.

When we learn that physical gratification is only incident to, and not the compelling force of love itself, we have made a supreme discovery" (*Eternal Love*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1973, p. 15).

As a righteous couple grow and mature in their love, they will come to know that the fine blending of the spiritual and physical dimensions of their relationship forms a solid foundation for their eternal union.

Marriage Is a Priority

Because the restored gospel reveals that eternal life with our Heavenly Father will be lived in family units, we would be wise to place a high priority in this life on preparing for and developing rewarding marriage relationships and roles as effective fathers and mothers. If we have been regarding too lightly the inspired counsel of the prophets on marriage, we may want to reorient our thinking. All the prophets in recent years have made powerful statements affirming that all who have the opportunity should work to attain eternal marriage and develop an eternal family unit.

Nevertheless, Satan will seek to have us do otherwise, and enticing voices will speak to us of worldly achievements and acquisitions that may lead us on dangerous detours from which we can return only with great effort. Small, seemingly insignificant choices along the way will have large consequences that will determine our eventual destiny.

My wife and I made an important choice early in our marriage when I was struggling as a first-year law student and she was overwhelmed by her first teaching position. We rarely met in all our individual comings and goings, and our relationship with each other was suffering noticeably.

Even Sundays were burdensome as we tried to fulfill our Church callings and catch up on studies and school preparation. Finally, we sat down one evening and decided that if our marriage was a very important part of our lives, we had better start acting like it. We agreed to completely honor the Sabbath by refraining from all work, including our studies, and to devote ourselves to building a stronger marriage. We experienced an immediate surge in our feelings toward each other and noticeable improvement in other areas, including my grades and Kathy's teaching. Twenty-six years later, we are still faced with many similar choices and issues. I hope and pray that we are resolving them in favor of the things that matter most.

Perfection Is Gradual

The Savior attained perfection by the following process: "He received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness" (D&C 93:13).

A recognition that the Savior's perfection came gradually is comforting to two imperfect beings who are trying to make their marriage perfect. In my own case, I recently ventured to ask my wife a very risky question: "How am I doing?"

I was encouraged by her reply: "Well, I think you are nicer than you used to be."

I believe that those of you who are walking around with a checklist of desirable fully perfected attributes in a prospective companion may come off empty-handed. Most of those attributes will be only in embryo when you are courting and will take most of a lifetime to perfect.

Commitment

Another gospel principle that significantly contributes to development of an eternal marriage is absolute commitment to our companions, as described by this scripture: "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22).

Obviously, this also means that "Thou shalt love thy husband with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto him and none else." None of us knows when we marry what life will bring in terms of health challenges, financial setbacks, or even transgressions. Giving ourselves to one another in an eternal marriage is an unconditional giving of the whole person for the whole journey.

Recently, I visited with a widower as he stood bravely at the side of his wife's casket, surrounded by several handsome and stalwart sons. This man and his wife had been married for fifty-three years, during the last six of which she had been seriously ill with a terminal kidney disease. He had provided the 24-hour care she required until his own health was in jeopardy. I expressed my admiration for him and the great love and care he had given his wife. I felt compelled to ask, "How did you do it?"

It was easy, he replied, when he remembered that fifty-three years earlier, he had knelt at an altar in the temple and made a covenant with the Lord and with his bride. "I wanted to keep it," he said.

In an eternal marriage, the thought of ending what began with a covenant between God and each other simply has little place. When challenges come and our individual weaknesses are revealed, the remedy is to repent, improve, and apologize, not to separate or divorce. When we make covenants with the Lord and our eternal companion, we should do everything in our power to honor the terms.

Loving Kindness

A final gospel truth that will contribute to our understanding of and hence the quality of our marriages relates to the degree in which we involve the Savior in our relationships as husbands and wives. As designed by our Heavenly Father, marriage consists of our first entering into a covenant relationship with Christ and then with each other. He and his teachings must be the focal point of our togetherness. As we become more like him and grow closer to him, we will naturally become more loving and grow closer to each other.

I have personally felt the mellowing influence of Christ's example and teachings in my own marriage. I can vividly recall how easy it was to be accusing and judgmental and to find fault in the early years of my marriage. When I came home in the evenings having set the whole world in order, I would often wonder why Kathy in overseeing our young children was struggling with her few square feet in the kitchen. Then one day a wise teacher shared with me Nephi's touching description of the Savior:

"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" (1 Ne. 19:9).

I suppose "loving kindness" is a synonym for charity, or the pure love of Christ. I know that it is an absolutely essential ingredient in an eternal marriage and that romantic love cannot be separated from it or flourish without it. Loving kindness is a common thread in all the exceptional marriages with which

I am acquainted, and it is the remedy for almost all marital problems.

I have only begun to scratch the surface of my topic; I have only hinted at discussing sacrifice, forgiveness, agency, and children, all of which are vital elements in a successful eternal marriage. I could never hope to do justice to doctrines and truths which, if followed, will enable us as husbands and wives to "pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to [our] exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon [our] heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever" (D&C 132:19).

If we will strive to love with understanding, the Spirit will teach us "all things what [we] should do" (2 Ne. 32:5) to achieve an eternal marriage pleasing to the Lord. Under the influence of the Spirit, our sympathy and love for our eternal companions will deepen, and we will come to know a happiness and contentment in marriage that the world will never know.

No matter what our backgrounds or the quality of marriage our grandparents or parents enjoyed, we can in time and with the Lord's help achieve the ideal. If our heritage includes a spiritually strong family with healthy marriages and close relationships, we will be able to build and even improve on the foundation that has been laid. If our heritage is not as strong, we can resolve that our children will receive a richer legacy.

Above all, I hope that we will vow never to be satisfied with a mediocre marriage. Not long ago a friend told me that one of his young children had asked, "Do you think Grandpa ever kisses Grandma?" I certainly hope my wife and I are sufficiently in love and demonstrative about it that our grandchildren will not have to wonder. We can never afford to let our relationships become merely mutual toleration or accommodation.

Eternal marriage is godlike marriage. The term *eternal* describes the quality of marriage as much as its duration.

MARRIAGE FOR ETERNITY

The ultimate purpose of all we teach is to unite parents and children in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage.

—President Boyd K. Packer

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Eternal Increase

First Presidency—Heber J. Grant, Anthony W. Ivins, Charles W. Nibley

“Man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes, and even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so that undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God” (in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:244).

Elder Melvin J. Ballard

“What do we mean by endless or eternal increase? We mean that through the righteousness and faithfulness of men and women who keep the commandments of God they will come forth with celestial bodies, fitted and prepared to enter into their great, high and eternal glory in the celestial kingdom of God; and unto them through their preparation, there will come spirit children. I don’t think that is very difficult to comprehend. The nature of the offspring is determined by the nature of the substance that flows in the veins of the being. When blood flows in the veins of the being the offspring will be what blood produces, which is tangle flesh and bone; but when that which flows in the veins is spirit matter, a substance which is more refined and pure and glorious than blood, the offspring of such beings will be spirit children. By that I mean

they will be in the image of the parents. They will have a spirit body and have a spark of the eternal or divine that always did exist in them” (*Melvin J. Ballard—Crusader for Righteousness*, 211).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“Mortal persons who overcome all things and gain an ultimate exaltation will live eternally in the family unit and have spirit children, thus becoming Eternal Fathers and Eternal Mothers. (D&C 132:19–32.) Indeed, the formal pronouncement of the Church, issued by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve, states: ‘So far as the stages of eternal progression and attainment have been made known through divine revelation, we are to understand that *only resurrected and glorified beings can become parents of spirit offspring.*’ (*Man: His Origin and Destiny*, p. 129.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 517).

The New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage

President Brigham Young

“We understand that we are to be made kings and priests unto God; now if I be made the king and lawgiver to my family, and if I have many sons, I shall become the father of many fathers, for they will have sons, and their sons will have sons, and so on, from generation to generation, and, in this way, I may become the father of many fathers, or the king of many kings. This will constitute every man a prince, king, lord, or whatever the Father sees fit to confer upon us.

“In this way we can become king of kings, and lord of lords, or father of fathers, or prince of princes, and this is the only course, for another man is not going to raise up a kingdom for you” (in *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 195).

“The whole subject of the marriage relation is not in my reach, nor in any other man’s reach on this earth. It is without beginning of days or end of years; it is a hard matter to reach. We can tell some things with regard to it; it lays the foundation for worlds, for angels, and for the Gods; for intelligent beings to be crowned with glory, immortality, and eternal lives. In fact, it is the thread which runs from the beginning to the end of the holy Gospel of Salvation—of the Gospel of the Son of God; it is from eternity to eternity” (in *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 195).

President Boyd K. Packer

“The ultimate purpose of all we teach is to unite parents and children in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage, linked to their generations, and assured of exaltation in the presence of our Heavenly Father” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 8).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“If righteous men have power through the gospel and its crowning ordinance of celestial marriage to become kings and priests to rule in exaltation forever, it follows that the women by their side (without whom they cannot attain exaltation) will be queens and priestesses. (Rev. 1:6; 5:10.) Exaltation grows out of the eternal union of a man and his wife. Of those whose marriage endures in eternity, the Lord says, ‘Then shall *they* be gods’ (D&C 132:20); that is, each of them, the man and the woman, will be a god. As such they will rule over their dominions forever” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 613).

“Marriages performed in the temples for time and eternity, by virtue of the sealing keys restored by Elijah, are called *celestial marriages*. The participating parties become husband and wife in this mortal life, and if after their marriage they keep all the terms and conditions of this order of the priesthood, they continue on as husband and wife in the celestial kingdom of God.

“If the family unit continues, then by virtue of that fact the members of the family have gained eternal life (exaltation), the greatest of all the gifts of God, for by definition exaltation consists in the continuation of the family unit in eternity. Those so inheriting are the sons and daughters of God, the members of his family, those who have made their callings and elections sure. They are joint-heirs with Christ to all that the Father hath, and they receive the fulness of the glory of the Father, becoming gods in their own right. (D&C 132; *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, pp. 58–99.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 117).

Those Who Do Not Marry**President Lorenzo Snow**

“There is no Latter-day Saint who dies after having lived a faithful life who will lose anything because of having failed to do certain things when opportunities

were not furnished him or her. In other words, if a young man or a young woman has no opportunity of getting married, and they live faithful lives up to the time of their death, they will have all the blessings, exaltation, and glory that any man or woman will have who had this opportunity and improved it. That is sure and positive” (*Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, 138).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“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” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 33; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 27).

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

President Spencer W. Kimball

President of the Church

*In 1976 Devotional
Speeches of the Year,
142–55*

I have warned the youth of Zion against the sins and vices so prevalent in our society—those of sexual impurity and all of its many ugly approaches. I have spoken of immodesty in dress and actions as one of the softening processes of Lucifer. I hereby express appreciation to the many who have carefully responded to those exhortations and rewarn those who have ignored them.

I spoke plainly, warning youth of the pitfalls of petting and of all the other perversions into which young men and women sometimes fall. I have endeavored, also, to give hope to those who might have stepped over the bounds of propriety, and I outlined to them the path by which total repentance might bring them to forgiveness.

I have warned the youth against the many hazards of interfaith marriage, and with all the power I possessed, I warned young people to avoid the sorrows and disillusionments which come from

marrying out of the Church and the unhappy situations which almost invariably result when a believer marries an unbelieving spouse. I have pointed out the demands of the Church upon its members in time, energy, and funds; the deepness of the spiritual ties which tighten after marriage and as the family comes; the antagonisms that naturally follow such mismatching; the fact that these and many other reasons argue eloquently for marriage within the Church, where husband and wife have common backgrounds, common ideals and standards, common beliefs, hopes, and objectives, and, above all, where marriage may be eternalized through righteous entry into the holy temple.

Today, it is my hope to follow with a discussion of family life. This topic is not new nor is it spectacular, but it is vital. Marriage is relevant in every life, and family life is the basis of our existence.

Marital Happiness and Unhappiness

The ugly dragon of divorce has entered into our social life. Little known to our grandparents and not even common among our parents, this cancer has come to be so common in our own day that nearly every family has been cursed by its destructive machinations. This is one of the principal tools of Satan to destroy faith, through breaking up happy homes and bringing frustration of life and distortion of thought.

Honorable, happy, and successful marriage is surely the principal goal of every normal person. One who would purposely or neglectfully avoid its serious implications is not only not normal but is frustrating his own program. There are a few people who marry for spite or marry for wealth or marry on the rebound after having been jilted. How distorted is the thinking of such an one!

Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all the decisions and has the most far-reaching effects, for it has to do not only with immediate happiness, but also with eternal joys. It affects not only the two people involved, but their families and particularly their children and their children's children down through the many generations.

It is absolutely appalling, the number of children today who are growing up in our society who do not have two parents, a father and a mother, and neither one is totally sufficient, if two could be had.

In selecting a companion for life and for eternity, certainly the most careful planning and thinking and praying and fasting should be done to be sure that, of all the decisions, this one must not be wrong. In true marriage there must be a union of minds as well as of hearts. Emotions must not wholly determine decisions, but the mind and the heart, strengthened by fasting and prayer and serious consideration, will give one a maximum chance of marital happiness.

Marriage is not easy; it is not simple, as evidenced by the ever-mounting divorce rate. Exact figures astound us. The following ones come from Salt Lake County [prior to 1976], which are probably somewhere near average. There were 832 marriages in a single month, and there were 414 divorces. That is half as many divorces as marriages. There were 364 temple marriages, and of the temple marriages about 10 percent were dissolved by divorce. This is substantially better than the average, but we are chagrined that there should be any divorce following a temple marriage.

We are grateful that this one survey reveals that about 90 percent of the temple marriages hold fast. Because of this, we recommend that people marry those who are of the same racial background generally, and of somewhat the same economic and social and educational background (some of those are not an absolute necessity, but preferred), and above all, the same religious background, without question. In spite of the most favorable matings, the evil one still takes a monumental toll and is the cause for many broken homes and frustrated lives.

With all conditions as nearly ideal as possible, there are still people who terminate their marriages for the reason of "incompatibility." We see so many shows and read so much fiction and come in contact with so many society scandals that the people in general come to think of "marrying and giving in marriage," divorcing and remarrying, as the normal patterns.

The divorce itself does not constitute the entire evil, but the very acceptance of divorce as a cure is also a serious sin of this generation. Because a program or a pattern is universally accepted is not evidence that it is right. Marriage never was easy. It may never be. It brings with it sacrifice, sharing, and a demand for great selflessness.

Many of the TV screen shows and stories of fiction end with marriage: "They lived happily ever after."

Since nearly all of us have experienced divorce among our close friends or relatives, we have come to realize that divorce is not a cure for difficulty, but is merely an escape, and a weak one. We have come to realize also that the mere performance of a ceremony does not bring happiness and a successful marriage. Happiness does not come by pressing a button, as does the electric light; happiness is a state of mind and comes from within. It must be earned. It cannot be purchased with money; it cannot be taken for nothing.

Some think of happiness as a glamorous life of ease, luxury, and constant thrills; but true marriage is based on a happiness which is more than that, one which comes from giving, serving, sharing, sacrificing, and selflessness.

Two people coming from different backgrounds soon learn after the ceremony is performed that stark reality must be faced. There is no longer a life of fantasy or of make-believe; we must come out of the clouds and put our feet firmly on the earth. Responsibility must be assumed and new duties must be accepted. Some personal freedoms must be relinquished and many adjustments, unselfish adjustments, must be made.

One comes to realize very soon after the marriage that the spouse has weaknesses not previously revealed or discovered. The virtues which were constantly magnified during courtship now grow relatively smaller, and the weaknesses which seemed so small and insignificant during courtship now grow to sizable proportions. The hour has come for understanding hearts, for self-appraisal, and for good common sense, reasoning, and planning. The habits of years now show themselves; the spouse may be stingy or prodigal, lazy or industrious, devout or irreligious, may be kind and cooperative or petulant and cross, demanding or giving, egotistical or self-effacing. The in-law problem comes closer into focus, and the relationships of the spouses to them is again magnified.

Often there is an unwillingness to settle down and to assume the heavy responsibilities that immediately are there. Economy is reluctant to replace lavish living, and the young people seem often too eager "to keep up with the Joneses." There is often an unwillingness to make the financial adjustments necessary. Young wives are often demanding that all the luxuries formerly enjoyed in the prosperous homes of their successful fathers be continued in

their own homes. Some of them are quite willing to help earn that lavish living by continuing employment after marriage. They consequently leave the home, where their duty lies, to pursue professional or business pursuits, thus establishing an economy that becomes stabilized so that it becomes very difficult to yield toward the normal family life. Through both spouses working, competition rather than cooperation enters the family. Two weary workers return home with taut nerves, individual pride, increased independence, and then misunderstandings arise. Little frictions pyramid into monumental ones. Frequently, spouses sinfully return to new and old romances, and finally the seemingly inevitable break comes with a divorce, with its heartaches, bitterness, disillusionments, and always scars.

While marriage is difficult, and discordant and frustrated marriages are common, yet real, lasting happiness is possible, and marriage can be more an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive. This is within the reach of every couple, every person. "Soul mates" are fiction and an illusion; and while every young man and young woman will seek with all diligence and prayerfulness to find a mate with whom life can be most compatible and beautiful, yet it is certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage if both are willing to pay the price.

There is a never-failing formula which will guarantee to every couple a happy and eternal marriage; but like all formulas, the principal ingredients must not be left out, reduced, or limited. The selection before courting and then the continued courting after the marriage process are equally important, but not more important than the marriage itself, the success of which depends upon the two individuals—not upon one, but upon two.

In a marriage commenced and based upon reasonable standards as already mentioned, there are no combinations of power which can destroy it except the power within either or both of the spouses themselves; and they must assume the responsibility generally. Other people and agencies may influence for good or bad. Financial, social, political, and other situations may seem to have a bearing; but the marriage depends first and always on the two spouses who can always make their marriage successful and happy if they are determined, unselfish, and righteous.

The formula is simple; the ingredients are few, though there are many amplifications of each.

First, there must be the proper approach toward marriage, which contemplates the selection of a spouse who reaches as nearly as possible the pinnacle of perfection in all the matters which are of importance to the individuals. And then those two parties must come to the altar in the temple realizing that they must work hard toward this successful joint living.

Second, there must be a great unselfishness, forgetting self and directing all of the family life and all pertaining thereunto to the good of the family, subjugating self.

Third, there must be continued courting and expressions of affection, kindness, and consideration to keep love alive and growing.

Fourth, there must be a complete living of the commandments of the Lord as defined in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

With these ingredients properly mixed and continually kept functioning, it is quite impossible for unhappiness to come, misunderstandings to continue, or breaks to occur. Divorce attorneys would need to transfer to other fields and divorce courts would be padlocked.

Unselfishness in Marriage

Two individuals approaching the marriage altar must realize that to attain the happy marriage which they hope for, they must know that marriage is not a legal coverall; but it 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.

Before marriage, each individual is quite free to go and come as he pleases, to organize and plan his life as it seems best, to make all decisions with self as the central point. Sweethearts should realize before they take the vows that each must accept literally and fully that the good of the little new family must always be superior to the good of either spouse. Each party must eliminate the "I" and the "my" and substitute therefore "we" and "our." Every decision must take into consideration that there are two or more affected by it. As she approaches major

decisions now, the wife will be concerned as to the effect they will have upon the parents, the children, the home, and their spiritual lives. His choice of occupation, his social life, his friends, his every interest must now be considered in the light that he is only a part of a family, that the totalness of the group must be considered.

Every divorce is the result of selfishness on the part of one or the other or both parties to a marriage contract. Someone is thinking of self—comforts, conveniences, freedoms, luxuries, or ease. Sometimes the ceaseless pinpricking of an unhappy, discontented, and selfish spouse can finally add up to serious physical violence. Sometimes people are goaded to the point where they erringly feel justified in doing the things which are so wrong. Nothing, of course, justifies sin.

Sometimes a wife or a husband feels neglected, mistreated, and ignored until he or she wrongly feels justified in adding to the errors. If each spouse submits to frequent self-analysis and measures his own imperfections by the yardstick of perfection and the Golden Rule, and if each spouse sets about to correct self in every deviation found by such analysis rather than to set about to correct the deviations in the other party, then transformation comes and happiness is the result. There are many pharisaic people who marry who should memorize the parable of the Savior in Luke—people who prate their own virtues and pile up their own qualities of goodness and put them on the scales against the weaknesses of the spouse. They say, "I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all I possess" (see Luke 18:12).

For every friction, there is a cause; and whenever there is unhappiness, each should search self to find the cause or at least that portion of the cause which originated in that self.

A marriage may not always be even and incidentless, but it can be one of great peace. A couple may have poverty, illness, disappointment, failures, and even death in the family, but even these will not rob them of their peace. The marriage can be a successful one so long as selfishness does not enter in. Troubles and problems will draw parents together into unbreakable unions if there is total unselfishness there. During the depression of the 1930s there was a definite drop in divorce. Poverty, failures, disappointment—they tied parents together. Adversity can cement relationships which prosperity can destroy.

The marriage that is based upon selfishness is almost certain to fail. The one who marries for wealth or the one who marries for prestige or social plane is certain to be disappointed. The one who marries to satisfy vanity and pride or who marries to spite or to show up another person is fooling only himself. But the one who marries to give happiness as well as receive it, to give service as well as to receive it, and who looks after the interests of the two and then the family as it comes will have a good chance that the marriage will be a happy one.

Many people there are, though, who do not find divorce attorneys and who do not end their marriages, but who have permitted their marriages to grow stale and weak and cheap. There are spouses who have fallen from the throne of adoration and worship and are in the low state of mere joint occupancy of the home, joint sitters at the table, joint possessors of certain things which cannot be easily divided. These people are on the path that leads to trouble. These people will do well to reevaluate, to renew their courting, to express their affection, to acknowledge kindnesses, and to increase their consideration so their marriage again can become beautiful, sweet, and growing.

Love is like a flower, and, like the body, it needs constant feeding. The mortal body would soon be emaciated and die if there were not frequent feedings. The tender flower would wither and die without food and water. And so love, also, cannot be expected to last forever unless it is continually fed with portions of love, the manifestation of esteem and admiration, the expressions of gratitude, and the consideration of unselfishness.

Total unselfishness is sure to accomplish another factor in successful marriage. If one is forever seeking the interests, comforts, and happiness of the other, the love found in courtship and cemented in marriage will grow into mighty proportions. Many couples permit their marriages to become stale and their love to grow cold like old bread or worn-out jokes or cold gravy. Certainly the foods most vital for love are consideration, kindness, thoughtfulness, concern, expressions of affection, embraces of appreciation, admiration, pride, companionship, confidence, faith, partnership, equality, and dependence.

Love is like a flower, and, like the body, it needs constant feeding.

To be really happy in marriage, one must have a continued faithful observance of the commandments of the Lord. No one, single or married, was ever sublimely happy unless he was righteous. There are temporary satisfactions and camouflaged situations for the moment, but permanent, total happiness can come only through cleanliness and worthiness. One who has a pattern of religious life with deep religious convictions can never be happy in an inactive life. The conscience will continue to afflict, unless it has been seared, in which case the marriage is already in jeopardy. A stinging conscience can make life most unbearable. Inactivity is destructive to marriage, especially where the parties are inactive in varying degrees.

Religious differences are the most trying and among the most unsolvable of all differences.

Divinity of Marriage Institution

Marriage is ordained of God. It is not merely a social custom. Without proper and successful marriage, one will never be exalted. Read the words of your Lord, that it is right and proper to be married.

That being true, the thoughtful and intelligent Latter-day Saint will plan carefully his life to be sure there are no impediments placed in the way. To make one serious mistake, one may place in the way obstacles which may never be removed and which may block the way to eternal life and godhood—our ultimate destiny. If two people love the Lord more than their own lives and then love each other more than their own lives, working together in total harmony with the gospel program as their basic structure, they are sure to have this

great happiness. When a husband and wife go together frequently to the holy temple, kneel in prayer together in their home with their family, go hand in hand to their religious meetings, keep their lives wholly chaste, mentally and physically, so that their whole thoughts and desires and loves are all centered in the one being, their companion, and both work together for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, then happiness is at its pinnacle.

Sometimes in marriage there are other cleavings, in spite of the fact that the Lord said:

“Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.” [D&C 42:22]

This means just as completely that “thou shalt love thy *husband* with all thy heart and shall cleave unto *him* and none else.” Frequently, people continue to cleave unto their mothers and their fathers and their chums. Sometimes mothers will not relinquish the hold they have had upon their children; and husbands as well as wives return to their mothers and fathers to obtain advice and counsel and to confide, whereas cleaving should be to the wife in most things, and all intimacies should be kept in great secrecy and privacy from others.

Couples do well to immediately find their own home, separate and apart from that of the in-laws on either side. The home may be very modest and unpretentious, but still it is an independent domicile. Your married life should become independent of her folks and his folks. You love them more than ever; you cherish their counsel; you appreciate their association; but you live your own lives, being governed by your decisions, by your own prayerful considerations after you have received the counsel from those who should give it. To cleave does not mean merely to occupy the same home; it means to adhere closely, to stick together:

“Wherefore, it is lawful that . . . they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation;

“And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made.” [D&C 49:16–17]

Our own record is not pleasing. Of 31,037 marriages, our records say only 14,169 were in the temple for eternity. This is 46 percent. There were 7,556 members married out of the Church. This is terribly disturbing to us. This is 24 percent, which means that about 9,000, or 30 percent, apparently thought so little of themselves and their posterity, they married out of the temple, which could give them a key to eternal life. Is it possible they do not know, or do they not care?

Of course, most such people who marry out of the Church and temple do not weigh the matter. The survey I mentioned disclosed the fact that only about one out of seven nonmember spouses would be converted and baptized into the Church. This is a great loss. It means that in many cases there is not only a loss of the unbaptized spouse, but also of the children and even sometimes the other spouse.

We love those few who join the Church after marriage. We praise them and honor them, but the odds are against us. According to the figures given

above, this means that nearly 6,500 of the new marriages may never find both parties finally joining the Church to make the family totally united. This grieves us very much. The total program of the Lord for the family cannot be enjoyed fully if the people are unequally yoked in marriage.

We call upon all youth to make such a serious, strong resolution to have a temple marriage that their determination will provide for them the rich promises of eternal marriage with its accompanying joys and happiness. This would please the Lord, who counts on you so heavily. He has said that eternal life can be had only in the way he has planned it.

May I quote a word or two from the scriptures before closing.

“And a white stone is given to each of those who come into the celestial kingdom, whereon is a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. The new name is the key word.” [D&C 130:11]

It is the *normal* thing to marry. It was arranged by God in the beginning. One is not wholly normal who does not want to be married. Remember:

“Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.” [1 Corinthians 11:11]

No one can reject this covenant (of celestial marriage) and reach the eternal kingdom of God. This is certain.

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

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

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

“He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom.” [D&C 131:1–4]

“For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned.” [D&C 132:4]

And *damned* means stopped in progress.

These are the words of the Lord. They were said directly to us. There is no question about them.

“And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law. . . .

“Therefore, when they are out of the world [after they have died] 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.

“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.” [D&C 132:6, 16–17]

And one closing thought:

“Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment, by my word, saith the Lord, and hath entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne. . . .

“Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved.” [D&C 132:29, 32]

Brothers and sisters, may I say, this is the word of the Lord. It is very, very serious, and there is nobody who should argue with the Lord. He made the earth; he made the people. He knows the conditions. He set the program, and we are not intelligent enough or smart enough to be able to argue him out of these important things. He knows what is right and true.

We ask you to think of these things. All of you students, be sure that your marriage is right. Be sure that your life is right. Be sure that your part of the marriage is carried forward properly.

Now I ask the Lord to bless you. These things worry us considerably because there are too many divorces and they are increasing. It has come to be a common thing to talk about divorce. The minute there is a little crisis or a little argument in the family, we talk about divorce, and we rush and see an attorney. This is not the way of the Lord. We should go back and adjust our problems and make our marriage compatible and sweet and blessed.

I pray the Lord will bless each one who faces decisions before marriage and after marriage. I ask his blessings upon each one of you and give you my testimony that this Church is true and divine, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

WHAT GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER



President Gordon B. Hinckley

*First Counselor
in the First Presidency*

*In Conference Report,
Apr. 1991, 93–98;
or Ensign, May 1991,
71–74*

Granddaughters' Wedding Ceremonies

Ten days ago, I had a beautiful and touching experience in the Salt Lake Temple, the building immediately to the east of this tabernacle. There in that holy sanctuary I had the privilege of sealing in marriage, in two separate but consecutive ceremonies, two beautiful young women who are twins, each to a handsome and able young man of her choice. That evening a double wedding reception was held where hundreds of friends came to express their love and good wishes.

Mothers often shed tears at a wedding ceremony. Sisters also, and sometimes fathers. Seldom do grandparents show any emotion. But these beautiful girls were my own granddaughters, and I must confess that this old grandfather choked up and had a difficult time. I don't understand why. Certainly it was a happy occasion, a fulfillment of dreams and prayers. Perhaps my tears were really an expression of joy and of gratitude to God for these lovely brides and their handsome young husbands. In sacred promises, they pledged their love and loyalty one to another for time and all eternity.

Marriage Is Ordained of God

How wonderful a thing is marriage under the plan of our Eternal Father, a plan provided in His divine wisdom for the happiness and security of His children and the continuity of the race.

He is our Creator, and He designed marriage from the beginning. At the time of Eve's creation, “Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: . . .

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:23–24).

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Saints, “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11).

In modern revelation the Lord has said, “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” (D&C 49:15).

President Joseph F. Smith once declared “that no man can be saved and exalted in the kingdom of God without the woman, and no woman can reach perfection and exaltation in the kingdom of God, alone. . . . God instituted marriage in the beginning. He made man in His own image and likeness, male and female, and in their creation it was designed that they should be united together in sacred bonds of marriage, and one is not perfect without the other” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1913, p. 118).

Surely no one reading the scriptures, both ancient and modern, can doubt the divine concept of marriage. The sweetest feelings of life, the most generous and satisfying impulses of the human heart, find expression in a marriage that stands pure and unsullied above the evil of the world.

Such a marriage, I believe, is the desire—the hoped-for, the longed-for, the prayed-for desire—of men and women everywhere.

Single Brethren and Sisters

While riding a plane some time ago, I picked up a copy of the *New York Magazine*. As I thumbed through it, I came to a section titled “Strictly Personals.” I counted 159 advertisements placed by lonely men and women seeking partners. It was evident that those who had placed the ads had labored to cast themselves in the best light possible. I wish I had time to read some of them to you. You would enjoy them. There was nothing of an unseemly nature. It was easy to sense that behind these witty and clever descriptions was much of sadness and loneliness, a great desire to find an amiable companion with whom to walk the road of life.

My heart reaches out to those among us, especially our single sisters, who long for marriage and cannot seem to find it. Our Father in Heaven reserves for them every promised blessing. I have far less sympathy for the young men, who under the customs of our society have the prerogative to take the initiative in these matters but in so many cases fail to do so. Strong words have been spoken to them in the past by Presidents of this church.

Marital Bliss

Marriage usually means children and family. Can a young mother, having given birth to her first child, doubt the divinity and the wonder and the miracle of it all? Can a young father, looking upon his newborn son or daughter, sense other than that this is a part of the design of the Almighty?

Of course, all in marriage is not bliss. Years ago I clipped these words from a column written by Jenkins Lloyd Jones:

“There seems to be a superstition among many thousands of our young who hold hands and smooch in the drive-ins that marriage is a cottage surrounded by perpetual hollyhocks to which a perpetually young and handsome husband comes home to a perpetually young and ravishing wife. When the hollyhocks wither and boredom and bills appear the divorce courts are jammed. . . .

“Anyone who imagines that bliss is normal is going to waste a lot of time running around shouting that he has been robbed” (“Big Rock Candy Mountains,” *Deseret News*, 12 June 1973, p. A4).

Pain Is Part of the Process

Stormy weather occasionally hits every household. Connected inevitably with the whole process is much of pain—physical, mental, and emotional. There is much of stress and struggle, of fear and worry. For most, there is the ever-haunting battle of economics. There seems never to be enough money to cover the needs of a family. Sickness strikes periodically. Accidents happen. The hand of death may reach in with dread stealth to take a precious one.

But all of this seems to be part of the processes of family life. Few indeed are those who get along without experiencing some of it. It has been so from the beginning. Cain quarreled with Abel and then did a terrible thing. How great must have been the grief in the hearts of their parents, Adam and Eve.

Love for Rebellious Children

Absalom was the third son of David, a son favored and loved. David had given him a name which meant “father of peace.” But he brought not peace—rather, anger and ambition and sorrow. He killed his brother and conspired against his father. In the midst of his evil actions, in his wicked pursuit for his father’s throne, while Absalom rode a mule, his head caught in the branches of an oak tree, and

he was left hanging helpless. Joab, nephew of David and captain of the king's army, seizing the opportunity to get rid of this rebellious and traitorous son, pierced his heart with darts. He apparently felt he was doing a favor to the king.

But when David heard of his son's death, even though that son had conspired to destroy him, "the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! . . . [And] the king covered his face, and . . . cried" (2 Samuel 18:33; 19:4).

Through the history of the generations of man, the actions of rebellious children have been laden with sorrow and heartbreak, but even when there has been rebellion, the strong cords of family life have reached out to encircle the rebellious one.

I know of no more beautiful story in all of literature than that told by the Master as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. It is the story of a heady and greedy son who demanded his inheritance, which he wasted until none was left. Penitent, he returned to his father, and his father, seeing him afar off, ran to him and embraced him and fell upon his neck and kissed him.

The Great Scourge of Divorce

Some of you within the sound of my voice could recount family sorrows in your own experience. But among the greatest of tragedies, and I think the most common, is divorce. It has become as a great scourge. The most recent issue of the *World Almanac* says that in the United States during the twelve months ending with March 1990, an estimated 2,423,000 couples married. During this same period, an estimated 1,177,000 couples divorced. (See *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1991* [New York: World Almanac, 1990], p. 834.)

This means that in the United States almost one divorce occurred for every two marriages.

Those are only figures written on the pages of a book. But behind them lies more of betrayal, more of sorrow, more of neglect and poverty and struggle than the human mind can imagine. Millions of those divorced in this nation are lonely, frustrated, insecure, and unhappy. Millions of single parents are struggling to rear families, carrying burdens beyond their capacity to handle. Millions of children

are growing up in single-parent homes from which the parent, usually the mother, out of necessity is absent much of the time. These "latch-key children" return from school each day to empty houses, where, in many cases, there is inadequate food and only the refuge of the television set. Not only are the children suffering, but all of society is paying a frightful price for their circumstances. As they grow older, the incidence of drugs increases among them. Vast numbers turn to criminal behavior. Inadequately trained, many are unemployed. Some aimlessly squander their lives. Millions have become the "flotsam and jetsam" of society, washed upon the shore by oceans of neglect, abuse, and frustration, helpless to correct their circumstances. *Time* magazine, discussing the problems of New York City, stated that the most serious is the breakdown of the family. Sixty percent of those in New York City public schools, totalling some 600,000, come from one-parent homes. Comparable studies would doubtless bring forth similar statistics for other large cities in America and most of the large cities of the world.

We are building and maintaining more prisons than we can afford. The costs are enormous, almost beyond comprehension.

In an alarming percentage of the cases of those who are warehoused in these facilities, there will be found in their background a broken home where a father abandoned his family and a mother struggled in vain to handle the overpowering odds against her.

Selfishness a Major Cause of Divorce

Why all of these broken homes? What happens to marriages that begin with sincere love and a desire to be loyal and faithful and true one to another?

There is no simple answer. I acknowledge that. But it appears to me that there are some obvious reasons that account for a very high percentage of these problems. I say this out of experience in dealing with such tragedies. I find selfishness to be the root cause of most of it.

I am satisfied that a happy marriage is not so much a matter of romance as it is an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one's companion.

Selfishness so often is the basis of money problems, which are a very serious and real factor affecting the stability of family life. Selfishness is at the root of adultery, the breaking of solemn and sacred covenants to satisfy selfish lust. Selfishness is the

antithesis of love. It is a cankering expression of greed. It destroys self-discipline. It obliterates loyalty. It tears up sacred covenants. It afflicts both men and women.

Too many who come to marriage have been coddled and spoiled and somehow led to feel that everything must be precisely right at all times, that life is a series of entertainments, that appetites are to be satisfied without regard to principle. How tragic the consequences of such hollow and unreasonable thinking!

A Burdened Single Mother

Bitter consequences are seen in the lives of children who need but do not have a father who loves them, teaches them, protects them, and leads them along the path of life by example and precept. Let me recount for you something I heard about two years ago in this tabernacle. The occasion was a great gathering of single men and women. Elder Marion D. Hanks conducted a panel discussion. Included in that panel was an attractive and able young woman, divorced, the mother of seven children then ranging in ages from five to sixteen. She said that one evening she went across the street to deliver something to a neighbor. Listen to her words as I recall them: "As I turned around to walk back home, I could see my house lighted up. I could hear echoes of my children as I had walked out of the door a few minutes earlier: 'Mom, what are we going to have for dinner?' 'Can you take me to the library?' 'I have to get some poster paper tonight.' Tired and weary, I looked at that house and saw the light on in each of the rooms. I thought of all of those children who were home waiting for me to come and meet their needs. My burdens felt very heavy on my shoulders.

"I remember looking through tears toward the sky, and I said, 'O my Father, I just can't do it tonight. I'm too tired. I can't face it. I can't go home and take care of all those children alone. Could I just come to You and stay with You for just one night? I'll come back in the morning.'

"I didn't really hear the words of reply, but I heard them in my mind. The answer was, 'No, little one, you can't come to me now. You would never wish to come back. But I can come to you.'"

There are so many, so very, very many like that young mother. She recognizes a divine power available to her. She is fortunate enough to have some around to love her and help her, but very many do not have

such help. In loneliness and desperation, watching their children drift toward drugs and crime and helpless to stop that drift, they weep and pray.

The Golden Rule Is the Remedy

There is a remedy for all of this. It is not found in divorce. It is found in the gospel of the Son of God. He it was who said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). The remedy for most marriage stress is not in divorce. It is in repentance. It is not in separation. It is in simple integrity that leads a man to square up his shoulders and meet his obligations. It is found in the Golden Rule.

Marriage is beautiful when beauty is looked for and cultivated. It can be ugly and uncomfortable when one is looking for faults and is blinded to virtue. As Edgar A. Guest once remarked, "It takes a heap o' livin' in a house t' make it home" ("Home," in *Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest* [Chicago: Reilly and Lee Co., 1934], p. 12). That is true. I can show you throughout this church hundreds of thousands of families who make it work with love and peace, discipline and honesty, concern and unselfishness.

There must be recognition on the part of both husband and wife of the solemnity and sanctity of marriage and of the God-given design behind it.

There must be a willingness to overlook small faults, to forgive, and then to forget.

There must be a holding of one's tongue. Temper is a vicious and corrosive thing that destroys affection and casts out love.

There must be self-discipline that constrains against abuse of wife and children and self. There must be the Spirit of God, invited and worked for, nurtured and strengthened. There must be recognition of the fact that each is a child of God—father, mother, son, and daughter, each with a divine birthright—and also recognition of the fact that when we offend one of these, we offend our Father in Heaven.

Resist Satan's Entreaties

There may be now and again a legitimate cause for divorce. I am not one to say that it is never justified. But I say without hesitation that this plague among us, which seems to be growing everywhere, is not of God, but rather is the work of the adversary of righteousness and peace and truth.

(Due to time constraints, the remainder of this talk was not given from the pulpit. President Hinckley has asked that it be included in the Conference Report.)

You need not be his victims. You can rise above his wiles and entreaties. Get rid of the titillating entertainment, the pornography that leads to evil desires and reprehensible activity. Wives, look upon your husbands as your precious companions and live worthy of that association. Husbands, see in your wives your most valued asset in time or eternity, each a daughter of God, a partner with whom you can walk hand in hand, through sunshine and storm, through all the perils and triumphs of life. Parents, see in your children sons and daughters of your Father in Heaven, who will hold you accountable for them. Stand together as their guardians, their protectors, their guides, their anchors.

God Is the Designer of the Family

The strength of the nations lies in the homes of the people. God is the designer of the family. He intended that the greatest of happiness, the most satisfying aspects of life, the deepest joys should come in our associations together and our concerns one for another as fathers and mothers and children.

God bless the homes of our people. May He bless those homes that there may be loyal and true fathers, and good and wonderful mothers, and obedient and ambitious children reared in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Enos 1:1), I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

WHY MARRY IN THE TEMPLE?



Elder John A. Widtsoe

*Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

*Evidences and
Reconciliations,
297–301*

Marriage, the most important event between birth and death, is a determining condition of life’s happiness. Therefore, it should be entered into with the greatest of care. A companion for life should be one who lives righteously, to whom abundant love may be given, and who can be respected in his or her daily walk and talk. Likewise, the marriage covenant should be of such a nature as to help

create, build, and maintain daily happiness. As the successive days are, so all of life will be. Wealth, power, and fame are beggared in comparison with the joy that comes from a happy family life.

The Church offers the privilege of marriage in the temple as the foremost means of establishing and maintaining happiness in the households of its members. It is a privilege beyond compare, which every prospective bride and groom should seek and use. The conditions are such that every person may fit himself to receive this privilege, so earnestly coveted by true Latter-day Saints.

Here are nine brief answers to the question, “Why Marry in the Temple?”

1. *It is the Lord’s desire and will.* The temple is by divine decree the place where marriages should if possible be performed. Marriage is of such crucial importance in life that it should begin with full obedience to God’s law. Love is the foundation of marriage, but love itself is a product of law and lives by law. True love is law-abiding, for the highest satisfactions come to a law-abiding life.

Moreover, true love of man for woman always includes love of God from whom all good things issue. The proof of our love of God is obedience to His law. Besides, life is so full of problems that the married couple should from the first seek the constant favor of the Lord. A sense of security and comfort comes to all who are wedded within the temple. They have obeyed the law. They have pleased the Lord. As law-abiding citizens in the kingdom of God, they have a special claim upon divine aid, blessings, and protection. Conformity to the practices of the Church always builds happiness in life. Marriage should begin right—by obedience to law.

2. *It is in harmony with the sacred nature of the marriage covenant.* Temple marriages are also more in harmony with the nature and importance of the occasion. They are performed in an attractive sealing room, especially dedicated for the purpose. The ceremony itself is simple, beautiful, and profound. Relatively few witnesses are present. Quiet and order prevail. There are no external trappings to confuse the mind. Full attention may be given to the sacred covenants to be made, and the blessings to follow, covering the vast period of eternal existence. The attention is focused upon the meaning of the marriage ceremony, and not upon distracting outside features which characterize a wedding in an elaborate social setting. Such concentration of the soul upon the

covenants entered into and the blessings promised, becomes a joyful, happy memory incomparably sweeter than that of the usual rush and show of a wedding outside temple walls. Lovely in its simple beauty and deep import is a temple wedding.

There is ample opportunity after the ceremony in the temple for a reception, simple or elaborate, at which friends may gather to congratulate the couple and to wish them happiness.

3. *It tends to insure marital happiness.* Experience has shown that temple marriages are generally the happiest. There are relatively fewer divorces among couples who have been sealed over the altars of the temple. This is shown by dependable statistics. Today's views of marriage are notably loose; yet no person with a decent outlook on life will enter the marriage state as an experiment. Life's happiness is made or marred by marriage. Divorce does not return the individuals to their former condition. Scars remain. Hasty weddings and the easy divorces that follow menace individual and public welfare. When the integrity of the family, the unit of society, vanishes, and family relationships are held in disrespect, society is headed for disaster. The deliberation that precedes a temple marriage, the solemnity that accompanies it, and the power that seals and blesses it, form a bulwark against many evils of the day. The temple marriage hedges about, and keeps inviolate, the happiness that of right belongs to the married state.

4. *It permits the association of husband and wife for time and for all eternity.* The essential difference between temple and all other marriages is of the greatest consequence. In the temple, and only there, the bridal couple are wedded for time and eternity. The contract is endless. Here and hereafter, on earth and beyond, they may travel together in loving companionship. This precious gift conforms to the Latter-day Saint belief that existence in the life after this may be active, useful, progressive. Love, content to end with death, is perishable, poor, and helpless. Marriage that lasts only during earth life is a sad one, for the love established between man and woman, as they live together and rear their family, should not die, but live and grow richer with the eternal years. True love hopes and prays for an endless continuation of association with the loved one. To those who are sealed to each other for all existence, love is

ever warm, more hopeful, believing, courageous, and fearless. Such people live the richer, more joyful life. To them happiness and the making of it have no end. Dismal, dreary, full of fear, is the outlook upon love that ends with death. The youth of the Church dare not forego the gift of everlasting marriage.

5. *It provides the eternal possession of children and family relationship.* There is yet an added blessing. Children born under the temple covenant belong to their parents for all time and eternity. That is, the family relationships on earth are continued, forever, here and hereafter. The family, continued from earth into the next world, becomes a unit in everlasting life. In the long eternities we shall not be lonely wanderers, but side by side, with our loved ones who have gone before and those who shall follow, we shall travel the endless journey. What mother does not value this promise! What father does not feel his heart warm towards the eternal possession of his family! What heartbreakings might have been avoided if humanity had been true to the truth, and had surrendered to the sealing power of the Priesthood of God. Temple marriage becomes a promise of unending joy.

6. *It acts as a restraint against evil.* The powers of darkness are ever active to push mankind into evil paths. Often, we are tempted to do foolish things. In the family little things may lead to discord. To create unhappiness is the aim of the adversary of righteousness. Here appears one of the foremost blessings of the temple marriage. Those who have been sealed in the temple have their eyes fixed upon eternity. They dare not forfeit the promised blessings. The family is to them an everlasting possession. They remember the covenants which make possible this eternal association. The temple marriage, with all that it means, becomes a restraining force in the presence of temptation. All family acts are more likely to be shaped in anticipation of an undying relationship. Under the influence of the memory of the temple ceremony, family differences are swallowed up in peace; hate is transmuted into love; fear, into courage; and evil is rebuked and cast out. Peace is the world's great need. From the temples of the Lord, and from everything done within them, issues the spirit of truth which is the foundation of peace.

***True love hopes
and prays for
an endless
continuation.***

7. *It furnishes the opportunity for endless progression.* Modern revelation sets forth the high destiny of those who are sealed for everlasting companionship. They will be given opportunity for a greater use of their powers. That means progress. They will attain more readily to their place in the presence of the Lord; they will increase more rapidly in every divine power; they will approach more nearly to the likeness of God; they will more completely realize their divine destiny. And this progress is not delayed until life after death. It begins here, today, for those who yield obedience to the law. Life is tasteless without progress. Eternal marriage, with all that it means, provides for unending advancement. “Eternal increase” is the gift to all who enter into the eternal marriage covenant, as made in the temples of the Lord.

8. *It places the family under the protection of the power of the Priesthood.* They who have won a temple marriage have been sealed for time and eternity by the power of the Holy Priesthood. This is the supreme power committed to man’s keeping. That power issues from the unseen world. It gives life and light to the world. Human life with its cares and worries is transfigured into a radiant experience and adventure when it clings to this divine power and is blessed by it. To walk under divine authority, to possess it, to be a part of it, is to walk with heads erect, with grateful hearts, before our fellow men and our Father in heaven. The men and women who have come with this power out of the Lord’s holy house will be hedged about by divine protection and walk more safely among the perplexities of earth. They will be indeed the ultimate conquerors of earth, for they come with the infinite power of God to solve the problems of earth. Spiritual power accompanies all who marry in the temple, if they thenceforth keep their sacred covenants.

9. *It provides a God-like destiny for human beings.* “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 they be gods, because they have no end; therefore they shall be from everlasting to everlasting,

because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.” (D. & C. 132:19, 20; see also *The Improvement Era*, 17:1064; 30:1098; 34:704; 39:214; 41:136, 220, 268, 330; 43:586).

MARRIAGE



Elder Boyd K. Packer
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Apr. 1981, 14–17;
or Ensign, May 1981,
13–15

The prophet Jacob foretold the destruction of a people because they were blind to ordinary things, “which blindness,” he said, “came by looking beyond the mark.” (Jacob 4:14.)

We often seek for things we cannot seem to find when they are within easy reach—ordinary, obvious things.

I wish to talk about an ordinary word. I have tried for months—really tried—to find some way to hold this word up in such a way that you would be very impressed with what it means.

Marriage

The word is *marriage*.

I have wished that I could set before you a finely carved chest, placing it where the light is just right. I would carefully unlatch it and reverently uncover the word—*marriage*.

Perhaps then you would see that it is priceless!

I cannot show it to you that way, so I will do the best I can using other ordinary words.

It is my purpose to endorse and to favor, to encourage and defend marriage.

Many regard it nowadays as being, at best, semiprecious, and by some it is thought to be worth nothing at all.

I have seen and heard, as you have seen and heard, the signals all about us, carefully orchestrated to convince us that marriage is out of date and in the way.

Counterfeit of Marriage

There is a practice, now quite prevalent, for unmarried couples to live together, a counterfeit of marriage. They suppose that they shall have all that marriage can offer without the obligations connected with it. They are wrong!

However much they hope to find in a relationship of that kind, they will lose more. Living together without marriage destroys something inside all who participate. Virtue, self-esteem, and refinement of character wither away.

Claiming that it will not happen does not prevent the loss; and these virtues, once lost, are not easily reclaimed.

To suppose that one day they may nonchalantly change their habits and immediately claim all that might have been theirs had they not made a mockery of marriage is to suppose something that will not be.

One day, when they come to themselves, they will reap disappointment.

One cannot degrade marriage without tarnishing other words as well, such words as *boy, girl, manhood, womanhood, husband, wife, father, mother, baby, children, family, home*.

Such words as *unselfishness* and *sacrifice* will then be tossed aside. Then self-respect will fade and love itself will not want to stay.

If you have been tempted to enter such a relationship or if you now live with another without marriage, leave! Withdraw from it! Run away from it! Do not continue with it! Or, if you can, make a marriage out of it.

Marriage Is Sacred

Even a rickety marriage will serve good purpose as long as two people struggle to keep it from falling down around them.

And now a word of warning. One who destroys a marriage takes upon himself a very great responsibility indeed. Marriage is sacred!

To willfully destroy a marriage, either your own or that of another couple, is to offend our God. Such a thing will not be lightly considered in the judgments of the Almighty and in the eternal scheme of things will not easily be forgiven.

Do not threaten nor break up a marriage. Do not translate some disenchantment with your own

marriage partner or an attraction for someone else into justification for any conduct that would destroy a marriage.

This monumental transgression frequently places heavy burdens upon little children. They do not understand the selfish yearnings of unhappy adults who are willing to buy their own satisfaction at the expense of the innocent.

God Himself decreed that the physical expression of love, that union of male and female which has power to generate life, is authorized only in marriage.

Marriage is the shelter where families are created. That society which puts low value on marriage sows the wind and, in time, will reap the whirlwind—and thereafter, unless they repent, bring upon themselves a holocaust!

Trouble Attracts Attention

Some think that every marriage must expect to end in unhappiness and divorce, with the hopes and dreams predestined to end in a broken, sad wreck of things.

Some marriages do bend, and some will break, but we must not, because of this, lose faith in marriage nor become afraid of it.

Broken marriages are not typical.

Remember that trouble attracts attention! We travel the highway with thousands of cars moving in either direction without paying much attention to any of them. But should an accident occur, we notice immediately.

If it happens again, we get the false impression that no one can go safely down the road.

One accident may make the front page, while a hundred million cars that safely pass are not regarded as worth mentioning.

Writers think that a happy, stable marriage does not have the dramatic appeal, the conflict worth featuring in a book or a play or a film. Therefore, we constantly hear about the ruined ones and we lose our perspective.

I believe in marriage. I believe it to be the ideal pattern for human living. I know it to be ordained of God. The restraints relating to it were designed to protect our happiness.

Keep Faith in Marriage

I do not know of any better time in all of the history of the world for a young couple who are of age and prepared and who are in love to think of marriage. There is no better time because it is *your* time.

I know that these are very troubled times. Troubles like we have now are very hard on marriages.

Do not lose faith in marriage. Not even if you have been through the unhappiness of a divorce and are surrounded with pieces of a marriage that has fallen apart.

If you have honored your vows and your partner did not do so, remember God is watching over us. One day, after all of the tomorrows have passed, there will be recompense. Those who have been moral and faithful to their covenants will be happy and those who have not will be otherwise.

Some marriages have broken up in spite of all that one partner could do to hold the marriage together. While there may be faults on both sides, I do not condemn the innocent one who suffers in spite of all that was desired and done to save the marriage.

And to you I say, do not lose faith in marriage itself. Do not let your disappointment leave you bitter or cynical or justify any conduct that is unworthy.

If you have had no opportunity for marriage or if you have lost your companion in death, keep your faith in marriage.

Some years ago an associate of mine lost his beloved wife. She died after a lingering illness, and he watched in helpless agony as the doctors withdrew all hope.

One day near the end she told him that when she was gone she wanted him to marry again and he was not to wait too long a time. He protested! The children were nearly grown and he would go the rest of the way alone.

She turned away and wept and said, "Have I been such a failure that after all our years together you would rather go unmarried? Have I been such a failure?"

In due time there came another, and their life together has reaffirmed his faith in marriage. And I have the feeling that his first beloved wife is deeply grateful to the second one, who filled the place that she could not keep.

Joys and Tests of Marriage

Marriage is yet safe, with all its sweet fulfillment, with all its joy and love. In marriage all of the worthy yearnings of the human soul, all that is physical and emotional and spiritual, can be fulfilled.

Marriage is not without trials of many kinds. These tests forge virtue and strength. The tempering that comes in marriage and family life produces men and women who will someday be exalted.

God has ordained that life should have its beginning within the protecting shelter of marriage, conceived in a consummate expression of love and nurtured and fostered with that deeper love which is accompanied always by sacrifice.

Marriage offers fulfillment all the way through life—in youth and young love, the wedding and on the honeymoon, with the coming of little children and the nurturing of them. Then come the golden years when young ones leave the nest to build one of their own. The cycle then repeats itself, as God has decreed it should.

Eternal Love, Eternal Marriage, Eternal Increase

There is another dimension to marriage that we know of in the Church. It came by revelation. This glorious, supernal truth teaches us that marriage is meant to be eternal.

There are covenants we can make if we are willing, and bounds we can seal if we are worthy, that will keep marriage safe and intact beyond the veil of death.

The Lord has declared, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39.)

The ultimate end of all activity in the Church is that a man and his wife and their children can be happy at home and that the family can continue through eternity. All Christian doctrine is formulated to protect the individual, the home, and the family.

These lines express something of the place of marriage in the eternal progress of man:

*We have within a burning flame,
A light to kindle lights,
The sacred fire of life itself,
Which if misused ignites
A smold'ring, suffocating cloud*

*Of sorrow and distress.
When used by law this power brings forth
A life, a family, happiness.*

*Temptors from the darkest realm
Seek to pervert this power
In acts of wickedness and waste
Until there comes the hour
Of judgment and of recompense,
When bitter tears are shed
O'er power once held to foster life
That now is gone and dead.*

*I know this power to be a key,
A very key to God's own plan
Which brings to pass eternal life
And immortality for man.
And marriage is the crucible
Where elements of life combine,
Where mortal temples are conceived
Within that plan divine.*

*Then spirit offspring of our God
Can come through mortal birth
To have a choice, to face the test—
The purpose of our stay on earth.
Here good and evil stand alike*

*Before decision's sovereign nod.
Those who elect the righteous path
Will part the veil, return to God.*

*A gift from God, the plan provides
That mortal beings in humble strait
Be given power, supernal power,
To share their love and help create
A living child, a living soul,
Image of man, and of Deity.
How we regard this sacred gift
Will fix our course, our destiny!*

Eternal love, eternal marriage, eternal increase! This ideal, which is new to many, when thoughtfully considered, can keep a marriage strong and safe. No relationship has more potential to exalt a man and a woman than the marriage covenant. No obligation in society or in the Church supersedes it in importance.

I thank God for marriage. I thank God for temples. I thank God for the glorious sealing power, that power which transcends all that we have been given, through which our marriages may become eternal. May we be worthy of this sacred gift, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

MARRIAGE THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

*We build our marriages with
endless friendship, confidence,
integrity, and by administering and
sustaining each other.*

—Elder James E. Faust

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Brigham Young

“Those who attain to the blessing of the first or celestial resurrection will be pure and holy, and perfect in body. Every man and woman that reaches to this unspeakable attainment will be as beautiful as the angels that surround the throne of God. If you can by faithfulness in this life, obtain the right to come up in the morning of the resurrection, you need entertain no fears that the wife will be dissatisfied with her husband, or the husband with the wife; for those of the first resurrection will be free from sin and from the consequences and power of sin” (“Future State of Existence,” *Contributor*, May 1890, 241).

THE ENRICHING OF MARRIAGE



*Elder James E. Faust
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Oct. 1977, 12–14;
or Ensign, Nov. 1977,
9–11*

Some years ago, I was consulted by a woman who desired a divorce from her husband on grounds which, in my opinion, were justified. After the divorce was concluded, I did not see her again for many years. A chance meeting with her on the street was very surprising. The years of loneliness

and discouragement were evident in her once beautiful face.

After passing a few pleasantries, she was quick to say that life had not been rich and rewarding for her and that she was tired of facing the struggle alone. Then came a most startling disclosure, which, with her permission, I share. She said, “Bad as it was, if I had to do it over again, knowing what I do now, I would not have sought the divorce. This is worse.”

Divorce

Statistically, it is difficult to avoid a divorce because in the United States with every one hundred marriages there are now about fifty divorces. (*World Almanac*, 1976.) Unless the present rate of ever-increasing divorces diminishes, in the early 1980s with every one hundred marriages there will be seventy divorces.

Divorce can be justified only in the most rare of circumstances, because it often tears people’s lives apart and shears family happiness. Frequently in a divorce the parties lose much more than they gain.

The traumatic experience one goes through in divorce seems little understood and not well enough appreciated; and certainly there need to be much more sympathy and understanding for those who have experienced this great tragedy and whose lives cannot be reversed. For those who are divorced, there is still much to be hoped for and expected in terms of fulfillment and happiness in life, in the forgetting of self and in the rendering of service to others.

Difficult Questions

Why is happiness in marriage so fragile and fleeting for so many, yet so abundant for others? Why does the resulting train of heartache and suffering have to be so long and have so many innocent people on board?

What are the missing enriching ingredients in so many marriages, all begun with such happiness and so many high hopes?

I have long pondered these difficult questions. Having spent almost a lifetime dealing with human experiences, I am somewhat familiar with the problems of unhappy marriages, of divorce, and of heartbroken families. I can also speak of great happiness, for, thanks to my beloved Ruth, I have found in marriage the richest fulfillment of human existence.

Reasons for Divorce

There are no simple, easy answers to the challenging and complex questions of happiness in marriage. There are also many supposed reasons for divorce. Among them are the serious problems of selfishness, immaturity, lack of commitment, inadequate communication, unfaithfulness; and all of the rest, which are obvious and well known.

In my experience there is another reason which seems not so obvious but which precedes and laces through all of the others. It is the lack of a constant enrichment in marriage. It is an absence of that something extra which makes it precious, special, and wonderful, when it is also drudgery, difficult, and dull.

Enriching a Marriage

You might wonder, "How can a marriage be constantly enriched?" Adam, speaking of Eve, said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." (Gen. 2:23.)

We build our marriages with endless friendship, confidence, integrity, and by administering and sustaining each other in our difficulties.

There are a few simple, relevant questions which each person, whether married or contemplating marriage, should honestly ask in an effort to become "one flesh." They are:

First, am I able to think of the interest of my marriage and partner first before I think of my own desires?

Second, how deep is my commitment to my companion, aside from any other interests?

Third, is he or she my best friend?

Fourth, do I have respect for the dignity of my partner as a person of worth and value?

Fifth, do we quarrel over money? Money itself seems neither to make a couple happy, nor the lack of it, necessarily, to make them unhappy, but money is often a symbol of selfishness.

Sixth, is there a spiritually sanctifying bond between us?

I commend to all the excellent discussion by President Kimball, "Marriage and Divorce," in which he reminds us, "[There are] no combination[s] of power [which] can destroy [a] marriage except the power within either or both of the spouses themselves." (*Marriage and Divorce*, Deseret Book, p. 17.)

Prayer

Marriage relationships can be enriched by better communication. One important way is to pray together. This will resolve many of the differences, if there are any, between the couple before sleep comes. I do not mean to overemphasize differences, but they are real, and make things interesting. Our differences are the little pinches of salt which can make the marriage seem sweeter. We communicate in a thousand ways, such as a smile, a brush of the hair, a gentle touch, and remembering each day to say "I love you" and the husband to say "You're beautiful." Some other important words to say, when appropriate, are "I'm sorry." Listening is excellent communication.

Trust

Complete trust in each other is one of the greatest enriching factors in marriage. Nothing devastates the core of mutual trust necessary to maintain a fulfilling relationship like infidelity. There is never a justification for adultery. Despite this destructive experience, occasionally marriages are saved and families preserved. To do so requires the aggrieved party to be capable of giving unreserved love great enough to forgive and forget. It requires the errant party to want desperately to repent and actually forsake evil.

Our loyalty to our eternal companion should not be merely physical, but mental and spiritual as well. Since there are no harmless flirtations and no place for jealousy after marriage, it is best to avoid the very appearance of evil by shunning any questionable contact with another to whom we are not married.

Virtue

Virtue is the strong glue which holds it all together. Said the Lord, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else." (D&C 42:22.)

Of all that can bless marriages, there is one special enriching ingredient, which above all else will help join a man and a woman together in a very real, sacred, spiritual sense. It is the presence of the divine in marriage. Shakespeare, speaking in *Henry the Fifth*, said, "God, the best maker of all marriages, combine your hearts in one." (*Henry V*, 5:2.) God is also the best keeper of marriages.

There are many things which go into making a marriage enriching, but they seem to be of the husk. Having the companionship and enjoying the fruits of a Holy and Divine Presence is the kernel of a great happiness in marriage. Spiritual oneness is the anchor. Slow leaks in the sanctifying dimension of marriage often cause marriages to become flat tires.

Divorces are increasing because in many cases the union lacks that enrichment which comes from the sanctifying benediction which flows from the keeping of the commandments of God. It is a lack of spiritual nourishment.

Tithing

I learned in serving almost twenty years as bishop and stake president that an excellent insurance against divorce is the payment of tithing. Payment of tithing seems to facilitate keeping the spiritual battery charged in order to make it through the times when the spiritual generator has been idle or not working.

There is no great or majestic music which constantly produces the harmony of a great love. The most perfect music is a welding of two voices into one spiritual solo. Marriage is the way provided by God for the fulfillment of the greatest of human needs, based upon mutual respect, maturity, selflessness, decency, commitment, and honesty. Happiness in marriage and parenthood can exceed a thousand times any other happiness.

Parenthood

The soul of the marriage is greatly enriched and the spiritual growing process is greatly strengthened when a couple become parents. Parenthood should bring the greatest of all happiness. Men grow because as fathers they must take care of their families. Women blossom because as mothers they must forget themselves. We understand best the full meaning of love when we become parents.

Our homes should be among the most hallowed of all earthly sanctuaries.

In the enriching of marriage the big things are the little things. It is a constant appreciation for each other and a thoughtful demonstration of gratitude. It is the encouraging and the helping of each other to grow. Marriage is a joint quest for the good, the beautiful, and the divine.

The Savior has said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the

door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20.)

May the presence of God be found enriching and blessing all marriages and homes, especially those of His Saints, as part of His eternal plan, I pray humbly in the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

HINCKLEYS TO NOTE 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Dell Van Orden

Church News, 19 Apr. 1997, 3

President and Sister Hinckley talked about some of the essentials for a happy marriage.

"Live the gospel," President Hinckley admonished. "That is so important. That means a lot of things. That means sacrifice in some circumstances. That means love and appreciation and respect. That means self-discipline. That means curbing your temper and your tongue and being careful of what you say because words can wound just as deeply and just as seriously as can anything that inflicts bodily harm.

"And you have to look on the bright side of things; you have to be optimistic and say, 'We can make it!'"

Develop and maintain respect for one another, he counseled. "You have to give and take in marriage. Another thing is a soft answer, keeping your voice down. Don't lose your temper. Speak quietly. There will be differences," President Hinckley continued, "but don't get stirred up over them. Just be quiet and calm and speak softly one to another."

Sister Hinckley added: "You cannot be selfish in marriage. You have to have as your first priority the happiness and comfort of your spouse. If you work on that, then you are happy, too."

"Selfishness," said President Hinckley, "brings about conflict and all of these difficulties that afflict so very, very many marriages. Being plain, downright selfish is the problem."

Continuing, he said, "[Marriage] requires a very substantial measure of self-discipline. Marriage is not all romance. Marriage is work. Marriage is effort. You have to accommodate one another. You have to look after one another. Another thing is to do everything you can to develop the talents, the resources, the opportunities of your companion."

"Some people," said Sister Hinckley, "try to remake their spouse."

“Recognize your differences,” said President Hinckley. *“You will find that is a very wholesome and stimulating thing.”*

President Hinckley also counseled husbands and wives to get out of debt. *“Debt is a terrible thing. Anybody who lived through the Depression knows that debt is an enslaving thing. Stay out of debt and pay your bills promptly.”*

“There is another thing; we have always talked together. There has been no lack of communication between us. I hear so many, many cases of unhappy marriages, of people who say ‘we can’t communicate with one another.’”

“There has been no lack of communication between us,” President Hinckley said.

“We have had a very happy marriage,” he continued. *“When I look back, I have no regrets. Through the years we have been blessed beyond any measure that we ever dreamed of. We have been so richly blessed. We have never lacked, I can honestly say. We have paid our tithing. That came first. We have lived modestly but comfortably and reasonably well. We have plowed our little furrow and enlarged it and gone forward with our lives.”*

“There is nothing really extraordinary about our lives,” he maintained.

As the interview was ending, President Hinckley turned to his wife and said: *“What she did as a parent she is doing as a grandmother and a great-grandmother. Now we, after 60 years of marriage,*

are smaller; we don’t stand as tall, we have shrunken a little.”

“We move slower,” added Sister Hinckley.

“We move slower,” said President Hinckley, *“but we are happy and love one another.”*

Interview with President and Sister Hinckley

Some Essentials for a Happy Marriage

- Live the gospel.
- Love, appreciate each other.
- Develop self-discipline.
- Curb temper and tongue.
- Look on the bright side of things.
- Develop, maintain respect for one another.
- Give soft answer.
- Speak quietly.
- Don’t be selfish.
- Look after one another.
- Develop talents, opportunities of companion.
- Recognize differences.
- Pay tithing, stay out of debt.
- Develop ability to communicate with each other.

MATE SELECTION

‘Soul mates’ are fiction and an illusion; . . . it is certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage.

—President Spencer W. Kimball

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Importance of Choosing Wisely

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all the decisions and has the most far-reaching effects, for it has to do not only with immediate happiness, but also with eternal joys. It affects not only the two people involved, but also their families and particularly their children and their children’s children down through the many generations” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 3).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“This will be the most important decision of your life, the individual whom you marry. . . .

“. . . Marry the right person in the right place at the right time” (“Life’s Obligations,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1999, 2).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“The most important things that any member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ever does in this world are: 1. To marry the right person, in the right place, by the right authority; and 2. To keep the covenant made in connection with this holy and perfect order of matrimony” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 118).

Background Factors

President David O. McKay

“In choosing a companion, it is necessary to study the disposition, the inheritance, and training of the one with whom you are contemplating making life’s journey” (*Gospel Ideals*, 459).

President Spencer W. Kimball

“The difficulties and hazards of marriage are greatly increased where backgrounds are different” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 302).

“I have warned the youth against the many hazards of interfaith marriage, and with all the power I possessed, I warned young people to avoid the sorrows and disillusionments which come from marrying out of the Church and the unhappy situations which almost invariably result when a believer marries an unbelieving spouse. I pointed out the demands of the Church upon its members in time, energy, and funds; the deepness of the spiritual ties which tighten after marriage and as the family comes; the antagonisms which naturally follow such mismating; the fact that these and many other reasons argue eloquently for marriage within the Church, where husband and wife have common backgrounds, common ideals and standards, common beliefs, hopes, and objectives, and, above all, where marriage may be eternalized through righteous entry into the holy temple. . . .

“. . . We recommend that people marry those who are of . . . somewhat the same economic and social and educational background (some of those are not an absolute necessity, but preferred), and above all, the same religious background, without question” (“Marriage and Divorce,” 142–44).

The Right Person

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Be worthy of the mate you choose. Respect him or her. Give encouragement to him or her. Love your companion with all your heart. This will be the most important decision of your life, the individual whom you marry.

“There is no substitute for marrying in the temple. It is the only place under the heavens where marriage can be solemnized for eternity. Don’t cheat yourself. Don’t cheat your companion. Don’t shortchange your lives. Marry the right person in the right place at the right time.

“Choose a companion of your own faith. You are much more likely to be happy. Choose a companion you can always honor, you can always respect, one who will complement you in your own life, one to whom you can give your entire heart, your entire love, your entire allegiance, your entire loyalty. . . .

“. . . I could not wish for any of you more than I have had in my companionship with my beautiful wife.

“A good marriage requires time. It requires effort. You have to work at it. You have to cultivate it. You have to forgive and forget. You have to be absolutely loyal one to another. Most of you will marry and have children. They will become the source of your greatest pride and happiness. . . .

“All of this can come to pass if you make this most important decision, one guided by prayer as well as instinct, of choosing a dear companion who will be yours through thick and thin forever, throughout all eternity” (“Life’s Obligations,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1999, 2, 4).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“The right person is someone for whom the natural and wholesome and normal affection that should exist does exist. It is the person who is living so that he or she can go to the temple of God and make the covenants that we there make” (in Conference Report, Sept.–Oct. 1955, 13).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“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, kindness, 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.

“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” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 31; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 26).

Outer Appearance and Inner Beauty

President David O. McKay

“Yes, men are attracted by beauty, and thousands are ensnared by it. There are thousands of men who look for nothing else and who desire nothing else but to have their senses pleased or their passions gratified. These outward adornments will satisfy and only outward adornment will retain. When beauty fades, the passion seeks for gratification elsewhere. ‘Beauty is only skin-deep,’ and when outward adornment is all a girl possesses, the admiration she calls forth is even more shallow than her beauty. . . .

“But there is a beauty every girl has—a gift from God, as pure as the sunlight, and as sacred as life. It is a beauty that all men love, a virtue that wins all men’s souls. That beauty is *chastity*. Chastity without skin beauty may enkindle the soul; skin beauty without chastity can kindle only the eye. Chastity enshrined in the mold of true womanhood will hold true love eternally” (*Gospel Ideals*, 450).

As you seek an eternal companion, look for someone who is developing the essential attributes that bring happiness.

Counsel for Single Sisters

President Wilford Woodruff

“When the daughters of Zion are asked by the young men to join with them in marriage, instead of asking—‘Has this man a fine brick house, a span of fine horses and a fine carriage?’ they should ask—‘Is he a man of God? Has he the Spirit of God with him? Is he a Latter-day Saint? Does he pray? Has he got the Spirit upon him to qualify him to build up the kingdom?’ If he has that, never mind the carriage and brick house, take hold and unite

yourselves together according to the law of God” (in *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 271).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Dear sisters, never lose sight of this sacred goal [of a temple marriage]. Prayerfully prepare for it and live for it. Be married the Lord’s way. Temple marriage is a gospel ordinance of exaltation. Our Father in Heaven wants each of His daughters to have this eternal blessing.

“Therefore, don’t trifle away your happiness by involvement with someone who cannot take you worthily to the temple. Make a decision now that this is the place where you will marry. To leave that decision until a romantic involvement develops is to take a risk the importance of which you cannot now fully calculate.

“And remember, you are not required to lower your standards in order to get a mate. Keep yourselves attractive, maintain high standards, maintain your self-respect. Do not engage in intimacies that bring heartache and sorrow. Place yourselves in a position to meet worthy men and be engaged in constructive activities.

“But also, do not expect perfection in your choice of a mate. Do not be so concerned about his physical appearance and his bank account that you overlook his more important qualities. Of course, he should be attractive to you, and he should be able to financially provide for you. But, does he have a strong testimony? Does he live the principles of the gospel and magnify his priesthood? Is he active in his ward and stake? Does he love home and family, and will he be a faithful husband and a good father? *These* are qualities that really matter.

“And I would also caution you single sisters not to become so independent and self-reliant that you decide marriage isn’t worth it and you can do just as well on your own. Some of our sisters indicate that they do not want to consider marriage until *after* they have completed their degrees or pursued a career. This is not right. Certainly we want our single sisters to maximize their individual potential, to be well educated, and to do well at their present employment. You have much to contribute to society, to your community, and to your neighborhood. But we earnestly pray that our single sisters will desire honorable marriage in the temple to a worthy man and rear a righteous family, even though this may mean the sacrificing of degrees and careers. Our

priorities are right when we realize there is no higher calling than to be an honorable wife and mother” (“To the Single Adult Sisters of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 96–97).

Counsel for Single Brethren

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Work hard educationally and in your vocation. Put your trust in the Lord, have faith, and it will work out. The Lord never gives a commandment without providing the means to accomplish it (see 1 Nephi 3:7).

“Also, do not be caught up in materialism, one of the real plagues of our generation—that is, acquiring things, fast-paced living, and securing career success in the single state.

“Honorable marriage is more important than wealth, position, and status. As husband and wife, you can achieve your life’s goals together. As you sacrifice for each other and your children, the Lord will bless you, and your commitment to the Lord and your service in His kingdom will be enhanced” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 59; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 53).

“Now, brethren, do not expect perfection in your choice of a mate. Do not be so particular that you overlook her most important qualities of having a strong testimony, living the principles of the gospel, loving home, wanting to be a mother in Zion, and supporting you in your priesthood responsibilities.

“Of course, she should be attractive to you, but do not just date one girl after another for the sole pleasure of dating without seeking the Lord’s confirmation in your choice of your eternal companion.

“And one good yardstick as to whether a person might be the right one for you is this: in her presence, do you think your noblest thoughts, do you aspire to your finest deeds, do you wish you were better than you are?

“God bless you single adult brethren of the Church. May your priorities be right. I have suggested some very important priorities this evening. May you seriously consider and ponder them” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 59; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 53).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“I hope you will not put off marriage too long. I do not speak as much to the young women as to the young men whose prerogative and responsibility it is to take the lead in this matter. Don’t go on

endlessly in a frivolous dating game. Look for a choice companion, one you can love, honor, and respect, and make a decision" ("Thou Shalt Not Covet," *Ensign*, Mar. 1990, 6).

The Role of Prayer and Personal Revelation

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

"Use both agency and prayer. It is not, never has been, and never will be the design and purpose of the Lord—however much we seek him in prayer—to answer all our problems and concerns without struggle and effort on our part. This mortality is a probationary estate. In it we have our agency. We are being tested to see how we will respond in various situations; how we will decide issues; what course we will pursue while we are here walking, not by sight, but by faith. Hence, we are to solve our own problems and then to counsel with the Lord in prayer and receive a spiritual confirmation that our decisions are correct" ("Why the Lord Ordained Prayer," *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 11).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

"If a revelation is outside the limits of stewardship, you know it is not from the Lord, and you are not bound by it. I have heard of cases where a young man told a young woman she should marry him because he had received a revelation that she was to be his eternal companion. If this is a true revelation, it will be confirmed directly to the woman if she seeks to know. In the meantime, she is under no obligation to heed it. She should seek her own guidance and make up her own mind. The man can receive revelation to guide his own actions, but he cannot properly receive revelation to direct hers. She is outside his stewardship. . . .

". . . When a choice will make a real difference in our lives—obvious or not—and when we are living in tune with the Spirit and seeking his guidance, we can be sure we will receive the guidance we need to attain our goal" ("Revelation," 25–26).

"A desire to be led by the Lord is a strength, but it needs to be accompanied by an understanding that our Heavenly Father leaves many decisions for our personal choices. Personal decision making is one of the sources of the growth we are meant to experience in mortality. Persons who try to shift all decision making to the Lord and plead for revelation in every choice will soon find circumstances in which they

pray for guidance and don't receive it. For example, this is likely to occur in those numerous circumstances in which the choices are trivial or either choice is acceptable.

"We should study things out in our minds, using the reasoning powers our Creator has placed within us. Then we should pray for guidance and act upon it if we receive it. If we do not receive guidance, we should act upon our best judgment. Persons who persist in seeking revelatory guidance on subjects on which the Lord has not chosen to direct us may concoct an answer out of their own fantasy or bias, or they may even receive an answer through the medium of false revelation. Revelation from God is a sacred reality, but like other sacred things, it must be cherished and used properly so that a great strength does not become a disabling weakness" ("Our Strengths Can Become Our Downfall," *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 13–14).

Finding the Right One

President Spencer W. Kimball

"While marriage is difficult, and discordant and frustrated marriages are common, yet real, lasting happiness is possible, and marriage can be more an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive. This is within the reach of every couple, every person. 'Soul mates' are fiction and an illusion; and while every young man and young woman will seek with all diligence and prayerfulness to find a mate with whom life can be most compatible and beautiful, yet it is certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage if both are willing to pay the price" ("Oneness in Marriage," *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 4).

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith

"We have no scriptural justification, however, for the belief that we had the privilege of choosing our parents and our life companions in the spirit world. This belief has been advocated by some, and it is possible that in some instances it is true, but it would require too great a stretch of the imagination to believe it to be so in all, or even in the majority of cases. Most likely we came where those in authority decided to send us. Our agency may not have been exercised to the extent of making choice of parents and posterity" (*Way to Perfection*, 44).

Mission or Marriage?

President Spencer W. Kimball

“There is increasing evidence that some young women are being strongly encouraged to serve full-time missions. Though capable and effective, young women do not have the same responsibility to serve full-time missions as do young men who hold the priesthood. We are grateful that some desire to serve as full-time missionaries, but they should not be made to feel obligated to do so. A young woman should not be recommended for a mission if it would interfere with a specific marriage proposal” (in *Bulletin*, 1993, no. 2, p. 2).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Now I wish to say something to bishops and stake presidents concerning missionary service. It is a sensitive matter. There seems to be growing in the Church an idea that all young women as well as all young men should go on missions. We need some young women. They perform a remarkable work. They can get in homes where the elders cannot.

“I confess that I have two granddaughters on missions. They are bright and beautiful young women. They are working hard and accomplishing much good. Speaking with their bishops and their parents, they made their own decisions to go. They did not tell me until they turned in their papers. I had nothing to do with their decision to go.

“Now, having made that confession, I wish to say that the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve are united in saying to our young sisters that they are not under obligation to go on missions. I hope I can say what I have to say in a way that will not be offensive to anyone. Young women should not feel that they have a duty comparable to that of young men. Some of them will very much wish to go. If so, they should counsel with their bishop as well as their parents. If the idea persists, the bishop will know what to do.

“I say what has been said before, that missionary work is essentially a priesthood responsibility. As such, our young men must carry the major burden. This is their responsibility and their obligation.

“We do not ask the young women to consider a mission as an essential part of their life’s program. Over a period of many years, we have held the age level higher for them in an effort to keep the number going

relatively small. Again to the sisters I say that you will be as highly respected, you will be considered as being as much in the line of duty, your efforts will be as acceptable to the Lord and to the Church whether you go on a mission or do not go on a mission.

“We constantly receive letters from young women asking why the age for sister missionaries is not the same as it is for elders. We simply give them the reasons. We know that they are disappointed. We know that many have set their hearts on missions. We know that many of them wish this experience before they marry and go forward with their adult lives. I certainly do not wish to say or imply that their services are not wanted. I simply say that a mission is not necessary as a part of their lives.

“Now, that may appear to be something of a strange thing to say in priesthood meeting. I say it here because I do not know where else to say it. The bishops and stake presidents of the Church have now heard it. And they must be the ones who make the judgment in this matter.

“That is enough on that subject” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 72–73; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 52).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“It does not matter if it interrupts your schooling or delays your career or your marriage—or basketball. Unless you have a serious health problem, every Latter-day Saint young man should answer the call to serve a mission” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 61; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 42).

Making the Decision at the Appropriate Time

President Harold B. Lee

“I am not trying to urge you younger men to marry too early. I think therein is one of the hazards of today’s living. We don’t want a young man to think of marriage until he is able to take care of a family, to have an institution of his own, to be independent. He must make sure that he has found the girl of his choice, they have gone together long enough that they know each other, and that they know each other’s faults and they still love each other. I have said to the mission presidents (some of whom have been reported to us as saying to missionaries, ‘Now, if you are not married in six months, you are a failure as a missionary’), ‘Don’t you ever say that to one of your missionaries. Maybe in six months they

will not have found a wife; and if they take you seriously, they may rush into a marriage that will be wrong for them.'

"Please don't misunderstand what we are saying; but, brethren, think more seriously about the obligations of marriage for those who bear the holy priesthood at a time when marriage should be the expectation of every man who understands the responsibility; for remember, brethren, that only those who enter into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage in the temple for time and eternity, only those will have the exaltation in the celestial kingdom. That is what the Lord tells us" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 120; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 100).

First Presidency—Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson

"When full-time missionaries return home, they should be counseled concerning such matters as continuing their education or employment, strengthening family relationships, participating actively in the Church, paying tithes and offerings, and preparing for temple marriage. It is unwise, however, to 'recommend that missionaries be married within a specific time. The decision to marry is so important that it should be made only after the most prayerful and careful consideration by the individual.' [*Mission President's Handbook* (31153), 1990, 23]" (in *Bulletin*, 1993, no. 2, 2).

AGENCY OR INSPIRATION?



Elder Bruce R. McConkie
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
New Era, Jan. 1975,
38–43

My wife and I were having a serious discussion recently in which we were counting our many blessings. We named a host of things that have come to us, because of the Church, because of our family, because of the glorious restoration of eternal truth that has taken place in this day; and then she

climaxed the discussion by asking this question: "What's the greatest blessing that has ever come into your life?"

The most important single thing that any Latter-day Saint ever does in this world is to marry the right person, in the right place.

Without a moment's hesitation I said, "The greatest blessing that has ever come to me was on the thirteenth day of October in 1937 at 11:20 A.M. when I was privileged to kneel in the Salt Lake Temple at the Lord's altar and receive you as an eternal companion."

She said, "Well, you passed that test."

I believe that the most important single thing that any Latter-day Saint ever does in this world is to marry the

right person, in the right place, by the right authority; and that then—when they have been so sealed by the power and authority that Elijah the prophet restored—the most important remaining thing that any Latter-day Saint can ever do is so to live that the terms and conditions of the covenant thus made will be binding and efficacious now and forever. And so I'd like, if properly guided, to make some suggestions that apply in all fields of choice—in all fields, at least all major fields of activity—but that apply particularly to the matter of eternal marriage, singling that out as the one thing paramount above all others.

When we dwelt in the presence of God our Heavenly Father, we were endowed with agency. This gave us the opportunity, the privilege, to choose what we would do—to make a free, untrammelled choice. When father Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden he was given this same power, and we now possess it. We're expected to use the gifts and talents and abilities, the sense and judgment and agency with which we are endowed.

But on the other hand we're commanded to seek the Lord, to desire his Spirit, to get the spirit of revelation and inspiration in our lives. We come into the Church and a legal administrator places his hands upon our head and says, "Receive the Holy Ghost." This gives us the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the right to the constant companionship of that member of the Godhead, based on faithfulness.

And so we're faced with two propositions. One is that we ought to be guided by the spirit of inspiration, the spirit of revelation. The other is that we're here under a direction to use our agency, to determine what we ought to do on our own; and we need to

strike a fine balance between these two, if we're going to pursue a course that will give us joy, satisfaction, and peace in this life and lead to eternal reward in our Father's kingdom.

When we were with our Father in the preexistent sphere, he observed and studied us and he knew how we would respond to his laws when we were in his presence, when we had the knowledge that he was our Father and that the teachings presented to us came from him. We walked by sight. Now he's finding out how we'll respond when we walk by faith, when we're outside his presence and we have to rely on things other than the personal counsel that we once received from him.

I'd like to present three case studies, out of which, perhaps, we can draw some very realistic and sound conclusions as to what ought to be in our lives. I'll take these illustrations out of the revelations that the Lord has given us.

"You Have Not Understood"

Case study number one: There was a man named Oliver Cowdery. In the early days he operated as an amanuensis to the Prophet. He was the scribe. He wrote down the words that the Prophet dictated while the Spirit rested upon him in the translation processes (the Book of Mormon was then being translated). Brother Cowdery was relatively spiritually immature at that time, and he sought and desired to do something beyond his then present spiritual capacity. He wanted to translate. And so he importuned the Prophet, the Prophet took the matter up with the Lord, and they got a revelation. The Lord said, "Oliver Cowdery, verily, verily, I say unto you, that assuredly as the Lord liveth, who is your God and your Redeemer, even so surely shall you receive a knowledge of whatsoever things you shall ask in faith, with an honest heart, believing that you shall receive. . . ." And then one thing he might receive is defined as, "a knowledge concerning the engravings of old records, which are ancient, which contain those parts of my scripture of which has been spoken by the manifestation of my Spirit."

Having thus dealt with the specific problem, then the Lord revealed a principle that applies to it and all other like situations: "Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation." (D&C 8:1-3.)

Oliver did what a good many of us would have done. He had the instructions I have read, and he assumed that they meant what they seemed on the surface to say, which was that if in faith he asked God, he'd have power to translate. But in his condition of relative spiritual immaturity, he hadn't yet learned what was involved in asking of God, or how to generate the kind of faith or do the specific thing that has to be done in order to get an answer to a prayer. And so he asked. And as you know, he failed; he was totally unable to translate. This caused some concern, I suppose, to him and the Prophet. The matter was referred back to the Lord, whose promise they had been attempting to conform to; and the answer came, the reason came, why he couldn't translate: "Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me." (D&C 9:7.)

Now, seemingly, that's all he'd been instructed to do, to ask in faith; but implicit in asking in faith is the precedent requirement that we do everything in our power to accomplish the goal that we seek. We use the agency with which we have been endowed. We use every faculty and capacity and ability that we possess to bring about the eventuality that may be involved. This is translating the Book of Mormon, it's choosing a wife, it's choosing employment, it's doing any one of ten thousand important things that arise in our lives.

The Lord continued:

". . . I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

"But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me." (D&C 9:8-9.)

How do you choose a wife? I've heard a lot of young people from Brigham Young University and elsewhere say, "I've got to get a feeling of inspiration. I've got to get some revelation. I've got to fast and pray and get the Lord to manifest to me whom I should marry." Well, maybe it will be a little shock to you, but never in my life did I ever ask the Lord whom I ought to marry. It never occurred to me to ask him. I went out and found the girl I wanted; she suited me; I evaluated and weighed the proposition, and it

just seemed a hundred percent to me as though this ought to be. Now, if I'd done things perfectly, I'd have done some counseling with the Lord, which I didn't do; but all I did was pray to the Lord and ask for some guidance and direction in connection with the decision that I'd reached. A more perfect thing to have done would have been to counsel with him relative to the decision and get a spiritual confirmation that the conclusion, which I by my agency and faculties had arrived at, was the right one.

“Why Are You Asking Me?”

Now, case study number two: There was a man whose name is not preserved to us in the ancient record. He's known as the brother of Jared. From other sources we know his name was Moriancumer. He was the spiritual leader, initially, of the Jaredite people. As they started their progress from the tower of Babel to their American promised land, he was the one who communed with the Lord to get the direction, the spiritual guidance that they as a people needed.

And some very interesting things occurred. They got to the waters that they were going to cross, and the Lord said to him, “Build some barges.” But interestingly, the Lord didn't tell him how to build the barges. The brother of Jared had done it on a previous occasion; he didn't need instruction; he didn't need revelation to guide him. So he built the barges.

But this time they were going to be used under some peculiar and difficult circumstances, and he needed something more than was now present in them: he needed some air. And this was a problem that was beyond him. So he took that matter up with the Lord, and because it was totally beyond his capacity to solve, the Lord solved it for him and said, “Do thus and so and you'll have air.”

But then the brother of Jared—having confidence because he was talking to the Lord, because he was communing and getting answers—asked another question: he asked for a solution to a problem that he should have figured out by himself and not taken up with the Lord. He said, “What will we do for light in the vessels?”

And the Lord talked to him about it a little and then he said this: “What will ye that I should do that ye may have light in your vessels?” (Eth. 2:23.) In effect, “What are you asking me for? This is something you should have solved.” And he talked a little more, and he repeated in essence the question:

“What will ye that I should prepare for you that ye may have light when ye are swallowed up in the depths of the sea?” (Eth. 2:25.) In other words, “Moriancumer, this is your problem. Why are you troubling me? I've given you your agency; you are endowed with capacity and ability. Get out and solve the problem.”

Well, the brother of Jared got the message. He went up into a mount called Shelem, and the record says he “did molten out of a rock sixteen small stones; and they were white and clear, even as transparent glass.” (Eth. 3:1.)

Well, the brother of Jared took sixteen little crystals of some sort (he could hold all of them in his hands) up on the mount. The record says, “He did carry them in his hands upon the top of the mount” (Eth. 3:1), and then he said in effect to the Lord, “Now this is what I hope you will do.” You really don't tell the Lord what to do, but you get some inspiration, and you use your judgment, and then you talk the matter over with him. And so Moriancumer said to the Lord: “Touch these stones, O Lord, with thy finger, and prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness; and they shall shine forth unto us in the vessels which we have prepared, that we may have light while we shall cross the sea.” (Eth. 3:4.)

And the Lord did what the brother of Jared asked, and this is the occasion when he then saw the finger of the Lord; and, while he was in tune, he received revelation that exceeded anything that any prophet had ever gained up to that moment. The Lord revealed more to him about his nature and personality than ever theretofore had come forth, and it all came about because he'd done everything that he could do and because he counseled with the Lord.

There's a fine balance between agency and inspiration. We're expected to do everything in our power and then to seek an answer from the Lord, a confirming seal that we've reached the right conclusion; and sometimes, happily, in addition, we get added truths and knowledge that we hadn't even supposed.

“They Shall Counsel between Themselves and Me”

Now, case study number three: In the early history of the Church, the Lord commanded the Saints to assemble in a certain place in Missouri. The decree went forth: “Assemble.” Specifically, the decree went forth, “Let the Presiding Bishop come here and do

such and such." Now notice what happened. The Lord is talking:

". . . as I spake concerning my servant Edward Partridge, this land is the land of his residence, and those whom he has appointed for his counselors; and also the land of the residence of him whom I have appointed to keep my storehouse;

"Wherefore, let them bring their families to this land, [and here's the point] as they shall counsel between themselves and me." (D&C 58:24–25.)

You see, the Lord said "assemble" to Zion. The details and the arrangements, however, the *how* and the *when* and the *circumstances*, are to be determined by the agency of those who are called to assemble, but they are to counsel with the Lord. Now, when you counsel with the Lord, you talk something over. I bring my children in and we counsel on a problem. I don't tell them what ought to be; I say, "What do you think? What's your evaluation? What do you want to do in this situation? What's the best thing to do?" And they tell me what they think, and if I happen to have any wisdom or judgment on the matter, I express my views. The Lord has all wisdom, all knowledge, and all power; he knows how to govern and control and direct us in a perfect manner. He lets us determine what we should do, but he expects us to counsel with him.

Now, after the Lord had said this to the Presiding Bishopric of the Church, he gave the principle that governed in that situation, and it governs in all situations. And this is one of our glorious revealed truths. He said:

"For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

"Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.

"But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned." (D&C 58:26–29.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith was asked, "How do you govern so great and diverse a people as the Latter-day Saints?"

He replied, "I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves."

Now, that's the order of heaven. That's how the Almighty operates. That's how the Church is supposed to operate. We're supposed to learn correct principles and then govern ourselves. We make our own choices, and then we present the matter to the Lord and get his approving, ratifying seal.

"Counsel with the Lord in All Thy Doings"

Those are the three case studies; let us come to the revealed conclusion. There was a man named Alma, a mighty and a great prophet. He had a son named Helaman, who was a holy and righteous man, following the pattern that his father had set. And to Helaman, Alma said this: "O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God. Yea, and cry unto God for all thy support." (Al. 37:35–36.) Do you think that if you're counseled to pray to the Lord for support, both temporal and spiritual, that that's all you have to do? The Lord's prayer says, "Give us this day our daily bread." Do you go out and sit down in the desert or on the mountain and pray with all the fervor you can possess, "Give us this day our daily bread," or do you go out and plant crops and raise herds and do everything that you can in your situation to accomplish the end result?

Continuing: "Yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever." (Al. 37:36.) Now note: "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good." (Al. 37:37.)

What was Oliver Cowdery's problem? "You took no thought save it was to ask . . . you must study it out in your mind." (D&C 9:7–8.)

Well, do you want a wife? Do you want anything that's right and proper? You go to work, and you use the agency and power and ability that God has given you. You use every faculty, you get all the judgment that you can centered on the problem, you make up your own mind, and then, to be sure that you don't err, you counsel with the Lord. You talk it over. You say, "This is what I think; what do you think?" And if you get the calm, sweet surety that comes only from the Holy Spirit, you know you've reached the right conclusion; but if there's anxiety and uncertainty in your heart, then you'd

better start over, because the Lord's hand is not in it, and you're not getting the ratifying seal that, as a member of the Church who has the gift of the Holy Ghost, you are entitled to receive.

"... yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep, and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day."

(Al. 37:37.) If you learn how to use the agency that God has given you, and if you try to make your own decisions, and if you reach conclusions that are sound and right, and if you counsel with the Lord and get his ratifying seal of approval upon the conclusions you've reached, then you've received revelation, for one thing; and for another thing, you're going to have the great reward of eternal life and be lifted up at the last day. We're not all equal by any means; some have one talent and capacity and some another. But if we use the talents we have, somehow we'll come out all right.

One Monday when we were celebrating Washington's birthday, I was down at my mother's sawing a log in the backyard. She came out to give me some direction and see how I was doing it, and she wasn't very pleased. She thought I ought to do it differently. She went back into the house and in a few minutes my younger brother arrived. She said to him, "I think you'd better go out in the backyard and give Bruce some help and see that he does this thing right." And then she said to him, "Bruce isn't very bright." Well, so I'm not. So I start where I am, and I go forward from there. I start using such talent as I have, and I begin to apply the principles of eternal truth to my life. I consult and counsel with the Lord in the process, and no matter where I am, the gospel takes me forward and onward and upward, and blessings flow to me that will ennoble and sanctify and improve me in this life and eventually give me glory and honor and dignity in the life to come.

We Have the Spirit of Revelation

I think we've said enough; the principles are before us. Let me just do one thing more. Let me do, in effect, what my friend Alma would do. After he'd preached a sermon, he said, "And this is not all. Do

If you get the calm, sweet surety that comes only from the Holy Spirit, you know you've reached the right conclusion.

ye not suppose that I know of these things myself?" (Al. 5:45.) That is he'd given them the case studies, he'd quoted the revelations, he'd told them what was involved, and then he bore personal testimony. This is what we ought to do in the Church. We ought to learn how to teach by the power of the Spirit, so that when we get through talking about the gospel

subjects we'll know whether what we've said is right, and we'll be in a position to bear testimony, not alone of the truth and the divinity of the work, but also that the doctrine we proclaim and the everlasting truths we expound are right, that they are the mind and voice and will of the Lord. The glorious, wondrous thing about this work and about these doctrines is that they are true. There isn't anything in this world, no truth that we can conceive of, to compare with the truth that the work we're engaged in is true, that the Lord's hand is here. It's a literal fact that we have the gift and power of the Holy Ghost. We have the spirit of revelation, the spirit of testimony, the spirit of prophecy. These things must be, or we're not in the Church and kingdom of God; we're not the Lord's people.

The fact is that we do have them; revelation works. Don't shy away from getting revelation. Joseph Smith said, "God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what he will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 149.) We're entitled to the spirit of revelation, but what I'm attempting to teach is that there's a how and a procedure, and there are conditions precedent. It is our obligation to go to work on our problems and then counsel with the Lord and get the ratifying seal of the Holy Spirit on the conclusions that we've reached; and that ratifying seal is the spirit of revelation.

God grant us wisdom in these things. God grant us the courage and the ability to stand on our own feet and use our agency and the abilities and capacities we possess; then let's be sufficiently humble and amenable to the Spirit to bow our will to his will, to get his ratifying, confirming seal of approval, to get in our lives in that way the spirit of revelation. And if we so do, there's no question about the result; it's peace in this life; it's glory and honor and dignity in the life to come.

MATURITY

Personal conduct is the only true measurement of maturity.

—Elder Marvin J. Ashton

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Two years make a tremendous difference in the life of a young man. He goes out a boy and comes back a man. He goes out immature, he comes back mature and strong, gracious, and a worker and willing to serve. He goes back to college in most cases and there he will make higher grades than he ever made before, because he has purpose in his life. He is already enjoying purpose, and now he has a new purpose” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 590–91).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Each of us, with discipline and effort, has the capacity to control his thoughts and his actions. This is part of the process of developing spiritual, physical, and emotional maturity” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 57; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 47).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

“Some weeks ago a man holding a high office in the Church asked a special favor of me. ‘Would you be good enough to take the time to listen while a mother, father, and their teenage daughter, special friends of mine, try to talk to each other?’

“As the four of us sat together, it immediately became obvious that all channels of communication were jammed with prejudice, threats, accusations, and resentment. As the verbal storms developed with bitter intensity, I found myself the only listener. Even though they had individually and collectively agreed I would be the counselor, judge, arbiter, or referee, if you please, I found myself waiting patiently for an opportunity to be heard. During the heated and emotional confrontation, the teenager repeatedly expressed her resentment with: ‘You can’t talk to me like that. I am an adult now. You can’t treat me like that. I am an adult now. You can’t dominate my life anymore. I am an adult now.’

“Each time she said ‘I am an adult now,’ I cringed. By definition, an adult is a person who has attained the age of maturity—full grown. While it is true a person may be legally classified as an adult when he or she reaches a certain age, for our purposes today the kind of adult status we are talking about must be earned by actions and attitude.

“I am not quite sure who has the right or responsibility to declare someone an adult, but I am quite certain that often the least qualified to make the declaration would be the individual himself. If a person is mature, he or she will not need to announce it. Personal conduct is the only true measurement of maturity. Adult classification, when it pertains to behavior, does not come with age, wrinkles, or gray hair. Perhaps it is not too far off the mark to say adult conduct is a process. Mature conduct is generally developed through self-discipline, resilience, and continuing effort.

“In fairness to the teenager, even though her declaration of ‘I am an adult now’ didn’t impress me favorably, there were times during the visit when I thought she showed more maturity than others in the room. When we who are more senior use an expression like ‘I am older than you’ to clinch a point, I am not too sure it is very effective. How much better it is to gain respect and love through worthy parental conduct than to seek it through the means of the age differential.

“Young men and young women worldwide, you, as well as your parents, need not announce or proclaim your maturity. By your faith and works you will be known for what you are. By your fruits you will be known and classified. Those among us who use abusive arguments, temper tantrums, demeaning and painful criticism, fruitless counter-complaints, and disrespect will benefit no one. Let us put away petty malice, resentment, and retaliatory practices that are self-destructive and return to a path of safety well marked by the Good Shepherd.

“It takes courage to flee from verbal contention. When maturity begins to set in, adult lives set in. ‘Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

“‘And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you’ (Ephesians 4:31–32). It is alarming how many older people go through life without ever becoming real adults.

“For many years I have had a very vivid picture in my mind of Jesus Christ standing before Pilate. While Jesus stood in front of an angry mob, who sneered and condemned, Pilate tried to get Him to respond and retaliate. He tried to get Him to declare himself a king. Jesus was silent. His life was his sermon. He was perfect in character, a worthy son, the Only Begotten of the Father. His maturity, if you please, would speak for itself” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 78–79; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 65).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Just as the capacity to defer gratification is a sign of real maturity, likewise the willingness to wait for deferred explanation is a sign of real faith and of trust spread over time” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 91; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 71).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“We are here on earth to gain experience we can obtain in no other way. We are given the opportunity

to grow, to develop, and to gain spiritual maturity. To do that, we must learn to apply truth. How we face challenges and resolve difficult problems is crucially important to our happiness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 38; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 30).

Elder Marion D. Hanks

“So it is with a life of honesty and responsibility, of sexual purity, of integrity, of selfless service. . . .

“When Paul spoke of charity out of the ‘pure heart,’ I believe he was talking about the sense of honest, unselfish concern for others that is the mark of moral and spiritual maturity. . . . To truly care about others, to be considerate and kind and responsible reflects true maturity” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 59–60).

MEN'S DIVINE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The title father is sacred and eternal. It is significant that of all the titles of respect and honor and admiration that are given to Deity, he has asked us to address him as Father.

—Father, Consider Your Ways

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Harold B. Lee

“All women have a desire for companionship. They want to be wives; they want to be mothers; and when men refuse to assume their responsibility of marriage, for no good reason, they are unable to consummate marriage. Brethren, we are not doing our duty as holders of the priesthood when we go beyond the marriageable age and withhold ourselves from an honorable marriage to these lovely women, who are seeking the fulfillment of a woman’s greatest desire to have a husband, a family, and a home” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 119–20; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 100).

President Spencer W. Kimball

“The Lord organized the whole program in the beginning with a father who procreates, provides, and loves and directs, and a mother who conceives and bears and nurtures and feeds and trains. The Lord could have organized it otherwise but chose to have a unit with responsibility and purposeful associations where children train and discipline each other and come to love, honor, and appreciate each other. The family is the great plan of life as conceived and organized by our Father in heaven” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 151; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 15).

President Howard W. Hunter

“Together with your wife, you determine the spiritual climate of your home” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 51).

FATHER, CONSIDER YOUR WAYS

Pamphlet

Brethren, have you considered the challenge it is to be a successful father? It takes hard work and planning to rear your children in righteousness and have unity with your wife, to build a constant feeling of love and harmony in the home. Why is being a successful, righteous father such a challenge for almost any man?

The Lord’s plan of salvation requires that you pass through trials in this mortal life. Those trials seem to be greatest when you reach fatherhood; but be assured—fatherhood, in a sense, is an apprenticeship to godhood. This presentation will help give you a broader perspective of what it means to be a father; to give you an understanding and a feeling of your worth to your Father in heaven. Father, consider your ways!

Through his Son, Jesus Christ, God created the heavens and the earth. At this time you lived with him as his spirit child, and you shouted for joy when this earth was formed. You knew the necessity of coming to earth, of gaining a physical body, and of passing through the many trials of earth life. You knew that at times you would make mistakes. You also knew that through the atoning sacrifice of your Brother and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, you could repent of these mistakes and be found clean.

You also knew that Jesus Christ was to be your example and would show you the way to return back to your Father in heaven. “So God created man in his own image . . . male and female created he them.” (Genesis 1:27.) And he gave man dominion, or stewardship, over all things on the earth and made him accountable for them. His greatest stewardship and accountability would be for children.

Marriage, as ordained of God, is the lawful union of man and wife, not only for this earth life, but for all eternity. A paramount purpose of marriage is to clothe spirit children of our Father in heaven with earthly bodies. When your first child is born, you become a father. The title *father* is sacred and eternal. It is significant that of all the titles of respect and honor and admiration that are given to Deity, he has asked us to address him as Father.

A father is the presiding authority in his family. On this earth your initial experience of being a father of a family gives you opportunities to learn to govern

with love and patience, and with your wife to teach each of your children correct principles; to prepare them to become proper fathers and mothers. When you do this according to the pattern given us by the Lord, and you endure to the end, your family will be added upon eternally. A righteous family is an eternal unit. On this earth, priesthood quorums and all other organizations of the Church aid you, the father, and your wife and family in achieving these eternal goals.

Father, with your wife you have entrusted to you from God the power to be cocreators with him, to multiply and replenish the earth. As cocreators, you have delegated to you the opportunity and responsibility to bring into mortality and teach in light and truth spirit children of our Father in heaven.

When you recognize the importance of teaching your children, you become humble, because at once you realize that this is accomplished by precept and example. You cannot be one thing and effectively teach another. You must live and study and pray for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. You must purify and organize your life so that your example and leadership reflect the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You must plan your day as guided by the Spirit of the Lord, earnestly seeking your own welfare and the welfare of your family before other cares blind you to these first responsibilities. As we have been taught by living prophets, "No other success in life can compensate for failure in the home," (see David O. McKay in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1964, p. 5) and "The greatest work you will ever do will be within the walls of your own home." (See Harold B. Lee, *Strengthening the Home*, 1973, p. 7.)

It must be emphasized that as a father, you are always teaching. For good or ill your family learns your ways, your beliefs, your heart, your ideas, your concerns. Your children may or may not choose to follow you, but the example you give is the greatest light you hold before your children, and you are accountable for that light.

At one time a young father acted somewhat unkindly to his wife. Three days later this same man saw his three-year-old daughter use his very words in acting unkindly to her mother. The man was sobered and came to ask himself this question, "Do I love my children and family enough to repent, to change my life for their welfare?"

The obligations, the burdens, the responsibility of being a proper father may seem overwhelming. Fortunately, you are not required to preside and judge and act without counsel, without assistance. You have a wife—a companion, a counselor, a partner, a helpmeet, a friend.

Is she one with you? Do you thank the Lord daily for her? Do you keep the covenants you made with her and with the Lord in the temple? Do you always strive to keep your thoughts and words and actions pure? Do you realize that when you offend her in any way it is like offending yourself, since you are one?

Does she know of your love for her? Is your relationship one of continual courtship? Do you regularly spend time together—alone, where your expression and actions reassure her of your appreciation and reliance on her companionship? Do you exercise righteous leadership with her?

Do you always keep sight of your marriage goal, the creation of an eternal unit bound together by love and by the power and ordinances of the priesthood?

Father, you are accountable to the Lord for what you have and what you are. In the future you will surely stand before him. What will be your report concerning your family? Will you be able to report that your home was a place of love, a bit of heaven? That daily family prayer and secret prayer were fostered? That it was a house of fasting? That in family home evenings and at other times you and your wife taught your children the basic principles of the gospel?

Will you be able to report that you created an environment in your home to build faith in a living God, to encourage learning, to teach order, obedience, and sacrifice? That you often shared your testimony of the reality of your Father in heaven, of the truthfulness of the restored gospel with your wife and children? Will you be able to report that you followed the living prophets? That your home was where your tender children could feel protected and safe, and where they felt the love, and acceptance, and warmth of you and their mother?

And what will be your report concerning the temporal welfare of your family? It is God's plan that you work for what you get. Your occupation should be honorable and should provide sufficiently to meet the needs of your family. Are your duties and labors undertaken with a joyful and thankful spirit? Do your wife and children feel secure because you feel

good about your occupation? Do you practice frugality and thrift and avoid debt by living within your income, your tithed income? Do your wife and children feel a sense of tradition and stability because the family home is not relocated on a whim, for unsound reasons?

Father, are you committed to the eternal welfare of each of your children? Do you labor and love and strive with them as long as they live?

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. It is not a matter of whether you are most worthy or best qualified, but it is a matter of law and appointment. You preside at the meal table, at family prayer. You preside at family home evening; and as guided by the Spirit of the Lord, you see that your children are taught correct principles. It is your place to give direction relating to all of family life.

You give father's blessings. You take an active part in establishing family rules and discipline. As a leader in your home you plan and sacrifice to achieve the blessing of a unified and happy family. To do all of this requires that you live a family-centered life.

Now, you are a son of God. You were sent to this earth to gain a physical body and to prove yourself in the trials and experiences of this earth life. It is the plan of your Father in heaven that you have been or will be sealed for eternity to a companion. In marriage, you and your wife are one in purpose as you strive to fulfill the purposes of the Lord. As a cocreator with God you bring forth children.

You prepare your family and each member in the family to serve their fellowman, to build the kingdom of God on earth. You conscientiously provide for their material well-being. In the family you learn to govern righteously. You teach your family generally and each child individually the doctrines of the kingdom.

The day will come when you will stand before the Lord and report your stewardship as a father on earth. Father, consider your ways. What will be your report?

A Summary

1. Your fatherhood is, in a sense, an apprenticeship to godhood.
2. Your earth life is a part of the plan of salvation that enables you to become like your Father in heaven.
3. Jesus Christ is your example to show you the way to return to your Father in heaven.
4. A righteous family is an eternal unity.
5. You are the presiding authority in the home.
6. The Church exists to assist you to return with your family to the presence of our Father in heaven.
7. You and your wife are cocreators with God for the eternal welfare of his spirit children.
8. You teach most effectively by example.
9. The greatest work you will ever do will be within the walls of your own home.
10. You must seek the spirit of the Lord in leading your family.
11. The mother sustains the father and is his helpmeet, his counselor.
12. You and your wife are one in purpose.
13. You have the responsibility for the physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being of your children.
14. You have the responsibility to lead your family by—
 - A. Governing, correcting, nurturing, and blessing them in meekness, tenderness, and love on the principles of righteousness. (See D&C 121.)
 - B. Creating an environment in the home conducive to order, prayer, worship, learning, fasting, happiness, and the Spirit of the Lord.
 - C. Teaching them the principles of faith in Christ, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, enduring to the end, and praying vocally and in secret.
 - D. Loving God and keeping his commandments.

TO THE FATHERS IN ISRAEL



President Ezra Taft Benson

President of the Church

In Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 59–63; or Ensign, Nov. 1987, 48–51; see also To the Fathers in Israel, pamphlet

My dear brethren, I am grateful to be here with you in this glorious assembly of the priesthood of God. I pray that the Spirit of the Lord will be with me and with you as I address you on a most vital subject. This evening I would like to speak to the fathers assembled here and throughout the Church about their sacred callings.

I hope you young men will also listen carefully, inasmuch as you are now preparing to become the future fathers of the Church.

An Eternal Calling

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 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.

President Harold B. Lee truly stated that “the most important of the Lord’s work that you [fathers] will ever do will be the work you do within the walls of your own home. Home teaching, bishopric’s work, and other Church duties are all important, but the most important work is within the walls of your home” (*Strengthening the Home* [pamphlet, 1973], p. 7).

What, then, is a father’s specific responsibility within the sacred walls of his home? May I suggest two basic responsibilities of every father in Israel.

Provide for Material Needs

First, you have a sacred responsibility to provide for the material needs of your family.

The Lord clearly defined the roles of providing for and rearing a righteous posterity. In the beginning, Adam, not Eve, was instructed to earn the bread by the sweat of his brow.

The Apostle Paul counsels husbands and fathers, “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 Timothy 5:8).

Early in the history of the restored Church, the Lord specifically charged men with the obligation to provide for their wives and family. In January of 1832 He said, “Verily I say unto you, that every man who is obliged to provide for his own family, let him provide, and he shall in nowise lose his crown” (D&C 75:28). Three months later the Lord said again, “Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken” (D&C 83:2). This is the divine right of a wife and mother. While she cares for and nourishes her children at home, her husband earns the living for the family, which makes this nourishing possible.

In a home where there is an able-bodied husband, he is expected to be the breadwinner. Sometimes we hear of husbands who, because of economic conditions, have lost their jobs and expect the

wives to go out of the home and work, even though the husband is still capable of providing for his family. In these cases, we urge the husband to do all in his power to allow his wife to remain in the home caring for the children while he continues to provide for his family the best he can, even

though the job he is able to secure may not be ideal and family budgeting may have to be tighter.

Also, the need for education or material things does not justify the postponing of children in order to keep the wife working as the breadwinner of the family.

Counsel of President Kimball

I remember the counsel of our beloved prophet Spencer W. Kimball to married students. He said: “I have told tens of thousands of young folks that when they marry they should not wait for children until they have finished their schooling and financial desires. . . . They should live together normally and let the children come. . . .

“ . . . I know of no scriptures,” President Kimball continued, “where an authorization is given to young wives to withhold their families and go to work to put their husbands through school. There are thousands of husbands who have worked their own way through school and have reared families

Fathers, yours is an eternal calling from which you are never released.

at the same time" ("Marriage Is Honorable," in *Speeches of the Year, 1973* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1974], p. 263).

A Mother's Role in the Home

Brethren of the priesthood, I continue to emphasize the importance of mothers staying home to nurture, care for, and train their children in the principles of righteousness.

As I travel throughout the Church, I feel that the great majority of Latter-day Saint mothers earnestly want to follow this counsel. But we know that sometimes the mother works outside of the home at the encouragement, or even insistence, of her husband. It is he who wants the items of convenience that the extra income can buy. Not only will the family suffer in such instances, brethren, but your own spiritual growth and progression will be hampered. I say to all of you, the Lord has charged men with the responsibility to provide for their families in such a way that the wife is allowed to fulfill her role as mother in the home.

Family Preparedness More Urgent Today

Fathers, another vital aspect of providing for the material needs of your family is the provision you should be making for your family in case of an emergency. Family preparedness has been a long-established welfare principle. It is even more urgent today.

I ask you earnestly, have you provided for your family a year's supply of food, clothing, and, where possible, fuel? The revelation to produce and store food may be as essential to our temporal welfare today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah.

Also, are you living within your income and saving a little?

Are you honest with the Lord in the payment of your tithes? Living this divine law will bring both spiritual and material blessings.

Yes, brethren, as fathers in Israel you have a great responsibility to provide for the material needs of your family and to have the necessary provisions in case of emergency.

Provide Spiritual Leadership

Second, you have a sacred responsibility to provide spiritual leadership in your family.

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], pp. 4–5).

However, along with that presiding position come important obligations. 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.

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.

Particularly is this true in your relationship with your wife.

Love Your Wives

Here again the counsel from the Apostle Paul is most beautiful and to the point. He said simply, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church" (Ephesians 5:25).

In latter-day revelation the Lord speaks again of this obligation. He said, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22). To my knowledge there is only one other thing in all scripture that we are commanded to love with all our hearts, and that is God Himself. Think what that means!

This kind of love can be shown for your wives in so many ways. First and foremost, nothing except God Himself takes priority over your wife in your life—not work, not recreation, not hobbies. Your wife is your precious, eternal helpmate—your companion.

What does it mean to love someone with all your heart? It means to love with all your emotional feelings and with all your devotion. Surely when you love your wife with all your heart, you cannot demean her, criticize her, find fault with her, or abuse her by words, sullen behavior, or actions.

What does it mean to “cleave unto her”? It means to stay close to her, to be loyal and faithful to her, to communicate with her, and to express your love for her.

Love means being sensitive to her feelings and needs. She wants to be noticed and treasured. She wants to be told that you view her as lovely and attractive and important to you. Love means putting her welfare and self-esteem as a high priority in your life.

You should be grateful that she is the mother of your children and the queen of your home, grateful that she has chosen homemaking and motherhood—to bear, to nourish, to love, and to train your children—as the noblest calling of all.

Husbands, recognize your wife's intelligence and her ability to counsel with you as a real partner regarding family plans, family activities, and family budgeting. Don't be stingy with your time or with your means.

Give her the opportunity to grow intellectually, emotionally, and socially as well as spiritually.

Remember, brethren, love can be nurtured and nourished by little tokens. Flowers on special occasions are wonderful, but so is your willingness to help with the dishes, change diapers, get up with a crying child in the night, and leave the television or the newspaper to help with the dinner. Those are the quiet ways we say “I love you” with our actions. They bring rich dividends for such little effort.

This kind of loving priesthood leadership applies to your children as well as to your wife.

A Father's Role in the Home

Mothers play an important role as the heart of the home, but this in no way lessens the equally important role fathers should play, as head of the home, in nurturing, training, and loving their children.

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. Your place is to give direction to all family life. You should take an active part in establishing family rules and discipline.

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. He cannot do this when there is bickering, quarreling, contention, or unrighteous behavior. The powerful effect of righteous fathers in setting an example, disciplining and training, nurturing and loving is vital to the spiritual welfare of his children.

Give Spiritual Leadership

With love in my heart for the fathers in Israel, may I suggest ten specific ways that fathers can give spiritual leadership to their children:

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.
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.
3. Whenever possible, attend Church meetings together as a family. Family worship under your leadership is vital to your children's spiritual welfare.
4. Go on daddy-daughter dates and father-and-sons' outings with your children. As a family, go on campouts and picnics, to ball games and recitals, to school programs, and so forth. Having Dad there makes all the difference.
5. Build traditions of family vacations and trips and outings. These memories will never be forgotten by your children.
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.
7. Teach your children to work, and show them the value of working toward a worthy goal. Establishing mission funds and education funds for your children shows them what Dad considers to be important.
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.

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.
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.

Your Most Important Calling

Oh, husbands and fathers in Israel, you can do so much for the salvation and exaltation of your families! Your responsibilities are so important.

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.

May you always provide for the material needs of your family and, with your eternal companion at your side, may you fulfill your sacred responsibility to provide the spiritual leadership in your home.

To this end I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

BEING A RIGHTEOUS HUSBAND AND FATHER



*President Howard W. Hunter
President of the Church*

*In Conference Report,
Oct. 1994, 66–70;
or Ensign, Nov. 1994,
49–51*

My dear brethren of the priesthood, I consider it a privilege to meet with you this evening in this general priesthood meeting. The priesthood is the greatest brotherhood on the earth. I feel great strength in seeing your faithfulness and feeling your love and sustaining vote. We are particularly grateful to have so many of our Aaronic Priesthood brethren here with their fathers or advisers.

Marriage Is a Sacred Privilege and Obligation

The subject of my address this evening will be more particularly directed to the husbands and fathers. All of you who hold the Aaronic Priesthood will soon arrive at the years of marriage and fatherhood.

Therefore, what I say tonight has application to all present.

I wish to speak of the relationship that a man holding the priesthood should have with his wife and children. With a knowledge of the plan of salvation as a foundation, a man who holds the priesthood looks upon marriage as a sacred privilege and obligation. It is not good for man nor for woman to be alone. Man is not complete without woman. Neither can fill the measure of their creation without the other (see 1 Corinthians 11:11; Moses 3:18). Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God (see D&C 49:15–17). Only through the new and everlasting covenant of marriage can they realize the fulness of eternal blessings (see D&C 131:1–4; 132:15–19). As a matter of priesthood responsibility, a man, under normal circumstances, should not unduly postpone marriage. Brethren, the Lord has spoken plainly on this matter. It is your sacred and solemn responsibility to follow his counsel and the words of his prophets.

The prophets of the past have spoken also of those who may not have opportunity to marry in this life. President Lorenzo Snow said:

“There is no Latter-day Saint who dies after having lived a faithful life who will lose anything because of having failed to do certain things when opportunities were not furnished him or her. In other words, if a young man or a young woman has no opportunity of getting married, and they live faithful lives up to the time of their death, they will have all the blessings, exaltation, and glory that any man or woman will have who had this opportunity and improved it. That is sure and positive” (*The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, comp. Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984], p. 138).

I believe President Snow’s statement to be true.

Show Perfect Moral Fidelity

A man who holds the priesthood shows perfect moral fidelity to his wife and gives her no reason to doubt his faithfulness. A husband is to love his wife with all his heart and cleave unto her and none else (see D&C 42:22–26). President Spencer W. Kimball explained:

“The words none else eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes pre-eminent in the life of the husband or wife and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take

precedence over the companion spouse" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], p. 250).

The Lord forbids and his church condemns any and every intimate relationship outside of marriage.

Infidelity on the part of a man breaks the heart of his wife and loses her confidence and the confidence of his children (see Jacob 2:35).

Be faithful in your marriage covenants in thought, word, and deed. Pornography, flirtations, and unwholesome fantasies erode one's character and strike at the foundation of a happy marriage. Unity and trust within a marriage are thereby destroyed. One who does not control his thoughts and thus commits adultery in his heart, if he does not repent, shall not have the Spirit but shall deny the faith and shall fear (see D&C 42:23; 63:16).

Be faithful in your marriage covenants in thought, word, and deed.

Show Reverence for Motherhood

A man who holds the priesthood has reverence for motherhood. Mothers are given a sacred privilege to "bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of [the] Father continued, that he may be glorified" (D&C 132:63).

The First Presidency has said: "Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind" (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75], 6:178). The priesthood cannot work out its destiny, nor can God's purposes be fulfilled, without our helpmates. Mothers perform a labor the priesthood cannot do. For this gift of life, the priesthood should have love unbounded for the mothers of their children.

Honor your wife's unique and divinely appointed role as a mother in Israel and her special capacity to bear and nurture children. We are under divine commandment to multiply and replenish the earth and to bring up our children and grandchildren in light and truth (see Moses 2:28; D&C 93:40). You share, as a loving partner, the care of the children. Help her to manage and keep up your home. Help teach, train, and discipline your children.

You should express regularly to your wife and children your reverence and respect for her. Indeed, one of the greatest things a father can do for his children is to love their mother.

Regard the Family as Most Important

A man who holds the priesthood regards the family as ordained of God. Your leadership of the family is your most important and sacred responsibility. The family is the most important unit in time and in eternity and, as such, transcends every other interest in life.

We reiterate what was stated by President David O. McKay: "No other success [in life] can compensate for failure in the home" (quoting J. E. McCulloch, *Home: the Savior of Civilization*, p. 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, p. 116) and President Harold B. Lee: "The most important of the Lord's work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes" (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], p. 255).

Effective family leadership, brethren, requires both quantity and quality time. The teaching and governance of the family must not be left to your wife alone, to society, to school, or even to the Church.

Accept Wife as an Equal Partner

A man who holds the priesthood accepts his wife as a partner in the leadership of the home and family with full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating thereto. Of necessity there must be in the Church and in the home a presiding officer (see D&C 107:21). By divine appointment, the responsibility to preside in the home rests upon the priesthood holder (see Moses 4:22). The Lord intended that the wife be a helpmeet for man (*meet* means equal)—that is, a companion equal and necessary in full partnership. Presiding in righteousness necessitates a shared responsibility between husband and wife; together you act with knowledge and participation in all family matters. For a man to operate independently of or without regard to the feelings and counsel of his wife in governing the family is to exercise unrighteous dominion.

Be Tender in the Intimate Relationship

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.

Be Loving, Not Abusive

Any man who abuses or demeans his wife physically or spiritually is guilty of grievous sin and in need of sincere and serious repentance. Differences should be worked out in love and kindness and with a spirit of mutual reconciliation. A man should always speak to his wife lovingly and kindly, treating her with the utmost respect. Marriage is like a tender flower, brethren, and must be nourished constantly with expressions of love and affection.

You who hold the priesthood must not be abusive in your relationship with children. Seek always to employ the principles of priesthood government set forth in the revelations (see D&C 93:40; 121:34–36, 41–45).

President George Albert Smith wisely counseled: “We should not lose our tempers and abuse one another. . . . Nobody ever abused anybody else when he had the spirit of the Lord. It is always when we have some other spirit” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1950, p. 8).

No man who has been ordained to the priesthood of God can with impunity abuse his wife or child. Sexual abuse of children has long been a cause for excommunication from the Church.

We encourage you, brethren, to remember that priesthood is a righteous authority only. Earn the respect and confidence of your children through your loving relationship with them. A righteous father protects his children with his time and presence in their social, educational, and spiritual activities and responsibilities. Tender expressions of love and affection toward children are as much the responsibility of the father as the mother. Tell your children you love them.

Provide Temporal Support

You who hold the priesthood have the responsibility, unless disabled, to provide temporal support for

your wife and children. No man can shift the burden of responsibility to another, not even to his wife. The Lord has commanded that women and children have claim on their husbands and fathers for their maintenance (see D&C 83; 1 Timothy 5:8). President Ezra Taft Benson has stated that when a husband encourages or insists that his wife work out of the home for their convenience, “not only will the family suffer in such instances, . . . but [his] own spiritual growth and progression will be hampered” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, pp. 60–61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, p. 49).

We urge you to do all in your power to allow your wife to remain in the home, caring for the children while you provide for the family the best you can. We further emphasize that men who abandon their family and fail to meet their responsibility to care for those they have fathered may find their eligibility for a temple recommend and their standing in the Church in jeopardy. In cases of divorce or separation, men must demonstrate that they are meeting family support payments mandated by law and obligated by the principles of the Church in order to qualify for the blessings of the Lord.

Lead Family in Church Participation

A man who holds the priesthood leads his family in Church participation so they will know the gospel and be under the protection of the covenants and ordinances. If you are to enjoy the blessings of the Lord, you must set your own homes in order. Together with your wife, you determine the spiritual climate of your home. Your first obligation is to get your own spiritual life in order through regular scriptural study and daily prayer. Secure and honor your priesthood and temple covenants; encourage your family to do the same.

Teach the Gospel to Family Members

Take seriously your responsibility to teach the gospel to your family through regular family home evening, family prayer, devotional and scripture reading time, and other teaching moments. Give special emphasis to preparation for missionary service and temple marriage. As patriarch in the home, exercise your priesthood through performing the appropriate ordinances for your family and by giving blessings to your wife and children. Next to your own salvation, brethren, there is nothing so important to you as the salvation of your wife and children.

Brethren, I have spoken plainly to you regarding your responsibility as holders of the holy priesthood. If there are areas in your life where improvement may be needed, I encourage you to make this a matter of prayerful consideration.

I testify that this is what the Lord would have the brethren of the priesthood receive at this time. May you be blessed in your efforts to be righteous husbands and fathers, I pray as I bear solemn witness of the truthfulness of that which has been spoken this evening and do so in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

LIVING WORTHY OF THE GIRL YOU WILL SOMEDAY MARRY



*President Gordon B. Hinckley
President of the Church
In Conference Report,
Apr. 1998, 66–69;
or Ensign, May 1998,
49–51*

A week ago President [James E.] Faust and the Young Women general presidency spoke to the young women of the Church in this Tabernacle.

As I looked at that gathering of beautiful young women, the question moved through my mind, “Are we rearing a generation of young men worthy of them?”

Those girls are so fresh and vibrant. They are beautiful. They are bright. They are able. They are faithful. They are virtuous. They are true. They are simply wonderful and delightful young women.

And so tonight, in this great priesthood meeting, I wish to speak to you young men, their counterpart. The title of my talk: “Living Worthy of the Girl You Will Someday Marry.”

The girl you marry will take a terrible chance on you. She will give her all to the young man she marries. He will largely determine the remainder of her life. She will even surrender her name to his name.

As Adam declared in the Garden of Eden:

“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. . . .

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:23–24).

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as young men holding the priesthood of God, you have a tremendous obligation toward the girl you marry. Perhaps you are not thinking much of that now. But the time isn't far away when you will think of it, and now is the time to prepare for that most important day of your lives when you take unto yourself a wife and companion equal with you before the Lord.

Be Absolutely Loyal

That obligation begins with absolute loyalty. As the old Church of England ceremony says, you will marry her “for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, for better or for worse.” She will be yours and yours alone, regardless of the circumstances of your lives. You will be hers and hers alone. There can be eyes for none other. There must be absolute loyalty, undeviating loyalty one to another. Hopefully you will marry her forever, in the house of the Lord, under the authority of the everlasting priesthood. Through all the days of your lives, you must be as true one to another as the polar star.

Be a Young Man of Virtue

The girl you marry can expect you to come to the marriage altar absolutely clean. She can expect you to be a young man of virtue in thought and word and deed.

I plead with you boys tonight to keep yourselves free from the stains of the world. You must not indulge in sleazy talk at school. You must not tell sultry jokes. You must not fool around with the Internet to find pornographic material. You must not dial a long-distance telephone number to listen to filth. You must not rent videos with pornography of any kind. This salacious stuff simply is not for you. Stay away from pornography as you would avoid a serious disease. It is as destructive. It can become habitual, and those who indulge in it get so they cannot leave it alone. It is addictive.

It is a five-billion-dollar business for those who produce it. They make it as titillating and attractive as they know how. It seduces and destroys its victims. It is everywhere. It is all about us. I plead with you young men not to get involved in its use. You simply cannot afford to.

The girl you marry is worthy of a husband whose life has not been tainted by this ugly and corrosive material.

Live the Word of Wisdom

Look upon the Word of Wisdom as more than a commonplace thing. I regard it as the most remarkable document on health of which I know. It came to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1833, when relatively little was known of dietary matters. Now the greater the scientific research, the more certain becomes the proof of Word of Wisdom principles. The evidence against tobacco is now overwhelming, yet we see a tremendous increase in its use by young men and women. The evidence against liquor is just as great.

To me it is an ironic thing that service stations offer beer sales. An individual can get as drunk on beer and be as dangerous on the road as he can on any other alcoholic substance. It is simply a matter of how much he drinks. How absolutely inconsistent it is for a service station, where you get gas so you can drive, to also sell beer that can cause you to drive "under the influence" and become a terrible menace on the highway.

Stay away from it. It will do you no good. It could do you irreparable harm. Suppose you drink and drive and cause the death of someone. You will never get over it as long as you live. It will haunt you night and day. The one simple thing to do is simply to not touch it.

Likewise, stay away from illegal drugs. They can absolutely destroy you. They will take away your powers of reason. They will enslave you in a vicious and terrible way. They will destroy your mind and your body. They will build within you such cravings that you will do anything to satisfy them.

Would any girl in her right mind ever wish to marry a young man who has a drug habit, who is the slave of alcohol, who is addicted to pornography?

Avoid Profanity

Avoid profanity. It is all around you in school. Young people seem to pride themselves on using filthy and obscene language as well as indulging in profanity, taking the name of our Lord in vain. It becomes a vicious habit which, if indulged in while you are young, will find expression throughout

your life. Who would wish to be married to a man whose speech is laden with filth and profanity?

Learn Now to Control Your Temper

There is another serious thing to which many young men become addicted. This is anger. With the least provocation they explode into tantrums of uncontrolled rage. It is pitiful to see someone so weak. But even worse, they are prone to lose all sense of reason and do things which bring later regret.

We hear much these days of the phenomenon called road rage. Drivers become provoked over some small irritation. They fly into a rage, even resulting in murder. A life of regret follows.

As the writer of Proverbs has said, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

If you have a temper, now is the time to learn to control it. The more you do so while you are young, the more easily it will happen. Let no member of this Church ever lose control of himself in such an unnecessary and vicious manner. Let him bring to his marriage words of peace and composure.

I constantly deal with those cases of members of the Church who have been married in the temple and who later divorce and then apply for a cancellation of their temple sealing. When first married, they are full of great expectations, with a wonderful spirit of happiness. But the flower of love fades in an atmosphere of criticism and carping, of mean words and uncontrolled anger. Love flies out the window as contention enters. I repeat, my brethren, if any of you young men have trouble controlling your temper, I plead with you to begin the work of making that correction now. Otherwise you will bring only tears and sorrow into the homes which you will someday establish. Jacob, in the Book of Mormon, condemns his people for their wickedness in marriage. Says he: "Behold, ye have done greater iniquities than the Lamanites, our brethren. Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you. And because of the strictness of the word of God, which cometh down against you, many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds" (Jacob 2:35).

Work for an Education

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 Timothy 5:8).

It is your primary obligation to provide for your family.

Your wife will be fortunate indeed if she does not have to go out and compete in the marketplace. She will be twice blessed if she is able to remain at home while you become the breadwinner of the family.

Education is the key to economic opportunity. The Lord has laid a mandate upon us as a people to acquire learning "by study, and also by faith" (D&C 109:14). It is likely that you will be a better provider if your mind and hands are trained to do something worthwhile in the society of which you will become a part.

Education is the key to economic opportunity.

Be Modest in Your Wants

Be modest in your wants. You do not need a big home with a big mortgage as you begin your lives together. You can and should avoid overwhelming debt. There is nothing that will cause greater tensions in marriage than grinding debt, which will make of you a slave to your creditors. You may have to borrow money to begin ownership of a home. But do not let it be so costly that it will preoccupy your thoughts day and night.

When I was married, my wise father said to me, "Get a modest home and pay off the mortgage so that if economic storms should come, your wife and children will have a roof over their heads."

The girl who marries you will not wish to be married to a tightwad. Neither will she wish to be married to a spendthrift. She is entitled to know all about family finances. She will be your partner. Unless there is full and complete understanding between you and your wife on these matters, there likely will come misunderstandings and suspicions that will cause trouble that can lead to greater problems.

Go on a Mission and Be Married in the Temple

She will wish to be married to someone who loves her, who trusts her, who walks beside her, who is her very best friend and companion. She will wish to be married to someone who encourages her in her Church activity and in community activities which will help her to develop her talents and make a greater contribution to society. She will want to be married to someone who has a sense of service to others, who is disposed to contribute to the Church and to other good causes. She will wish to be married to someone who loves the Lord and seeks to do His will. It is well, therefore, that each of you young men plan to go on a mission, to give unselfishly to your Father in Heaven a tithe of your life, to go forth with a spirit of total unselfishness to preach

the gospel of peace to the world wherever you may be sent. If you are a good missionary, you will return home with the desire to continue to serve the Lord, to keep His commandments, and to do His will. Such behavior will add immeasurably to the happiness of your marriage.

As I have said, you will wish to be married in one place and one place only. That is the house of the Lord. You cannot give to your companion a greater gift than that of marriage in God's holy house, under the protective wing of the sealing covenant of eternal marriage. There is no adequate substitute for it. There should be no other way for you.

Prepare to Become a Righteous Father

Choose carefully and wisely. The girl you marry will be yours forever. You will love her and she will love you through thick and thin, through sunshine and storm. She will become the mother of your children. What greater thing in all this world can there be than to become the father of a precious child, a son or daughter of God, our Father in Heaven, for whom we are given the rights and responsibilities of mortal stewardship.

How precious a thing is a baby. How wonderful a thing is a child. What a marvelous thing is a family. Live worthy of becoming a father of whom your wife and children will be proud.

The Lord has ordained that we should marry, that we shall live together in love and peace and harmony,

that we shall have children and rear them in His holy ways.

And so, my dear young men, you may not think seriously about it now. But 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. Make yourself worthy of the loveliest girl in all the world. Keep yourself worthy through all the days of your life. Be good and true and kind one to another. There is so much of bitterness in the world. There is so much of pain and sorrow that come of angry words. There is so much of tears that follow disloyalty. But there can be so much of happiness if there is an effort to please and an overwhelming desire to make comfortable and happy one's companion.

When all is said and done, this is what the gospel is about. The family is a creation of God. It is the basic creation. The way to strengthen the nation is to strengthen the homes of the people.

I am satisfied that if we would look for the virtues in one another and not the vices, there would be much more of happiness in the homes of our people. There would be far less of divorce, much less of infidelity, much less of anger and rancor and quarreling. There would be more of forgiveness, more of love, more of peace, more of happiness. This is as the Lord would have it.

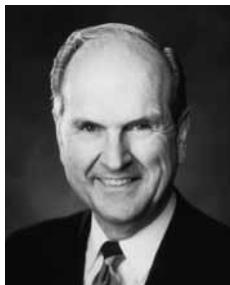
Now Is the Time to Prepare for the Future

Young men, now is the time to prepare for the future. And in that future for most of you is a beautiful young woman whose greatest desire is to bond with you in a relationship that is eternal and everlasting.

You will know no greater happiness than that found in your home. You will have no more serious obligation than that which you face in your home. The truest mark of your success in life will be the quality of your marriage.

God bless you, my dear young men. I could wish for you nothing more wonderful than the love, the absolute total love of a companion of whom you are proud and worthy in every respect. This choice will be the most important of all the choices you make in your life. I pray that heaven may smile upon you in the choice you make, that you may be guided, that you may live without regret, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

OUR SACRED DUTY TO HONOR WOMEN



*Elder Russell M. Nelson
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Apr. 1999, 50–53;
or Ensign, May 1999,
38–40*

It is a joy to be with you tonight, brethren, and wonderful to see so many young men with their fathers. We are assembled because of our desire to hearken to the leaders of the Church. But this congregation is unique. I don't see any mothers. Not one of us could be here without a mother, yet we are all here—without our mothers.

Tonight I am attending with a son, sons-in-law, and grandsons. Where are their mothers? Gathered in the kitchen of our home! What are they doing? Making large batches of homemade doughnuts! And when we return home, we will feast on those doughnuts. While we enjoy them, these mothers, sisters, and daughters will listen intently as each of us speaks of things he learned here tonight. It's a nice family tradition, symbolic of the fact that everything we learn and do as priesthood bearers should bless our families.¹

Let us speak about our worthy and wonderful sisters, particularly our mothers, and consider our sacred duty to honor them.

A Young Man's Sin Dishonors His Mother

When I was a young university student, one of my classmates urgently pleaded with a group of us—his Latter-day Saint friends—to donate blood for his mother, who was bleeding profusely. We went directly to the hospital to have our blood typed and tested. I'll never forget our shock when told that one of the prospective donors was unfit because of a positive blood test for a venereal disease. That infected blood was his own! Fortunately, his mother survived, but I'll never forget his lingering sorrow. He bore the burden of knowing that his personal immorality had disqualified him from giving needed aid to his mother, and he had added to her grief. I learned a great lesson: if one dishonors the

***This choice will
be the most
important of all
the choices you
make in your life.***

commandments of God, one dishonors mother, and if one dishonors mother, one dishonors the commandments of God.²

Honor Motherhood

During my professional career as a doctor of medicine, I was occasionally asked why I chose to do that difficult work. I responded with my opinion that the highest and noblest work in this life is that of a mother. Since that option was not available to me, I thought that caring for the sick might come close. I tried to care for my patients as compassionately and competently as Mother cared for me.

Many years ago the First Presidency issued a statement that has had a profound and lasting influence upon me. "Motherhood," they wrote, "is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels."³

Because mothers are essential to God's great plan of happiness, their sacred work is opposed by Satan, who would destroy the family and demean the worth of women.

You young men need to know that you can hardly achieve your highest potential without the influence of good women, particularly your mother and, in a few years, a good wife. Learn now to show respect and gratitude. Remember that your mother is your mother. She should not need to issue orders. Her wish, her hope, her hint should provide direction that you would honor. Thank her and express your love for her. And if she is struggling to rear you without your father, you have a double duty to honor her.

A Mother's Letter Saves Her Child

The influence of your mother will bless you throughout life, especially when you serve as a missionary. Long years ago, Elder Frank Croft was serving in the state of Alabama. While preaching to the people, he was forcefully abducted by a vicious gang, to be whipped and lashed across his bare back. Elder Croft was ordered to remove his coat and shirt before he was tied to a tree. As he did so, a letter he had recently received from his mother fell to the ground. The vile leader of the gang picked up the letter. Elder Croft closed his eyes and uttered a silent prayer. The attacker read the letter from Elder Croft's mother. From a copy of that letter, I quote:

If one dishonors the commandments of God, one dishonors mother, and if one dishonors mother, one dishonors the commandments of God.

"My beloved son, . . . remember the words of the Savior when He said, . . . 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for you will have your reward in Heaven for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' Also remember the Savior upon the cross suffering from

the sins of the world when He had uttered these immortal words, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Surely, my boy, they who are mistreating you . . . know not what they do or they would not do it. Sometime, somewhere, they will understand and then they will regret their action and they will honor you for the glorious work you are doing. So be patient, my son, love those who mistreat you and say all manner of evil against you and the Lord will bless you and magnify you. . . . Remember also, my son, that day and night, your mother is praying for you."

Elder Croft watched the hateful man as he studied the letter. He would read a line or two, then sit and ponder. He arose to approach his captive. The man said: "Feller, you must have a wonderful mother. You see, I once had one, too." Then addressing the mob, he said: "Men, after reading this Mormon's mother's letter, I just can't go ahead with the job. Maybe we had better let him go." Elder Croft was released without harm.⁴

We are deeply grateful for the faithful mothers and fathers of our wonderful missionaries. The love they bear for their children is sublime.

Honor Your Sisters

We who bear the holy priesthood have a sacred duty to honor our sisters. We are old enough and wise enough to know that teasing is wrong. We respect sisters—not only in our immediate families but all the wonderful sisters in our lives. As daughters of God, their potential is divine. Without them, eternal life would be impossible. Our high regard for them should spring from our love of God and from an awareness of their lofty purpose in His great eternal plan.

Hence, I warn against pornography. It is degrading of women. It is evil. It is infectious, destructive, and addictive. The body has means by which it can cleanse itself from harmful effects of contaminated

food or drink. But it cannot vomit back the poison of pornography. Once recorded, it always remains subject to recall, flashing its perverted images across your mind, with power to draw you away from the wholesome things in life. Avoid it like the plague!

We who bear the holy priesthood have a sacred duty to honor our sisters.

Honor Your Wife

To you who are not yet married, think about your future marriage. Choose your companion well. Remember the scriptures that teach the importance of marriage in the temple:

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

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

“And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.”⁵

The highest ordinances in the house of the Lord are received by husband and wife together and equally—or not at all!

In retrospect, I see that the most important day of my life was the day when my sweetheart, Dantzel, and I were married in the holy temple. Without her I could not have the highest and most enduring blessings of the priesthood. Without her I would not be the father to our wonderful children or grandfather to our precious grandchildren.

As fathers we should have love unbounded for the mothers of our children. We should accord to them the gratitude, respect, and praise that they deserve. Husbands, to keep alive the spirit of romance in your marriage, be considerate and kind in the tender intimacies of your married life. Let your thoughts and actions inspire confidence and trust. Let your words be wholesome and your time together be uplifting. Let nothing in life take priority over your wife—neither work, recreation, nor hobby.

An ideal marriage is a true partnership between two imperfect people, each striving to complement the other, to keep the commandments, and to do the will of the Lord.

The Family Is Ordained of God

The family is the most important unit of society and of the Church. The family is ordained of God. It is central to His plan for the eternal destiny of His children.⁶ “God has established families to bring happiness to his children, to allow them to learn

correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and to prepare them for eternal life.”⁷

Fathers Preside over the Family in Love

Parents have the primary responsibility for the welfare of their children.⁸ The

Church does not replace that parental responsibility. Ideally, the Latter-day Saint family is presided over by a worthy man who holds the priesthood. This patriarchal authority has been honored among the people of God in all dispensations. It is of divine origin, and that union, if sealed by proper authority, will continue throughout eternity. He who is the Father of us all and the source of this authority demands that governance in the home be in love and righteousness.⁹

You fathers can help with the dishes, care for a crying baby, and change a diaper. And perhaps some Sunday you could get the children ready for Church, and your wife could sit in the car and honk.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”¹⁰ With that kind of love, brethren, we will be better husbands and fathers, more loving and spiritual leaders. Happiness at home is most likely to be achieved when practices there are founded upon the teachings of Jesus Christ.¹¹ Ours is the responsibility to ensure that we have family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. Ours is the responsibility to prepare our children to receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation and the blessings promised to tithe payers. Ours is the privilege to bestow priesthood blessings of healing, comfort, and direction.

The home is the great laboratory of love. There the raw chemicals of selfishness and greed are melded in the crucible of cooperation to yield compassionate concern and love one for another.¹²

Express Love to Your Wife, Mother, Sisters

Honor the special sisters in your lives, brethren. Express your love to your wife, to your mother, and to the sisters. Praise them for their forbearance with you even when you are not at your best. Thank the Lord for these sisters who—like our Heavenly Father—love us not only for what we are but for what we may become. Humbly I thank God for my mother, my sisters, my daughters, granddaughters, and for my special sweetheart, companion, and friend—my wife!

May God bless us to honor each virtuous woman
I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See D&C 23:3.
2. Many scriptures teach us to honor our parents. See Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; Matt. 15:4; 19:19; Mark 7:10; 10:19; Luke 18:20; Eph. 6:2; 1 Ne. 17:55; Mosiah 13:20; JST, Matt. 19:19, The Holy Scriptures: Inspired Version; JST, Mark 7:12, Bible appendix.
3. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 6:178. In 1935 the First Presidency stated, “The true spirit of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gives to woman the highest place of honor in human life” (in *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6:5).
4. See Arthur M. Richardson, *The Life and Ministry of John Morgan* (1965), 267–68.
5. D&C 131:1–3.
6. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. *Family Guidebook* (pamphlet, 1992), iv.
8. See D&C 68:25–28.
9. See D&C 121:41–45.
10. Eph. 5:25.
11. See *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
12. See Mosiah 4:14–15; D&C 68:25–31.

THE HANDS OF THE FATHERS



*Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Apr. 1999, 15–19;
or Ensign, May 1999,
14–16*

Gratitude to God the Father

On this Easter weekend I wish to thank not only the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ but also His true Father, our spiritual Father and God, who, by accepting the

sacrifice of His firstborn, perfect Son, blessed all of His children in those hours of atonement and redemption. Never more than at Easter time is there so much meaning in that declaration from the book of John which praises the Father as well as the Son: “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.”¹

I am a father, inadequate to be sure, but I cannot comprehend the burden it must have been for God in His heaven to witness the deep suffering and Crucifixion of His Beloved Son in such a manner. His every impulse and instinct must have been to stop it, to send angels to intervene—but He did not intervene. He endured what He saw because it was the only way that a saving, vicarious payment could be made for the sins of all His other children, from Adam and Eve to the end of the world. I am eternally grateful for a perfect Father and His perfect Son, neither of whom shrank from the bitter cup nor forsook the rest of us who are imperfect, who fall short and stumble, who too often miss the mark.

Jesus’ Relationship with His Father

In considering such beauty of the “at-one-ment” in that first Easter season, we are reminded that this relationship between Christ and His Father is one of the sweetest and most moving themes running through the Savior’s ministry. Jesus’ entire being, His complete purpose and delight, were centered in pleasing His Father and obeying His will. Of Him He seemed always to be thinking; to Him He seemed always to be praying. Unlike us, He needed no crisis, no discouraging shift in events to direct His hopes heavenward. He was already instinctively, longingly looking that way.

In all His mortal ministry Christ seems never to have had a single moment of vanity or self-interest. When one young man tried to call Him “good,” He deflected the compliment, saying only one was deserving of such praise—His Father.

In the early days of His ministry He said humbly, “I can of mine own self do nothing: . . . I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”²

Following His teachings, which stunned the audience with their power and authority, He would say: “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. . . . I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true.”³ Later he would say again, “I have not spoken of

myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."⁴

To those who wanted to see the Father, to hear from God directly that Jesus was what He said He was, He answered, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. . . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."⁵ When Jesus wanted to preserve unity among His disciples, He prayed using the example of His own relationship with God: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are [one]."⁶

Even as He moved toward the Crucifixion, He restrained His Apostles who would have intervened by saying, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"⁷ When that unspeakable ordeal was finished, He uttered what must have been the most peaceful and deserved words of His mortal ministry. At the end of His agony, He whispered, "It is finished. . . . Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."⁸ Finally it was over. Finally He could go home.

I confess that I have reflected at length upon that moment and the Resurrection, which was shortly to follow it. I have wondered what that reunion must have been like: the Father that loved this Son so much, the Son that honored and revered His Father in every word and deed. For two who were one as these two were one, what must that embrace have been like? What must that divine companionship be yet? We can only wonder and admire. And we can, on an Easter weekend, yearn to live worthily of some portion of that relationship ourselves.

Strengthen Relationships with Children

As a father, I wonder if I and all other fathers could do more to build a sweeter, stronger relationship with our sons and daughters here on earth. Dads, is it too bold to hope that our children might have some small portion of the feeling for us that the Divine Son felt for His Father? Might we earn more of that love by trying to be more of what God was to His child? In any case, we do know that a young person's developing concept of God centers on characteristics observed in that child's earthly parents.⁹

Absence of Fathers Damages Children

For that reason and many others, I suppose no book I have read in recent months has alarmed me more

than a work entitled *Fatherless America*. In this study the author speaks of "fatherlessness" as "the most harmful demographic trend of this generation," the leading cause of damage to children. It is, he is convinced, the engine driving our most urgent social problems, from poverty to crime to adolescent pregnancy to child abuse to domestic violence. Among the principal social issues of our time is the flight of fathers from their children's lives.¹⁰

Of even greater concern than the physical absenteeism of some fathers is the spiritually or emotionally absent father. These are fatherly sins of omission that are probably more destructive than sins of commission. Why are we not surprised that when 2,000 children of all ages and backgrounds were asked what they appreciated most about their fathers, they answered universally, "He spends time with me"?¹¹

A young Laurel I met on a conference assignment not long ago wrote to me after our visit and said, "I wish my dad knew how much I need him spiritually and emotionally. I crave any kind comment, any warm personal gesture. I don't think he knows how much it would mean to me to have him take an active interest in what is going on in my life, to offer to give me a blessing, or just spend some time together. I know he worries that he won't do the right thing or won't say the words well. But just to have him try would mean more than he could ever know. I don't want to sound ungrateful because I know he loves me. He sent me a note once and signed it 'Love, Dad.' I treasure that note. I hold it among my dearest possessions."¹²

Most Fathers Are Wonderful

Well, as with that young woman, I don't want this talk to sound ungrateful, nor is it meant to make fathers feel they have fallen short. Most fathers are wonderful. Most dads are terrific. I don't know who wrote these little storybook verses remembered from my youth, but they go something like this:

*Only a dad with a tired face,
Coming home from the daily race, . . .
Toiling and striving from day to day,
Facing whatever may come his way, . . .
Glad in his heart that his own rejoice
To see him come home and to hear his voice. . . .
Only a dad, but he gives his all,
[Smoothing] the way for his children small,
Doing with courage [so] stern and grim
The deeds that his father did for him.*

*These are the lines that for him I pen:
Only a dad, but the best of men.*¹³

Follow God's Example of Fatherhood

And, brethren, even when we are not “the best of men,” even in our limitations and inadequacy, we can keep making our way in the right direction because of the encouraging teachings set forth by a Divine Father and demonstrated by a Divine Son. With a Heavenly Father's help we can leave more of a parental legacy than we suppose.

One new father wrote: “Often as I watch my son watch me, I am taken back to moments with my own dad, remembering how vividly I wanted to be just like him. I remember having a plastic razor and my own can of foaming cream, and each morning I would shave when he shaved. I remember following his footsteps back and forth across the grass as he mowed the lawn in summer.

“Now I want my son to follow my lead, and yet it terrifies me to know he probably will. Holding this little boy in my arms, I feel a ‘heavenly homesickness,’ a longing to love the way God loves, to comfort the way He comforts, to protect the way He protects. The answer to all the fears of my youth was always ‘What would Dad do?’ Now that I have a child to raise I am counting on a Heavenly Father to tell me exactly that.”¹⁴

Influence of a Father's Love

A friend from college days wrote to me recently, saying: “Much in my chaotic childhood was uncertain, but one thing I knew for sure: that my dad loved me. That certainty was the anchor of my young life. I came to know and love the Lord because my father loved him. I have never called anyone a fool or taken the Lord's name in vain because he told me the Bible said I shouldn't. I have always paid my tithing because he taught me it was a privilege to do so. I have always tried to take responsibility for my mistakes because my father did. Even though he was estranged from the Church for a [time], at the end of his life he served a mission and worked faithfully in the temple. In his will he said that any money left over from taking care of his [family] should go to the Church. He loved the Church with all of his heart. And because of him, so do I.”¹⁵

Surely that must be the spiritual application of Lord Byron's couplet: “Yet in my lineaments they trace / Some features of my father's face.”¹⁶

Scriptural Examples of a Father's Impact

At a vulnerable moment in young Nephi's life, his prophetic future was determined when he said, “I

did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father.”¹⁷ At the turning point of the prophet Enos's life, he said it was “the words which I had often heard my father speak”¹⁸ which prompted one of the great revelations recorded in the Book of Mormon. And sorrowing Alma the Younger, when confronted by the

excruciating memory of his sins, “remembered also to have heard [his] father prophesy . . . concerning the coming of . . . Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.”¹⁹ That brief memory, that personal testimony offered by his father at a time when the father may have felt nothing was sinking in, not only saved the spiritual life of this, his son, but changed forever the history of the Book of Mormon people.

Of Abraham, the grand patriarch, God said, “*I know him. . . . He will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.*”²⁰

I bear my witness this Easter weekend that “great things [will] be required at the hand[s] of [the] fathers,” as the Lord declared to the Prophet Joseph Smith.²¹ Surely the greatest of those things will be to have done all they could for the happiness and spiritual safety of the children they are to nurture.

In that most burdensome moment of all human history, with blood appearing at every pore and an anguished cry upon His lips, Christ sought Him whom He had always sought—His Father. “Abba,” He cried, “Papa,” or from the lips of a younger child, “Daddy.”²²

This is such a personal moment it almost seems a sacrilege to cite it. A Son in unrelieved pain, a Father His only true source of strength, both of them staying the course, making it through the night—together.

Fathers, this Easter weekend may we be renewed in our task as parents, bolstered by images of this Father and this Son as we embrace our children and stand with them forever, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

With a Heavenly Father's help we can leave more of a parental legacy than we suppose.

Notes

1. John 3:16.
2. John 5:30.
3. John 7:16, 28.
4. John 12:49.
5. John 14:7, 9.
6. John 17:11.
7. John 18:11.
8. John 19:30; Luke 23:46.
9. See "Parent-Child Relationships and Children's Images of God," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Mar. 1997, 25–43.
10. David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (1995), 1.
11. See "Becoming a Better Father," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 27.
12. Personal correspondence.
13. Edgar A. Guest, "Only a Dad," in *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People*, ed. Jack M. Lyon and others (1996), 90–91.
14. Personal correspondence.
15. Personal correspondence from Robert A. Rees.
16. *Parisina*, stanza 13, lines 285–86.
17. 1 Nephi 2:16.
18. Enos 1:3.
19. Alma 36:17.
20. Genesis 18:19; italics added.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 29:48.
22. Mark 14:36.

MORALITY AND MODESTY

*Modesty reflects an attitude of
humility, decency, and propriety.*

—President N. Eldon Tanner

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Immorality does not begin in adultery or perversion. It begins with little indiscretions like sex thoughts, sex discussions, passionate kissing, petting and such, growing with every exercise. The small indiscretion seems powerless compared to the sturdy body, the strong mind, the sweet spirit of youth who give way to the first temptation. But soon the strong has become weak, the master the slave, spiritual growth curtailed. But if the first unrighteous act is never given root, the tree will grow to beautiful maturity and the youthful life will grow toward God, our Father. . . .

“The early apostles and prophets mention numerous sins that were reprehensible to them. Many of them were sexual sins—adultery, being without natural affection, lustfulness, infidelity, incontinence, filthy communications, impurity, inordinate affection, fornication. They included all sexual relations outside marriage—petting, sex perversion, masturbation, and preoccupation with sex in one’s thoughts and talking. Included are every hidden and secret sin and all unholy and impure thoughts and practices. . . .

“Conscience tells the individual when he is entering forbidden worlds, and it continues to prick until silenced by the will or by sin’s repetition.

“Can anyone truthfully say he did not know such things were wrong? These unholy practices, whatever may be their unmentionable names with all their approaches and numerous manifestations, are condemned by the Lord and his church. Some may be more heinous than others, but all are sin, in spite of statements to the contrary of those who falsely pretend to know. The Lord’s prophets declare they are not right.

“The world may have its norm; the Church has a different one. . . . The world may countenance premarital sex experiences, but the Lord and his church condemn in no uncertain terms any and every sex relationship outside of marriage. . . .

“Since courtship is prelude to marriage and encourages close associations, many have convinced themselves that intimacies are legitimate—a part of the courting process. Many have cast off bridle and harness and have relaxed the restraints. Instead of remaining in the field of simple expressions of affection, some have turned themselves loose to fondling, often called ‘necking,’ with its intimate contacts and its passionate kissing. Necking is the younger member of this unholy family. Its bigger sister is called ‘petting.’ When the intimacies have reached this stage, they are surely the sins condemned by the Savior. . . .

“Who would say that he or she who pets has not become lustful, has not become passionate? Is it not this most abominable practice that God rebuked in his modern reiteration of the Ten Commandments: ‘Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it’ (D&C 59:6).

“What, may I ask you, is like unto adultery if it is not petting? Did not the Lord recognize that this heinous sin is but the devil’s softening process for the final acts of adultery or fornication? Can a person in the light of the Lord’s scriptures pursue the path of petting with clear conscience? Can anyone convince himself that this is not deep sin?

“We must repeat what we have said many times: Fornication with all its big and little brothers and sisters was evil and wholly condemned by the Lord in Adam’s day, in Moses’ day, in Paul’s day, and in our own day. The Church has no tolerance for any kind of perversions. The Lord has indicated his lack of tolerance, stating:

“‘For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance’ (D&C 1:31).

“When the scriptures are so plain, how can anyone justify immoralities and call them love? Is black white? Is evil good? Is purity filthiness?

“That the Church’s stand on morality may be understood, we declare firmly and unalterably, it is not an outworn garment, faded, old-fashioned, and threadbare. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and his covenants and doctrines are immutable; and when the sun grows cold and the

stars no longer shine, the law of chastity will still be basic in God's world and in the Lord's church. Old values are upheld by the Church not because they are old, but rather because through the ages they have proved right. It will always be the rule" ("President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality," *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 95–96).

President Ezra Taft Benson

"Watchmen—what of the night? We must respond by saying that all is not well in Zion. As Moroni counseled, we must cleanse the inner vessel (see Alma 60:23), beginning first with ourselves, then with our families, and finally with the Church. . . .

"The plaguing sin of this generation is sexual immorality. This, the Prophet Joseph said, would be the source of more temptations, more buffetings, and more difficulties for the elders of Israel than any other. (See *Journal of Discourses*, 8:55.)

"President Joseph F. Smith said that sexual impurity would be one of the three dangers that would threaten the Church within—and so it does. (See *Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 312–13.) It permeates our society" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 3, 6; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 4).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

"We live in a world that is filled with filth and sleaze, a world that reeks of evil. It is all around us. It is on the television screen. It is at the movies. It is in the popular literature. It is on the Internet. You can't afford to watch it, my dear friends. You cannot afford to let that filthy poison touch you. Stay away from it. Avoid it. You can't rent videos and watch them as they portray degrading things. You young men who hold the priesthood of God cannot mix this filth with the holy priesthood. . . .

"And while I speak of such matters I want to give emphasis again to the matter of pornography. It has become a \$10 billion industry in the United States, where a few men grow rich at the expense of thousands upon thousands who are their victims. Stay away from it. It is exciting, but it will destroy you. It will warp your senses. It will build within you an appetite that you will do anything to appease. And don't try to create associations through the Internet and chat rooms. They can lead you down into the very abyss of sorrow and bitterness. . . .

"You young men who plan to go on missions must recognize that sexual sin may keep you from that opportunity. You may think that you can hide it. Long experience has shown that you cannot. To serve an effective mission you must have the Spirit of the Lord, and truth withheld does not mix with that Spirit. Sooner or later you will feel compelled to confess your earlier transgressions. Well did Sir Galahad say, 'My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure' (Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Sir Galahad* [1842], st. 1).

"My dear young friends, in matters of sex you know what is right. You know when you are walking on dangerous ground, when it is so easy to stumble and slide into the pit of transgression. I plead with you to be careful, to stand safely back from the cliff of sin over which it is so easy to fall. Keep yourselves clean from the dark and disappointing evil of sexual transgression. Walk in the sunlight of that peace which comes from obedience to the commandments of the Lord.

"Now, if there be any who have stepped over the line, who may already have transgressed, is there any hope for you? Of course there is. Where there is true repentance, there will be forgiveness. That process begins with prayer. The Lord has said, 'He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more' (D&C 58:42). Share your burden with your parents if you can. And by all means, confess to your bishop, who stands ready to help you" ("A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 7–8).

"If they want to get involved in pornography, they can do so very easily. They can pick up the phone and dial a number with which they are familiar. They can sit at a computer and revel in cyberspace filth.

"I fear this may be going on in some of your homes. It is vicious. It is lewd and filthy. It is enticing and habit forming. It will take a young man or woman down to destruction as surely as anything in this world. It is foul sleaze that makes its exploiters wealthy, its victims impoverished.

"I regret to say that many fathers themselves like to hear the siren song of those who peddle filth. Some of them also work the Internet for that which is lewd and lascivious. If there be any man within the sound of my voice who is involved in this or who is moving in this direction, I plead with you to get it out of your life. Get away from it. Stay away from

*Stand safely
back from the
cliff of sin.*

it. Otherwise it will become an obsession. It will destroy your home life. It will destroy your marriage. It will take the good and beautiful out of your family relationships and replace these with ugliness and suspicion.

“To you young men, and to the young women who are your associates, I plead with you not to befoul your minds with this ugly and vicious stuff. It is designed to titillate you, to absorb you into its net. It will take the beautiful out of your life. It will lead you into the dark and ugly” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 68–69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 51).

Consequences of Obedience or Disobedience

Jacob 2:28–29, 33

The Nephites were warned that if they did not live the law of chastity, they would not prosper in the land. Violation of the law of chastity brings “a sore curse, even unto destruction.”

Helaman 13:38

Those who seek happiness in the lusts of the flesh will not find it because doing iniquity is contrary to the nature of happiness. Compare with Alma 41:10, “Wickedness never was happiness.”

3 Nephi 6:16–18

The Nephites became so morally corrupted that they were “carried about by the temptations of the devil whithersoever he desired to carry them, and to do whatsoever iniquity he desired they should.”

Doctrine and Covenants 121:45

Virtue, when combined with charity and faith, gives you confidence in your relationship with God and allows the doctrines of the priesthood to “distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.”

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

“Among the most common sexual sins our young people commit are those of necking and petting. Not only do these improper relations often lead to fornication and abortions—both ugly sins—but in and of themselves they are pernicious evils, and it is often difficult for youth to distinguish where one ends and another begins. They awaken lust and stir evil thoughts and sex desires. They are but parts of the whole family of related sins and indiscretions. . . .

“Because of the seriousness of this sin [homosexuality] it carries a heavy penalty for the unrepentant. The offender may realize that disfellowshipment or excommunication is the penalty for heavy petting, adultery, fornication and comparable sins if there is not adequate repentance, yet he often supposes that because his acts have not been committed with the opposite sex he is not in sin. Let it therefore be clearly stated that the seriousness of the sin of homosexuality is equal to or greater than that of fornication or adultery; and that *the Lord’s Church will as readily take action to disfellowship or excommunicate the unrepentant practicing homosexual as it will the unrepentant fornicator or adulterer*” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, 65, 81–82).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Those who mock the traditional moral values should heed this lesson of history from the Durants:

“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 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 both the individual and the group’ (Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968], pp. 35–36).

“Lasciviousness wrongly celebrates the capacity to feel, so that people lose their capacity to feel! Three different prophets in three different dispensations bemoaned those who became ‘past feeling’ (see 1 Nephi 17:45; Ephesians 4:19; Moroni 9:20). . . . Gross sin not only dulls the feelings, it also impairs the intellect” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 77).

Modesty

1 Timothy 4:12

“Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“I am not disposed to discuss in this forum the merits or otherwise of sex education in the public schools. But in passing, I am inclined to agree with one who was recently quoted in the newspaper *USA Today*: ‘More sex education in public schools will not reverse

the damaging legacy of the sexual revolution unless the clear message is premarital chastity and marital monogamy.' . . . (Tottie Ellis, "Teaching about Sex Endangers Children," 16 Mar. 1987, p. 12A)" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 58; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 47).

President N. Eldon Tanner

"Modesty in dress is a quality of mind and heart, born of respect for oneself, one's fellowmen, and the Creator of us all. Modesty reflects an attitude of humility, decency, and propriety. Consistent with these principles and guided by the Holy Spirit, let parents, teachers, and youth discuss the particulars of dress, grooming, and personal appearance, and with free agency accept responsibility and choose the right" ("Friend to Friend," *Friend*, June 1971, 3).

Elder L. Tom Perry

"President [Spencer W.] Kimball delivered a great talk many years ago at Brigham Young University entitled 'A Style of Our Own.' He encouraged us not to be among those who would follow worldly, immodest styles, but to have the courage to dress in a way which will send a message that our standards are different. Our dress will reflect the way we intend to live, founded on principles of the gospel of our Lord and Savior. It is impossible to expect a child who has been taught to love to dress in the immodest style trends of the day, to then change overnight to an entirely different wardrobe when they enter a Church university or a missionary training center, or when they are married in the temple, or even when they dress for the Sabbath day. Modest, proper styles must be taught almost from birth" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 88; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 75).

Elder James E. Faust

"In forsaking the great principle of modesty, society has paid a price in the violation of a greater but related principle—that of chastity. The purveyors of the concept of irresponsible sexual relations that degrade and brutalize the participants have grossly masqueraded and completely missed the purpose of these divine gifts" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 9).

Modesty in Thought

Mosiah 4:29–30

"I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

"But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not."

Doctrine and Covenants 121:45

"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 dew from heaven."

Modesty in Language

Proverbs 15:26

"The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord: but the words of the pure are pleasant words."

Matthew 12:36

"I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

Modesty in Dress

President Spencer W. Kimball

"Style is blamed for those extremes, but we wonder again if there might not be some satisfactions, sexual and otherwise, in what seems a wanton disregard of modest decency. Are the very scant bathing suits worn for style or to shock or stir or tempt? Can there be in all these expressions total innocence and total modesty? . . .

"We cannot overemphasize immodesty as one of the pitfalls to be avoided if we would shun temptation and keep ourselves clean" (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, 227).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Now comes the craze of tattooing one’s body. I cannot understand why any young man—or young woman, for that matter—would wish to undergo the painful process of disfiguring the skin with various multicolored representations of people, animals, and various symbols. With tattoos, the process is permanent, unless there is another painful and costly undertaking to remove it. Fathers, caution your sons against having their bodies tattooed. They may resist your talk now, but the time will come when they will thank you. A tattoo is graffiti on the temple of the body.

“Likewise the piercing of the body for multiple rings in the ears, in the nose, even in the tongue. Can they possibly think that is beautiful? It is a passing fancy, but its effects can be permanent. Some have gone to such extremes that the ring had to be removed by surgery. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve have declared that we discourage tattoos and also ‘the piercing of the body for other than medical purposes.’ We do not, however, take any position ‘on the minimal piercing of the ears by women for one pair of earrings’—one pair” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 70–71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 52).

Elder James E. Faust

“I was struck by the lack of self-esteem revealed in the manner by which so many people now clothe themselves in public. To attract attention or in the name of comfort and informality, many have sunk not only to immodesty but to slovenliness. Against their own self-interest, they present themselves to others in the worst possible way” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 9).

Modest Behavior**2 Nephi 15:20**

“Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

Articles of Faith 1:13

“We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things.

If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.”

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Modesty in dress and language and deportment is a true mark of refinement and a hallmark of a virtuous Latter-day Saint women. Shun the low and the vulgar and the suggestive” (“To the Young Women of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 83).

PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

President Harold B. Lee

President of the Church

Stand Ye in Holy Places:
Selected Sermons and
Writings of President
Harold B. Lee, 330–39

The Apostle Paul demonstrates his great ability as an inspired teacher as he pictures each of us as a warrior being clothed with the essential armor to protect the four parts of the human body which apparently Satan and his hosts, by their vigilant spy system, have found to be the most vulnerable parts through which the enemies of righteousness might make their “landing,” as it were, and invade the human soul. Here are his inspired teachings:

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

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

“And take the helmet of salvation. . . .” (Ephesians 6:14–15, 17.)

Did you note carefully the four main parts of your bodies to be guarded:

1. A girdle about your loins.
2. A breastplate over your heart.
3. Your feet shod.
4. A helmet on your head.

These instructions take on full significance when it is remembered the loins are those portions of the body between the lower ribs and the hips in which are located the vital generative organs, and also that in the scriptures and other inspired writings the

loins symbolize virtue or moral purity and vital strength. The heart suggests our daily conduct in life, for as the Master taught:

“. . . out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man . . . bringeth forth good things: and an evil man . . . bringeth forth evil things.” (Matthew 12:34–35.)

The feet typify the course you chart in the journey of life. The head, of course, represents your intellect.

But now pay careful heed to the fabric from which the various parts of your armor are to be fashioned.

Truth is to be the substance of which the girdle about your loins is to be formed if your virtue and vital strength are to be safeguarded. How can truth protect you from one of the deadliest of all evils, unchastity? First, for a definition of truth: Truth is knowledge, so the Lord tells us, “knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.” (D&C 93:24.) Now consider for a few moments the essential knowledge which will put to flight immorality, the ever-present enemy of youth:

Man and woman are the offspring of God and created after His own image and likeness as mortal beings. One of the first commandments given to our first mortal parents, “to multiply and to replenish the earth,” has been repeated as a sacred instruction to every faithful and true Latter-day Saint young man and young woman married in holy wedlock. To the end that this sacred purpose of parenthood be realized, our Creator has placed within the breast of every true man and woman a strong mutual attraction for each other, which acquaintance ripens in friendship, thence through the romance of courtship, and finally matures into happy marriage. But now mark you, *never once has God issued such a command to unmarried persons!* Indeed, to the contrary; he has written high on the decalogue of crime and second only to murder the divine injunction, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (which is unquestionably interpreted to mean all unlawful sexual association, inasmuch as the Master used interchangeably the words *adultery* and *fornication* in defining sexual impurity, and it has been severely condemned in every dispensation by authorized church leaders).

Those who make themselves worthy and enter into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage in the temple for time and all eternity will be laying the first cornerstone for an eternal family home in the celestial kingdom that will last forever. Their

reward is to have “glory added upon their heads forever and forever.” These eternal truths, if you believe them with all your soul, will be as a girdle of armor about your loins to safeguard your virtue as you would protect your life.

But now again may I put you on guard as to Satan’s methods used in an attempt to destroy you. The Lord, after giving us the definition of truth quoted above, said this: “And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning.” (D&C 93:25.)

When you are prompted to immodesty in dress or to unclean or obscene speech or brazen conduct in your courtship, you are playing Satan’s game and are becoming the victim of his lying tongue. Just so, if you allow the vain theories of men to cause you to doubt your relationship to God, the divine purpose of marriage, and your future prospects for eternity, you are being victimized by the master of lies, because all such is contrary to truth, which saves you from these perils.

Now, what about the breastplate which will safeguard your heart or your conduct in life? The Apostle Paul says that breastplate shall be made of a stuff called righteousness. The righteous man, although far superior to his fellows who are not, is humble and does not parade his righteousness to be seen of men but conceals his virtues as he would modestly conceal his nudity. The righteous man strives for self-improvement knowing that he has daily need of repentance for his misdeeds or his neglect. He is not so much concerned about what he can get but more about how much he can give to others, knowing that along that course only can he find true happiness. He endeavors to make each day his masterpiece so that at night’s close he can witness in his soul and to his God that whatever has come to his hand that day, he has done to the best of his ability. His body is not dissipated and weakened by the burdens imposed by the demands of riotous living; his judgment is not rendered faulty by the follies of youth; he is clear of vision, keen of intellect, and strong of body. The breastplate of righteousness has given him “the strength of ten—because his heart is clean.”

But to continue with your coat of armor. Your feet, which are to represent your goals or objectives in life, are to be shod. Shod with what? “With the preparation of the gospel of peace.” The apostle who wrote that phrase certainly knew life from actual

experience—"preparation of the gospel of peace"! He knew that preparedness is the way to victory and that "eternal vigilance is the price of safety." Fear is the penalty of unpreparedness and aimless dawdling with opportunity. Whether in speech or in song, whether in physical or moral combat, the tide of victory rests with him who is prepared.

The old philosophers understood the importance of having this preparation begin in the formative period of life, for we are admonished to "train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6.) To point out this same truth one old adage declared: "If you follow the river you will reach the sea," and another suggests a warning: "Following the course of least resistance makes men and rivers crooked."

Embodied in the gospel of Jesus Christ are the straightforward negative injunctions divinely given to the great lawgiver of Israel, Moses—"Thou shalt not . . . !"—to be followed later by the positive declarations in the Sermon on the Mount, which outline a veritable blueprint for your course through life. The gospel plan enjoins us to the observance of prayer, to walk uprightly, to honor our parentage, to keep the Sabbath Day holy, and to refrain from idleness. Happy is that one whose feet are shod with the preparation of these teachings from his youth to withstand the evil day. He has found the way to peace by "overcoming the world." He has built his house upon a rock, and when the storms come, the winds blow, and the rains do beat upon the house, it will not fall because it is founded upon a rock. (See Matthew 7:24–25.) Such a one is not afraid; he will not be overcome by a surprise attack, for he is ready for any emergency: he is prepared!

And now finally to the last piece of the prophet-teacher's armored dress. We will put a helmet upon the head. Our head or our intellect is the controlling member of our body. It must be well protected against the enemy, for "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7.) But now in order for this helmet to be effective, it must be of an exquisite design. It must be of a super-material to be effective in our eternal conflict with the invisible enemy of all righteousness. Our is to be the "helmet of salvation." Salvation means the attainment of the eternal right to live in the presence of God the Father and the Son as a reward for a good life in mortality.

With the goal of salvation ever in our mind's eye as the ultimate to be achieved, our thinking and our decisions which determine action will always challenge all that would jeopardize that glorious future state. Lost indeed is that soul who is intellectually without the "helmet of salvation" which tells him that death is the end and that the grave is a victory over life, and brings to defeat the hopes, the aspirations, and the accomplishments of life. Such a one might well conclude that he may as well "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

The conclusion reached by a committee of eminent divines appointed to investigate the cause of the wave of "student suicides" which swept over the country a few years ago was very significant. The summary of their findings declared: "The philosophy of the students who took their lives was such that they had never given religion serious thought, and when a test came they had nothing to hold fast to."

In contrast to the tragic picture, the one who confidently looks forward to an eternal reward for his efforts in mortality is constantly sustained through his deepest trials; when his bank fails, he does not commit suicide; when his loved ones die, he does not despair; when war and destruction dissipate his fortune, he does not falter. He lives above his world and never loses sight of the goal of his salvation.

Our intellects . . . must always measure learning by the gospel criteria: Is it true? Is it uplifting?

Our intellects, so protected, must always measure learning by the gospel criteria: Is it true? Is it uplifting? Will it benefit mankind? In the choices of life—our friends, our education, our vocation, our companion in marriage—all these and more must be made with an eye single to eternal life. Our thoughts must "smell of the sunshine" if our association would be inspiring and uplifting. If we

would refrain from murder, we must learn not to become angry; if we would free ourselves from sexual sin, we must control immoral thought; if we would avoid the penalty of imprisonment for theft, we must learn not to covet. So taught Jesus, the Master Teacher and our Savior. (See Matthew 5:21–28.)

"O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish." (2 Nephi 9:28.)

Children of the covenant who have upon their heads the helmet of salvation are not as these. The thrill of victory is within their grasp.

But now may I call your attention to one significant fact concerning the armor with which you now have been clothed. You have no armor whatsoever to protect you from the rear. Does this suggest yet another quality essential to this eternal conflict with “spiritual wickedness in high places”? Evidently no one can win this battle running *from* the enemy. The contest must be face to face. There must be no retreat. So came the clear-ringing counsel of the First Presidency to our boys during the last World War: “Boys, keep yourselves clean! Better die clean than to come home unclean.” Courage and determination and continual aggressiveness to the right are the essential qualities for the battle of life, else all the armor in the world suggested for our protection would be of no avail. Thus equipped within and without, we are now ready.

But wait a moment! Are we to have no weapons with which to fight? Are we to be mere targets for the enemy to attack? Let’s read now what Paul, the great apostle-teacher, said about our weapons:

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

“And take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (Ephesians 6:16–17.)

May I attempt to describe briefly that shield of faith? Faith is a gift from God, and blessed is the man who possesses it. “He who carries the lamp will not despair,” wrote one of the great industrial leaders with reference to a business crisis, “no matter how dark the night. That lamp I call faith.” Suppose we examine a few of life’s problems to see just how effective the shield of faith can be.

In what we might liken unto a great “pincer movement” of enemy forces to encircle us, we are being surfeited with the doctrine that we can get “something for nothing.” When the smoke of the present frenzied social conflict has cleared away and the carnage resulting therefrom carefully counted, we shall have had proved again that we cannot get something for nothing and continue to prosper, and that the habit of giving instead of getting is the way to happiness. Then our faith in those tried and trusted virtues of thrift, self-sacrifice, and frugality

will have triumphed over the vices of reckless spending, selfishness, and a disregard for decent standards of common civic virtue and morality.

It was the faith of our pioneer fathers that prompted them, as they pitched camp to begin a new settlement, to devoutly invoke the blessings of Almighty God upon their efforts. They prayed for the rains to come, for the fertility of the soil, for protection against destructive forces to the end that their crops would grow and that a harvest would be gathered. When a bounteous harvest came, they thanked God; for the protection of loved ones, they gave recognition to an Omnipotent Power; in death and sorrow, in floods and in storm, they saw the workings of a Divine Will. Out of such faith there was born in them, and can be likewise in you, a conviction that “a man and the Lord are a big majority in any test.”

If we have faith in our kinship to a Great Creator, we recognize by that same token our relationship to man. Such faith banishes hate in time of war and supplants therefore a sympathy for our enemy; the

envies and jealousies of human society become, in the white light of faith, merely the growing pains of a family of children growing up to maturity and to a better understanding of how, as grownups, they should act. By faith we surmount daily obstacles and

disappointments, and our defeats we

thus interpret as necessary for our experience and development; we realize that to be thrown upon one’s own resources is to be cast into the lap of fortune where our faculties undergo an unexpected development. With faith we become pioneers for the generations yet unborn and find ourselves becoming joyous in the contemplation of service we may render to our fellowmen even though the reward be but a martyr’s crown.

Note now how the “shield of faith” and the “sword of the spirit which is the word of God” work together, perfectly coordinated as weapons in the hands of one who has upon him the “armor of righteousness.” The scriptures declare, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17.) Just as one in hand-to-hand combat with only a shield and without a sword would soon be overcome, just so without the word of God from the scriptures and by revelation, our faith becomes weak in the face of modern destructionists who

*By faith we
surmount daily
obstacles and
disappointments.*

call themselves “liberals.” Shielded by faith, the commandments known as the Decalogue from Mount Sinai are transformed from mere platitudes of a philosopher to the thundering voice of authority from on high, and the teachings of the scriptures become the revealed word of God to guide us to our celestial home. Obedience to civil law would become a moral and a religious obligation, as well as a civic duty, if we believed that “the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. . . .” (Romans 13:1–2.)

Armed with the word of God, the shattered dreams of youth and the frustrations which result from the stresses of war and the vigors of life do not embitter us or stifle our ambitions or prompt us in our despondency to cry out in despair, “Oh, what’s the use?” Guided by faith taught by the word of God, we view life as a great process of soul-training. Under the ever-watchful eye of a loving Father, we learn by “the things which we suffer,” we gain strength by overcoming obstacles, and we conquer fear by triumphant victory in places where danger lurks. By faith, as the word of God teaches, we understand that whatever contributes in life to the lofty standard of Jesus—“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48)—is for our good and for our eternal benefit even though into that molding may go the severe chastening of an all-wise God, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” (Hebrews 12:6.)

Thus schooled and drilled for the contest with the powers of darkness and with spiritual wickedness, we may be “troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” (2 Corinthians 4:8–9.)

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.” (Romans 13:12–13.)

Youth of Zion, put on the whole armor of God!

THE LAW OF CHASTITY



President Ezra Taft Benson

President of the Church

*In Brigham Young University
1987–88 Devotional and
Fireside Speeches, 51–54*

Do not be misled by Satan’s lies. There is no lasting happiness in immorality. There is no joy to be found in breaking the law of chastity. Just the opposite is true. There may be momentary pleasure. For a time it may seem like everything is wonderful. But quickly the relationship will sour. Guilt and shame set in. We become fearful that our sins will be discovered. We must sneak and hide, lie and cheat. Love begins to die. Bitterness, jealousy, anger, and even hate begin to grow. All of these are the natural results of sin and transgression.

On the other hand, when we obey the law of chastity and keep ourselves morally clean, we will experience the blessings of increased love and peace, greater trust and respect for our marital partners, deeper commitment to each other, and, therefore, a deep and significant sense of joy and happiness.

We must not be misled into thinking these sins are minor, or that consequences are not that serious. One of the most sobering statements about being unchaste is that of Alma to his son Corianton: “Know ye not, my son,” he said, “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; emphasis added). Very few of us will ever be guilty of murder or of the sin against the Holy Ghost. But the law of chastity is frequently broken, and yet it stands next to these other sins in seriousness in the eyes of the Lord.

My beloved brothers and sisters, are we living in accordance with these scriptures? Do we clearly understand the seriousness of sexual sins? Do we constantly stress the blessings that come from obedience to this law? I say again, as have all the prophets before me, there is one standard of virtue and chastity, and all are expected to adhere to it. What the Lord says unto one, He says unto all:

“Ye must practice virtue and holiness before me continually” (D&C 46:33).

Six Steps to Prepare and Prevent

There is an old saying that states: It is better to prepare and prevent than it is to repair and repent. How true that is of the law of chastity. The first line of defense in keeping ourselves morally clean is to prepare ourselves to resist temptation and prevent ourselves from falling into sin.

For those who are pure and chaste, may I give six steps that are steps of preparation and prevention, steps that will insure that you never fall into this transgression:

1. *Decide now to be chaste.* The decision to be chaste and virtuous need only be made once. Make that decision now and let it be so firm and with such deep commitment that it can never be shaken. Don't wait until you are alone in a parked car or caught in a compromising situation to decide to be chaste. Decide now!
2. *Control your thoughts.* No one steps into immorality in an instant. The first seeds of immorality are always sown in the mind. When we allow our thoughts to linger on lewd or immoral things, the first step on the road to immorality has been taken. I especially warn you against the evils of pornography. Again and again we hear from those caught in deep sin that often the first step on their road to transgression began with pornographic materials. The Savior taught that even when a man looks upon a woman to lust after her, or in other words, when he lets his thoughts begin to get out of control, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart (see Matthew 5:28, D&C 63:16).
3. *Always pray for the power to resist temptation.* Temptation will come to all of us. It will take many forms and appear in many disguises, but the Lord has given us the key for resisting it. He said to the Prophet Joseph: “Pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work” (D&C 10:5). It should be part of our daily prayers to ask the Lord for constant strength to resist temptations, especially temptations that involve the law of chastity.

4. *If you are married, avoid flirtations of any kind.* Sometimes we hear of a married man going to lunch with his secretary or other women in the office. Men and women who are married sometimes flirt with and tease members of the opposite sex. So-called harmless meetings are arranged or inordinate amounts of time are spent together. In all of these cases, people rationalize by saying that these are natural expressions of friendship. But what may appear to be harmless teasing or simply having a little fun with someone of the opposite sex can easily lead to more serious involvement and eventual infidelity. A good question to ask ourselves is this: Would my spouse be pleased if he or she knew I was doing this? Would a wife be pleased to know that her husband lunches alone with his secretary? Would a husband be pleased if he saw his wife flirting and being coy with another man? My beloved brothers and sisters, this is what Paul meant when he said: “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22).
5. *If you are married, avoid being alone with members of the opposite sex whenever possible.* Many of the tragedies of immorality begin when a man and woman are alone in the office or at church or driving in a car. At first there may be no intent or even thought of sin. But the circumstances provide a fertile seedbed for temptation. One thing leads to another, and very quickly tragedy may result. It is so much easier to avoid such circumstances from the start so that temptation gets no chance for nourishment.
6. *For those who are single and dating members of the opposite sex, carefully plan positive and constructive activities so that you are not left to yourselves with nothing to do but share physical affection.* Once again this is the principle of filling one's life with the positive so that the negative has no chance to thrive. When young people are left to themselves for long periods of time with no specific planned activities, often they turn to necking and petting to fill the empty hours.

Five Steps to Repair and Repent

But I realize that there may be some, even now within the sound of my voice, for whom the counsel to prepare and prevent is too late. You may already be deeply entangled in serious sin. If this is the case, there is no choice now but to repair your lives

and repent of your sins. To you I would suggest five important things you can do to come back to a state of moral purity.

1. *Flee immediately from any situation you are in that is either causing you to sin or that may cause you to sin.* When Joseph of Egypt was entrapped by Potiphar's wife alone in the house, it would have been easy for Joseph to have rationalized. After all, he had not encouraged her. After all, he was her servant. After all, it would hurt her feelings if he refused. Had Joseph stood there and rationalized, he could easily have fallen. There is a great lesson in how he did respond. The scripture says, "And he left his garment in her hand, *and fled, and got him out*" (Genesis 39:12; emphasis added). He fled and got him out. My beloved brothers and sisters, if you are currently in a situation where your moral purity is being or could be compromised, follow Joseph's example. Flee from it and get yourself out. You cannot linger in sin and expect to have success in repentance.
2. *Plead with the Lord for the power to overcome.* One of Satan's most effective strategies with those he has lured into sin is to whisper in their ears that they are not worthy to pray. He will tell you that Heavenly Father is so displeased with you that He will never hear your prayers. This is a lie, and he says it to deceive us. The power of sin is great. If we are to extricate ourselves from it, especially serious sin, we must have a power greater than ourselves. No one is more anxious to help you flee from sin than your Father in Heaven. Go to Him. Acknowledge your sin, confess your shame and your guilt, and then plead with Him for help. He has the power to help you triumph.
3. *Let your priesthood leaders help you resolve the transgression and come back into full fellowship with the Lord.* Certain sins are of such gravity that they put our standing in the Church in jeopardy. Sexual sins are among those of such seriousness (see D&C 42:24). Full repentance of such sins requires that we not only confess our sins and resolve them with the Lord, but that we also do so with the Church. This is done through appropriate priesthood leaders. The bishops and stake presidents have been appointed by revelation to serve as watchmen over the Church and as judges in Israel. While only the Lord can forgive sins, the priesthood leaders play a critical role in the process of repentance. Even if we are

disfellowshipped or excommunicated, it is a beginning step in the process of repentance, and the sooner one begins, the sooner one can find the sweet peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness.

4. *Drink from the divine fountain and fill your lives with positive sources of power.* It is not enough simply to try to resist evil or empty our lives of sin. We must also fill our lives with righteousness. We must engage in activities that bring spiritual power. I speak of such activities as immersing ourselves in the scriptures. There is a power that flows into our lives when we read and study the scriptures on a daily basis that cannot be found in any other way. Daily prayer is another source of great power. Fasting for specific strength or special blessings can strengthen us beyond our normal ability. Christian service, church attendance, service in the kingdom—all can add to our storehouse of strength and power. We must do more than simply remove the negative influences from our lives. We must replace them with righteous activities that fill us with the strength and determination to live as we should.
5. *Remember that through proper repentance you can become clean again.* Moroni taught that "despair cometh because of iniquity" (Moroni 10:22). Those who are caught in immorality may be experiencing the devastating effects of despair. But there is an alternative. For those who pay the price required by true repentance, the promise is sure. You can be clean again. The despair can be lifted. The sweet peace of forgiveness will flow into your lives.

Finding Joy

The words of the Lord through Isaiah are sure: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

And in this dispensation the Lord spoke with equal clarity when He said, "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more" (D&C 58:42).

As I said earlier, when it comes to the law of chastity, it is better to prepare and prevent than it is to repair and repent.

My beloved brothers and sisters in the gospel, our Heavenly Father desires nothing for us but to be happy. He tells us only those things that will bring us joy. And one of the surest principles given by God to help us find that joy is the law of chastity.

I pray with all my heart that you will consider most solemnly the joyful consequences of keeping this law and the tragic consequence of violating it. And I do this in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

OFFICE OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

November 14, 1991

To: All Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Dear Brethren and Sisters:

Standards of Morality and Fidelity

We call upon members to renew their commitment to live the Lord's standard of moral conduct. Parents should teach their children the sacred nature of procreative powers and instill in them a desire to be chaste in thought and deed. A correct understanding of the divinely appointed roles of men and women will fortify all against sinful practices. Our only real safety, physically and spiritually, lies in keeping the Lord's commandments.

The Lord's law of moral conduct is abstinence outside of lawful marriage and fidelity within marriage. Sexual relations are proper only between husband and wife appropriately expressed within the bonds of marriage. Any other sexual contact, including fornication, adultery, and homosexual and lesbian behavior, is sinful. Those who persist in such practices or who influence others to do so are subject to Church discipline.

We remind you of scriptures that make clear the relationship between one's thoughts and actions (see Matthew 15:19; Mosiah 4:29–30; Alma 12:14; 3 Nephi 12:28; D&C 121:45). There is a distinction between immoral thoughts and feelings and participating in either immoral heterosexual or any homosexual behavior. However, such thoughts and feelings, regardless of their causes, can and should be overcome and sinful behavior should be eliminated. This can be achieved through faith in God, sincere repentance, and persistent effort. The help of others

may be needed. We commend and encourage those who are overcoming inappropriate thoughts and feelings. We plead with those involved in such behavior to forsake it. We love them and pray for them. We are confident that through repentance and obtaining needed help, they can experience the peace that comes from conforming their lives to God's teachings.

Individuals and their families desiring help with these matters should seek counsel from their bishop, branch president, stake or district president. We encourage Church leaders and members to reach out with love and understanding to those struggling with these issues. Many will respond to Christlike love and inspired counsel as they receive an invitation to come back and apply the atoning and healing power of the Savior (see Isaiah 53:4–5; Mosiah 4:2–3).

Sincerely your brethren,

Ezra Taft Benson
Gordon B. Hinckley
Thomas S. Monson
The First Presidency

OUR MORAL ENVIRONMENT



*Elder Boyd K. Packer
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Apr. 1992, 91–95;
or Ensign, May 1992,
66–68*

I have been a General Authority for over thirty years and a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for twenty-two. During those years I have interviewed I don't know how many, surely thousands, of members of the Church and have talked with them in intimate terms of their worthiness, their sorrow, and their happiness. I mention that only in the hope that the credential of experience may persuade you to consider matters which have us deeply worried.

Moral Environment

Today I speak to members of the Church as an environmentalist. My message is not on the *physical* but on the *moral and spiritual* environment in which we must raise our families. As we test the

moral environment, we find the *pollution* index is spiraling upward.

The Book of Mormon depicts humanity struggling through a “mist of darkness” and defines the darkness as the “temptations of the devil” (1 Nephi 8:23; 12:17). So dense was that *moral pollution* that many followed “strange roads” and “fell away into forbidden paths and were lost” (see 1 Nephi 8:23–32).

The deliberate pollution of the fountain of life now clouds our moral environment. The gift of mortal life and the capacity to kindle other lives is a supernal blessing. Its worth is *incalculable!*

The Spiritual Environment

The rapid, sweeping deterioration of values is characterized by a preoccupation—even an obsession—with the procreative act. Abstinence before marriage and fidelity within it are openly scoffed at, marriage and parenthood ridiculed as burdensome, unnecessary. Modesty, a virtue of a refined individual or society, is all but gone.

The Tempter

The adversary is jealous toward all who have the power to beget life. He cannot beget life; he is impotent. He and those who followed him were cast out and forfeited the right to a mortal body. His angels even begged to inhabit the bodies of swine (see Matthew 8:31). And the revelations tell us that “he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27).

With ever fewer exceptions, what we see and read and hear have the mating act as a central theme. Censorship is forced offstage as a violation of individual freedom.

That which should be absolutely private is disrobed and acted out center stage. In the shadows backstage are addiction, pornography, perversion, infidelity, abortion, incest, and molestation. In company with them now is a plague of biblical proportion. And all of them are on the increase.

Society excuses itself from responsibility except for teaching the physical process of reproduction to children in school to prevent pregnancy and disease and providing teenagers with devices which are supposed to protect them from both.

When any effort is made to include values in these courses—basic universal values, not just values of

the Church, but of civilization, of society itself—the protest arises, “You are imposing religion upon us, infringing upon our freedom.”

Freedom to Choose

While we pass laws to reduce pollution of the earth, any proposal to protect the moral and spiritual environment is shouted down and marched against as infringing upon liberty, agency, freedom, the right to choose.

Interesting how one virtue, when given exaggerated or fanatical emphasis, can be used to batter down another, with freedom, a virtue, invoked to protect *vice*. Those determined to transgress see any regulation of their life-style as interfering with their agency and seek to have their actions condoned by making them legal.

People who are otherwise sensible say, “I do not intend to indulge, but I vote for freedom of choice for those who do.”

Flawed Argument

Regardless of how lofty and moral the “pro-choice” argument sounds, it is badly flawed. With that same logic one could argue that all traffic signs and barriers which keep the careless from danger should be pulled down on the theory that each individual must be free to choose how close to the edge he will go.

No Free Agency

The phrase “*free agency*” does not appear in scripture. The only agency spoken of there is *moral agency*, “which,” the Lord said, “I have given unto him, that every man may be *accountable* for his own sins in the day of judgment.” (D&C 101:78; italics added.)

Heeding the Warning

And the Lord warned members of his Church, “Let not that which I have appointed be polluted by mine enemies, *by the consent of those who call themselves after my name*: For this is a very sore and grievous sin against me, and against my people” (D&C 101:97–98; italics added).

Because the laws of man, by and large, do not raise moral issues, we are taught to honor, sustain, and obey the law (see Articles of Faith 1:12) and that “he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land” (D&C 58:21).

The Right to Speak Out

When a moral issue does arise, it is the responsibility of the leaders of the Church to speak out. Gambling, for instance, certainly is a moral issue. Life is a moral issue. When morality is involved, we have both the *right* and the *obligation* to raise a warning voice. We do not as a church speak on political issues unless morality is involved. In thirty years and thousands of interviews, I have never once asked members of the Church what political party they belonged to.

Physical and Moral Laws

There are both moral and physical laws “irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world” (D&C 130:20) which man cannot overrule.

For instance, do you think a vote to repeal the law of gravity would do any good?

Unenforceable

Suppose a law decreed that all children would be taken from their parents and raised by the state. Such a law would be wicked but probably could be enforced. Such things have been done before.

But suppose an article of that law stated, “Within fifteen days the mother will cease all emotional ties to her child.”

That provision is absolutely unenforceable. No matter how severe the penalty or the number of enforcers, it is absolutely unenforceable because it contravenes both natural and moral law.

No matter if fifteen weeks or months or fifteen years were allowed, it cannot be enforced! It may work with animals, but “all flesh,” the scriptures teach, “is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts” (1 Corinthians 15:39). It cannot be made to work with human mothers. Never!

A man-made law against nature would be as impossible to defend as a law annulling love between mother and child would be impossible to enforce!

Children of God

No greater ideal has been revealed than the supernal truth that we are the children of God, and we differ, by virtue of our creation, from all other living things (see Moses 6:8–10, 22, 59).

The Evil Idea

No idea has been more *destructive* of happiness; no philosophy has produced more sorrow, more heartbreak and mischief; no idea has done more to destroy the family than the idea that we are not the offspring of God, only advanced animals, compelled to yield to every carnal urge.

Animals are not subject to moral law. Nevertheless, while by and large they are promiscuous in responding to their mating instincts, their mating rituals have set patterns and have rigid limitations. For instance, animals do not pair up with their own gender to satisfy their mating instincts. Nor are these instincts expressed in the molestation of their offspring.

The source of life is now relegated to the level of unwed pleasure, bought and sold and even defiled in satanic rituals. Children of God can willfully surrender to their carnal nature and, without remorse, defy the laws of morality and degrade themselves even below the beasts.

Most Abominable

If we pollute our fountains of life, there will be penalties “exquisite” and “hard to bear” (see D&C 19:15), more than all of the physical pleasure ever could be worth. 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).

The code for moral law is found in the scriptures, stated as simply as, “Wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10). The scriptures speak in general terms, leaving us free to apply the principles of the gospel to meet the infinite variety of life. But when they say “thou shalt not,” we had better pay attention.

The only legitimate employment of the power of procreation is between husband and wife, man and woman, who have been legally and lawfully married. Anything else violates the commandments of God. From Alma, “If ye speak against it, it matters not, for the word of God must be fulfilled” (Alma 5:58). . . .

Repentance

In the battle of life, the adversary takes enormous numbers of prisoners, and many who know of no way to escape and are pressed into his service. Every

soul confined to a concentration camp of sin and guilt has a key to the gate. The adversary cannot hold them if they know how to use it. The key is labeled *Repentance*. The twin principles of repentance and forgiveness exceed in strength the awesome power of the adversary.

I know of no sins connected with the moral standard for which we cannot be forgiven. I do not exempt abortion. The formula is stated in forty words:

“Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

“By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:42–43).

I Will Remember Your Sins No More

However long and painful the process of repentance, the Lord has said:

“This is the covenant . . . I will make with them. . . . I will put my *laws* into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

“And *their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*” (Hebrews 10:16–17; italics added).

Civilizations, like Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed themselves by disobedience to the laws of morality. “For the Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man. And when the Spirit ceaseth to strive with man then cometh speedy destruction” (2 Nephi 26:11; see also Genesis 6:3; Ether 2:15; D&C 1:33; Moses 8:17).

God grant that we will come to our senses and protect our moral environment from this mist of darkness which deepens day by day. The fate of all humanity hangs precariously in the balance.

And may we have the protection of Him who is our Father and our God, and may we merit the love and blessings of His Son, our Redeemer, in whose name, even the name of Jesus Christ, I bear witness, amen.

PERSONAL PURITY



*Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Oct. 1998, 98–102;
or Ensign, Nov. 1998,
75–78*

Personal Purity

As modern winds of immorality swirl luridly around them, I am concerned for any of our youth or young adults who may be confused about principles of personal purity, about obligations of total chastity before marriage and complete fidelity after it. Against what is happening in the world they see and hear, and hoping to fortify parents as they teach their children a higher standard, I wish to speak today about moral cleanliness. Because this subject is as sacred as any I know, I earnestly pray for the Holy Spirit to guide me in remarks that are more candid than I would wish to make. Today I know how Jacob in the Book of Mormon felt when he said on the same topic, “It grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech.”¹

In approaching this subject, I do not document a host of social ills for which the statistics are as grim as the examples are offensive. Nor will I present here a checklist of do’s and don’ts about dating and boy-girl relationships. What I wish to do is more personal—I wish to try to answer questions some of you may have been asking: *Why* should we be morally clean? *Why* is it such an important issue to God? Does the Church *have* to be so strict about it? How could anything society exploits and glamorizes so openly be very sacred or serious?

A River of Fire

May I begin with a lesson from civilization’s long, instructive story. Will and Ariel Durant have written: “No man [or woman], however brilliant or well-informed, can . . . safely . . . dismiss . . . the wisdom of [lessons learned] in the laboratory of history. A youth boiling with hormones will wonder why he should not give full freedom to his sexual desires; [but] if he is unchecked by custom, morals, or laws, he may ruin his life before he . . . understand[s] 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.”²

A more important scriptural observation 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? . . . Whoso committeth adultery . . . destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.”³

Why Is Sexual Purity So Important?

Why is this 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 the whole world, for that matter—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

By assigning such seriousness to a physical appetite so universally bestowed, what is God trying to tell us about its place in His plan for all men and women? I submit to you He is doing precisely that—commenting about the very plan of life itself. Clearly among His greatest concerns regarding mortality are how one gets into this world and how one gets out of it. He has set very strict limits in these matters.

Fortunately, in the case of how life is terminated, most seem to be quite responsible. But in the significance of *giving* life, we sometimes find near-criminal irresponsibility. May I offer three reasons why this is an issue of such magnitude and consequence in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Doctrine of the Human Soul

First is the revealed, restored doctrine of the human soul.

One of the “plain and precious” truths restored in this dispensation is that “the spirit and the body are the soul of man”⁵ and that when the spirit and body are separated, men and women “cannot receive a fulness of joy.”⁶ That is the reason why obtaining a body is so fundamentally important in the first place, why sin of any kind is such a serious matter (namely because it is sin that ultimately brings both physical and spiritual death), and why the resurrection

of the body is so central to the great triumph of Christ’s Atonement.

The body is an essential part of the soul. This distinctive and very important Latter-day Saint doctrine underscores why sexual sin is so serious. We declare that one who uses the God-given body of another without divine sanction abuses the very soul of that individual, abuses the central purpose and processes of life—“the very key”⁷ to life, as President Boyd K. Packer once called it. In exploiting the body of another—which means exploiting his or her soul—one desecrates the Atonement of Christ, which saved that soul and which makes possible the gift of eternal life. And when one mocks the Son of Righteousness, one steps into a realm of heat hotter and holier than the noonday sun. You cannot do so and not be burned.

Please, never say: “Who does it hurt? Why not a little freedom? I can transgress now and repent later.” Please don’t be so foolish and so cruel. You cannot with impunity “crucify Christ afresh.”⁸ “Flee fornication,” Paul cries,⁹ and flee “*anything like unto it*,”¹⁰ the Doctrine and Covenants adds. Why? Well, for one reason because of the incalculable suffering in both body and spirit endured by the Savior of the world so that we *could* flee.¹¹ We owe Him something for that. Indeed, we owe Him everything for that. “Ye are not your own,” Paul says. “Ye [have been] bought with a price: therefore *glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s*.”¹² In sexual transgression the soul is at stake—the body and the spirit.

The Ultimate Symbol of Total Union

Secondly, may I stress that human intimacy is reserved for a married couple because it is the ultimate symbol of total union, a totality and a union ordained and defined by God. From the Garden of Eden onward, marriage was intended to mean the complete merger of a man and a woman—their hearts, hopes, lives, love, family, future, everything. Adam said of Eve that she was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, and that they were to be “one flesh” in their life together.¹³ This is a union of such completeness that we use the word *seal* to convey its eternal promise. The Prophet Joseph Smith once said we perhaps could render such a sacred bond as being “welded”¹⁴ one to another.

But such a total union, such an unyielding commitment between a man and a woman, can only come with the proximity and permanence afforded

in a marriage covenant, with solemn promises and the pledge of all they possess—their very hearts and minds, all their days and all their dreams.

Can you see the moral schizophrenia that comes from *pretending* you are one, pretending you have made solemn promises before God, sharing the physical symbols and the physical intimacy of your counterfeit union but then fleeing, retreating, severing all such other aspects of what was meant to be a total obligation?

In matters of human intimacy, you must wait! You must wait until you can give everything, and you cannot give everything until you are legally and lawfully married. 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 self is emotional Russian roulette. If you persist in pursuing physical satisfaction without the sanction of heaven, you run the terrible risk of such spiritual, psychic damage that you may undermine *both* your longing for physical intimacy *and* your ability to give wholehearted devotion to a later, truer love. You may come to that truer moment of ordained love, of real union, only to discover to your horror that what you should have saved you have spent, and that only God’s grace can recover the piecemeal dissipation of the virtue you so casually gave away. On your wedding day the very best gift you can give your eternal companion is your very best self—clean and pure and worthy of such purity in return.

A Symbol of the Relationship with God

Thirdly, may I say that physical intimacy is not only a symbolic union between a husband and a wife—the very uniting of their souls—but it is also symbolic of a shared relationship between them and their Father in Heaven. He is immortal and perfect. We are mortal and imperfect. Nevertheless we seek ways even in mortality whereby we can unite with Him spiritually. In so doing we gain some access to both the grace and the majesty of His power. Those special moments include kneeling at a marriage altar in the house of the Lord, blessing a newborn baby, baptizing and confirming a new member of the Church, partaking of the emblems of the Lord’s Supper, and so forth.

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 quite literally take something of that divinity to ourselves. One aspect of that divinity given to virtually all men and women is the use of His power 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, your child—with eyes and ears and fingers and toes and a future of unspeakable grandeur.

Probably only a parent who has held that newborn infant in his or her arms understands the wonder of which I speak. Suffice it to say that of all the titles God has chosen for Himself, *Father* is the one He favors most, and *creation* is His watchword—especially human creation, creation in His image. You and I have been given something of that godliness, *but under the most serious and sacred of restrictions. The only control placed on us is self-control*—self-control born of respect for the divine sacramental power this gift represents.

Control Sacred Procreative Powers

My beloved friends, especially my young friends, can you see why personal purity is such a serious matter? Can you understand why the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles would issue a proclamation declaring that “the means by which mortal life is created [is] divinely appointed” and that “the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife”?¹⁵ Don’t be deceived and don’t be destroyed. Unless such powers are controlled and commandments kept, your future may be burned; your world could go up in flames. Penalty may not come on the precise day of transgression, but it comes surely and certainly enough. And unless there is true repentance and obedience to a merciful God, then someday, somewhere, the morally cavalier and unclean will pray like the rich man who wished Lazarus to “dip . . . his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”¹⁶

The Peace and Renewal of Repentance

I have declared here the solemn word of revelation that the spirit and the body constitute the soul of man, and that through the Atonement of Christ the body shall rise from the grave to unite with the spirit in an eternal existence. That body is therefore

something to be kept pure and holy. Do not be afraid of soiling its hands in honest labor. Do not be afraid of scars that may come in defending the truth or fighting for the right, but beware scars that spiritually disfigure, that come to you in activities you should not have undertaken, that befall you in places where you should not have gone. Beware the wounds of any battle in which you have been fighting on the wrong side.¹⁷

If some of you are carrying such wounds—and I know that you are—to you is extended the peace and renewal of repentance available through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. In such serious matters the path of repentance is not easily begun nor painlessly traveled. But the Savior of the world will walk that essential journey with you. He will strengthen you when you waver. He will be your light when it seems most dark. He will take your hand and be your hope when hope seems all you have left. His compassion and mercy, with all their cleansing and healing power, are freely given to all who truly wish complete forgiveness and will take the steps that lead to it.

Glorify God in Body and Spirit

I bear witness of the great plan of life, of the powers of godliness, of mercy and forgiveness and the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ—all of which have profound meaning in matters of moral cleanliness. I testify that we are to glorify God in our body and in our spirit. I thank heaven for legions of the young who are doing just that and helping others do the same. I thank heaven for

homes where this is taught. That lives of personal purity may be revered by all, I pray in the name of purity Himself, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Jacob 2:7; see Jacob 2 and 3 for the full context of his sermon on chastity.
2. *The Lessons of History* (1968), 35–36.
3. Proverbs 6:27–28, 32–33.
4. Alma 39:5.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 88:15.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:34.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1972, 139; or *Ensign*, July 1972, 113.
8. See Hebrews 6:6.
9. 1 Corinthians 6:18.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 59:6; italics added.
11. See especially Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–20.
12. 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; italics added; see also verses 13–18.
13. See Genesis 2:23–24.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
15. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
16. Luke 16:24.
17. See James E. Talmage, in Conference Report, Oct. 1913, 117.

MOTHERS' EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE THE HOME

*It is well-nigh impossible
to be a full-time homemaker
and a full-time employee.*

—President Gordon B. Hinckley

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Spencer W. Kimball

“The husband is expected to support his family and only in an emergency should a wife secure outside employment. Her place is in the home, to build the home into a heaven of delight.

“Numerous divorces can be traced directly to the day when the wife left the home and went out into the world into employment. Two incomes raise the standard of living beyond its norm. Two spouses working prevent the complete and proper home life, break into the family prayers, create an independence which is not cooperative, causes distortion, limits the family and frustrates the children already born. . . .

“. . . I beg of you, you who could and should be bearing and rearing a family: Wives, come home from the typewriter, the laundry, the nursing, come home from the factory, the café.

“No career approaches in importance that of wife, homemaker, mother—cooking meals, washing dishes, making beds for one’s precious husband and children.

“Come home, wives, to your husbands. Make home a heaven for them. Come home wives, to your children, born and unborn. Wrap the motherly cloak about you and unembarrassed help in a major role to create the bodies for the immortal souls who anxiously wait.

“When you have fully complemented your husband in home life and borne the children, growing up full of faith, integrity, responsibility and goodness, then you have achieved your accomplishments supreme, without peer, and you will be the envy through

time and eternity” (fireside address in San Antonio, Texas, 27, 32–33).

“How do you feel the Lord looks upon those who would trade flesh-and-blood children for pianos or television or furniture or an automobile, and is this not actually the case when people will buy these luxuries and yet cannot afford to have their children?” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 329).

“We have often said, This divine service of motherhood can be rendered only by mothers. It may not be passed to others. Nurses cannot do it; public nurseries cannot do it. Hired help cannot do it; kind relatives cannot do it. Only by mother, aided as much as may be by a loving father, brothers and sisters, and other relatives, can the full needed measure of watchful care be given” (“The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, 73).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Take time to always be at the crossroads when your children are either coming or going—when they leave and return from school, when they leave and return from dates, when they bring friends home. Be there at the crossroads whether your children are six or sixteen. In Proverbs we read, ‘A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame’ (Proverbs 29:15). Among the greatest concerns in our society are the millions of latchkey children who come home daily to empty houses, unsupervised by working parents” (*To the Mothers in Zion*, 8).

“In a home where there is an able-bodied husband, he is expected to be the breadwinner. Sometimes we hear of husbands who, because of economic conditions, have lost their jobs and expect the wives to go out of the home and work, even though the husband is capable of providing for his family. In these cases, we urge the husband to do all in his power to allow his wife to remain in the home caring for the children while he continues to provide for his family the best he can, even though the job he is able to secure may not be ideal and family budgeting may have to be tighter. . . .

“Sometimes the mother works outside of the home at the encouragement, or even insistence, of her husband. It is he who wants the items or conveniences that the extra income can buy. Not only will the family suffer in such instances, brethren, but your own spiritual growth and progression will be

hampered. I say to all of you, the Lord has charged men with the responsibility to provide for their families in such a way that the wife is allowed to fulfill her role as mother in the home. . . .

“One apparent impact of the women’s movement has been the feelings of discontent it has created among young women who have chosen the role of wife and mother. They are often made to feel that there are more exciting and self-fulfilling roles for women than housework, diaper changing, and children calling for mother. This view loses sight of the eternal perspective that God elected women to the noble role of mother and that exaltation is eternal fatherhood and eternal motherhood. [‘To the Elect Women of the Kingdom of God,’ Nauvoo Illinois Relief Society Dedication, 30 June 1978.]” (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 506–7, 548–49).

“There are voices in our midst which would attempt to convince you that these home-centered truths are not applicable to our present-day conditions. If you listen and heed, you will be lured away from your principal obligations.

“Beguiling voices in the world cry out for ‘alternative life-styles’ for women. They maintain that some women are better suited for careers than for marriage and motherhood.

“These individuals spread their discontent by the propaganda that there are more exciting and self-fulfilling roles for women than homemaking. Some even have been bold to suggest that the Church move away from the ‘Mormon woman stereotype’ of homemaking and rearing children. They also say it is wise to limit your family so you can have more time for personal goals and self-fulfillment” (“The Honored Place of Woman,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 105).

“The first priority for a woman is to prepare herself for her divine and eternal mission, whether she is married soon or late. It is folly to neglect that preparation for education in unrelated fields just to prepare temporarily to earn money. Women, when you are married it is the husband’s role to provide, not yours. Do not sacrifice your preparation for an eternally ordained mission for the temporary expediency of money-making skills which you may or may not use” (“In His Steps,” 64).

“It is time that the hearts of us fathers be turned to our children and the hearts of the children be turned to us fathers, or we shall both be cursed. The seeds of divorce are often sown and the blessings of

children delayed by wives working outside the home. Working mothers should remember that their children usually need more of mother than of money” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 24).

President Howard W. Hunter

See quotation on page 208.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Sisters, guard your children. They live in a world of evil. The forces are all about them. I am proud of so many of your sons and daughters who are living good lives. But I am deeply concerned about many others who are gradually taking on the ways of the world. Nothing is more precious to you as mothers, absolutely nothing. Your children are the most valuable thing you will have in time or all eternity. You will be fortunate indeed if, as you grow old and look at those you brought into the world, you find in them uprightness of life, virtue in living, and integrity in their behavior.

“I think the nurture and upbringing of children is more than a part-time responsibility. I recognize that some women must work, but I fear that there are far too many who do so only to get the means for a little more luxury and a few fancier toys.

“If you must work, you have an increased load to bear. You cannot afford to neglect your children. They need your supervision in studying, in working inside and outside the home, in the nurturing that only you can adequately give—the love, the blessing, the encouragement, and the closeness of a mother.

“Families are being torn asunder everywhere. Family relationships are strained as women try to keep up with the rigors of two full-time jobs.

“I have many opportunities to speak with leaders who decry what is going on—gangs on the streets of our cities, children killing children, spending their time in practices that can lead only to prison or to death. We face a great overwhelming tide of children born to mothers without husbands. The futures of such children are almost inevitably blighted from the day they are born. Every home needs a good father and a good mother.

“We cannot build prisons fast enough in this country to accommodate the need.

“I do not hesitate to say that you who are mothers can do more than any other group to change this

situation. All of these problems find their root in the homes of the people. It is broken homes that lead to a breakup in society.

"And so tonight, my beloved sisters, my message to you, my challenge to you, my prayer is that you will rededicate yourselves to the strengthening of your homes" ("Walking in the Light of the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 99–100).

"Some years ago President Benson delivered a message to the women of the Church. He encouraged them to leave their employment and give their individual time to their children. I sustain the position which he took.

"Nevertheless, I recognize, as he recognized, that there are some women (it has become very many, in fact) who have to work to provide for the needs of their families. To you I say, do the very best you can. I hope that if you are employed full-time you are doing it to ensure that basic needs are met and not simply to indulge a taste for an elaborate home, fancy cars, and other luxuries. The greatest job that any mother will ever do will be in nurturing, teaching, lifting, encouraging, and rearing her children in righteousness and truth. None other can adequately take her place.

"It is well-nigh impossible to be a full-time homemaker and a full-time employee. I know how some of you struggle with decisions concerning this matter. I repeat, do the very best you can. You know your circumstances, and I know that you are deeply concerned for the welfare of your children. Each of you has a bishop who will counsel with you and assist you. If you feel you need to speak with an understanding woman, do not hesitate to get in touch with your Relief Society president.

"To the mothers of this Church, every mother who is here today, I want to say that as the years pass, you will become increasingly grateful for that which you did in molding the lives of your children in the direction of righteousness and goodness, integrity and faith. That is most likely to happen if you can spend adequate time with them" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 93–94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 69).

"To you women who find it necessary to work when you would rather be at home, may I speak briefly. I know that there are many of you who find yourselves in this situation. Some of you have been abandoned and are divorced, with children to care for. Some of you are widows with dependent families. I honor

you and respect you for your integrity and spirit of self-reliance. I pray that the Lord will bless you with strength and great capacity, for you need both. You have the responsibilities of both breadwinner and homemaker. I know that it is difficult. I know that it is discouraging. I pray that the Lord will bless you with a special wisdom and the remarkable talent needed to provide your children with time and companionship and love and with that special direction which only a mother can give. I pray also that he will bless you with help, unstintingly given, from family, friends, and the Church, which will lift some of the burden from your shoulders and help you in your times of extremity.

"We sense, at least in some small degree, the loneliness you must occasionally feel and the frustrations you must experience as you try to cope with problems that sometimes seem beyond your capacity to handle. Sometimes you need food for your tables, and we trust that bishops will be there to supply food and other goods and services under the great program which the Lord has provided in his Church. But we know that more often your greater need is for understanding and appreciation and companionship. We shall try a little harder to cultivate these virtues, and I urge you sisters who are in a position to do so to reach out with greater concern to those who find themselves in these less fortunate circumstances.

"Now to others who work when it is not necessary and who, while doing so, leave children to the care of those who often are only poor substitutes, I offer a word of caution. Do not follow a practice which will bring you later regret. If the purpose of your daily employment is simply to get money for a boat or a fancy automobile or some other desirable but unnecessary thing, and in the process you lose the companionship of your children and the opportunity to rear them, you may find that you have lost the substance while grasping at the shadow" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 114; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 83).

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

"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" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Elder Howard W. Hunter

"In a personal way, I recall the experiences my dear wife and I went through after deciding the course I should take for my life's work. I had taken some courses in pharmacy with the plan in mind of converting to a career in medicine. As many of us do, I changed my mind and engaged in another business, banking. We were blessed with steady employment, but I felt attracted toward the profession of law. This was a serious decision because I was married and had a family to support but after fasting and prayer and obtaining the facts as to the best way to proceed, I completed my undergraduate work and entered law school. I took classes at night because it was necessary to be employed during the daytime. These were not easy years for us, but desires are usually accomplished if we are willing to make a determined effort. Needless to say, I had the help and support of my wife. She remained a homemaker and cared for our children. What she gave in love, encouragement, frugality, and companionship was far in excess of any material contribution she might have made by taking employment.

"Our wives deserve great credit for the heavy work load they carry day in and day out within our homes. No one expends more energy than a devoted mother and wife. In the usual arrangement of things, however, it is the man to whom the Lord has assigned the breadwinner's role.

"There are impelling reasons for our sisters to plan toward employment also. We want them to obtain all the education and vocational training possible before marriage. If they become widowed or divorced and need to work, we want them to have dignified and rewarding employment. If a sister does not

marry, she has every right to engage in a profession that allows her to magnify her talents and gifts.

"Brothers and Sisters, we need to do everything necessary to adequately prepare ourselves for employment or careers. We owe it to ourselves to do our best, and we owe our best in providing for our families" ("Prepare for Honorable Employment," *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 123–24).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

"The First Presidency counseled that 'the mother who entrusts her child to the care of others, that she may do non-motherly work, whether for gold, for fame, or for civic service, should remember that 'a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.' (Prov. 29:15) In our day the Lord has said that unless parents teach their children the doctrines of the Church 'the sin be upon the heads of the parents.' (D&C 68:25) . . .

"That message and warning from the First Presidency is needed more, not less, today than when it was given [in 1942]. And no voice from any organization of the Church on any level of administration equals that of the First Presidency" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 23).

Elder Richard G. Scott

"President Benson has taught that a mother with children should be in the home. He also said, 'We realize . . . that some of our choice sisters are widowed and divorced and that others find themselves in unusual circumstances where, out of necessity, they are required to work for a period of time. But these instances are the exception, not the rule' (Ezra Taft Benson, *To the Mothers in Zion* [pamphlet, 1987], pp. 5–6). You in these unusual circumstances qualify for additional inspiration and strength from the Lord. Those who leave the home for lesser reasons will not" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 42–43; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 34).

PARENTHOOD: CREATING A GOSPEL- CENTERED HOME

The ideal way to transform your home into a house of learning is to hold family home evening faithfully.

—Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Parental Success

President Spencer W. Kimball

“I have sometimes seen children of good families rebel, resist, stray, sin, and even actually fight God. In this they bring sorrow to their parents, who have done their best to set in movement a current and to teach and live as examples. But I have repeatedly seen many of these same children, after years of wandering, mellow, realize what they have been missing, repent, and make great contribution to the spiritual life of their community. The reason I believe this can take place is that, despite all the adverse winds to which these people have been subjected, they have been influenced still more, and much more than they realized, by the current of life in the homes in which they were reared. When, in later years, they feel a longing to recreate in their own families the same atmosphere they enjoyed as children, they are likely to turn to the faith that gave meaning to their parents’ lives” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, 160; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 111).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Nurture your children with love and the admonitions of the Lord.

“Rearing happy, peaceful children is no easy challenge in today’s world, but it can be done, and it is being done.

“Responsible parenthood is the key.

“Above all else, children need to know and feel they are loved, wanted, and appreciated. They need to be assured of that often. Obviously, this is a role parents should fill, and most often the mother can do it best. . . .

“Children must be taught to pray, to rely on the Lord for guidance, and to express appreciation for the blessings that are theirs. I recall kneeling at the bedsides of our young children, helping them with their prayers.

“Children must be taught right from wrong. They can and must learn the commandments of God. They must be taught that it is wrong to steal, lie, cheat, or covet what others have.

“Children must be taught to work at home. They should learn there that honest labor develops dignity and self-respect. They should learn the pleasure of work, of doing a job well.

“The leisure time of children must be constructively directed to wholesome, positive pursuits. Too much time viewing television can be destructive, and pornography in this medium should not be tolerated. It is estimated that growing children today watch television over twenty-five hours per week.

“Communities have a responsibility to assist the family in promoting wholesome entertainment. What a community tolerates will become tomorrow’s standard for today’s youth.

“Families must spend more time together in work and recreation. Family home evenings should be scheduled once a week as a time for recreation, work projects, skits, songs around the piano, games, special refreshments, and family prayers. Like iron links in a chain, this practice will bind a family together, in love, pride, tradition, strength, and loyalty.

“Family study of the scriptures should be the practice in our homes each Sabbath day.

“Daily devotionals are also a commendable practice, where scripture reading, singing of hymns, and family prayer are a part of our daily routine.

“Parents must prepare their children for the ordinances of the gospel. . . .

“The home is what needs reforming. Try today, and tomorrow, to make a change in your home by praying twice a day with your family. . . . Ask a blessing upon every meal you eat. Spend ten minutes . . . reading a chapter from the words of the Lord in the

[scriptures]. . . Let love, peace, and the Spirit of the Lord, kindness, charity, sacrifice for others, abound in your families. Banish harsh words, . . . and let the Spirit of God take possession of your hearts. Teach to your children these things, in spirit and power. . . . Not one child in a hundred would go astray, if the home environment, example and training, were in harmony with . . . the gospel of Christ.” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939, p. 302.)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 84–87; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 60–61).

Elder Orson F. Whitney

“The Prophet Joseph Smith declared—and he never taught more comforting doctrine—that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father’s heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110).

Elder Howard W. Hunter

“A successful parent is one who has loved, one who has sacrificed, and one who has cared for, taught, and ministered to the needs of a child. If you have done all of these and your child is still wayward or troublesome or worldly, it could well be that you are, nevertheless, a successful parent. Perhaps there are children who have come into the world that would challenge any set of parents under any set of circumstances. Likewise, perhaps there are others who would bless the lives of, and be a joy to, almost any father or mother” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 65).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Obviously, family values mirror our personal priorities. Given the gravity of current conditions,

would parents be willing to give up just one outside thing, giving that time and talent instead to the family? Parents and grandparents, please scrutinize your schedules and priorities in order to ensure that life’s prime relationships get more prime time! Even consecrated and devoted Brigham Young was once told by the Lord, ‘Take especial care of your family’ (D&C 126:3). Sometimes it is the most conscientious who need this message the most!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 121; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 90).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“Some of you have children who do not respond to you, choosing entirely different paths. Father in Heaven has repeatedly had that same experience. While some of His children have used His gift of agency to make choices against His counsel, He continues to love them. Yet, I am sure, He has never blamed Himself for their unwise choices” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 43; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 34).

Elder Robert D. Hales

“Countless things can be done within the walls of our homes to strengthen the family. May I share a few ideas that may help identify the areas that need strengthening in our own families. I offer them in a spirit of encouragement, knowing that each family—and each family member—is unique. . . .

- Spend individual time with our children, letting them choose the activity and the subject of conversation. Block out distractions. . . .

- Pray daily with our children.

- Read the scriptures together. I remember my own mother and father reading the scriptures as we children sat on the floor and listened. Sometimes they would ask, ‘What does that scripture mean to you?’ or ‘How does it make you feel?’ Then they would listen to us as we responded in our own words.

- Read the words of the living prophets and other inspiring articles for children, youth, and adults in Church magazines. . . .

- Hold family home evening every week. As parents, we are sometimes too intimidated to teach or testify to our children. I have been guilty of that in my own life. Our children need to have us share spiritual feelings with them and to teach and bear testimony to them.

“• Hold family councils to discuss family plans and concerns. Some of the most effective family councils are one on one with each family member. Help our children know their ideas are important. Listen to them and learn from them. . . .

“• Eat together when possible, and have meaningful mealtime discussions.

“• Work together as a family, even if it may be faster and easier to do the job ourselves. Talk with our sons and daughters as we work together. I had that opportunity every Saturday with my father.

“• Help our children learn how to build good friendships and make their friends feel welcome in our homes. Get to know the parents of the friends of our children.

“• Teach our children by example how to budget time and resources. Help them learn self-reliance and the importance of preparing for the future.

“• Teach our children the history of our ancestors and of our own family history.

“• Build family traditions. Plan and carry out meaningful vacations together, considering our children’s needs, talents, and abilities. Help them create happy memories, improve their talents, and build their feelings of self-worth. . . .

“• Remember the Prophet Joseph Smith’s words: ‘Nothing is so much calculated to lead people to forsake sin as to take them by the hand, and watch over them with tenderness. When persons manifest the least kindness and love to me, O what power it has over my mind, while the opposite course has a tendency to harrow up all the harsh feelings and depress the human mind’ (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 240)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 41–44; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 33–34).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

“Even that beloved and wonderfully successful parent President Joseph F. Smith pled, ‘Oh! God, let me not lose my own.’ That is every parent’s cry, and in it is something of every parent’s fear. But no one has failed who keeps trying and keeps praying. You have every right to receive encouragement and to know in the end your children will call your name blessed” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 48; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 36).

Bishop Robert D. Hales

“A child, even one raised with great love and care and carefully taught, may choose, when an adult, not to follow those teachings for a variety of reasons. How should we react? We understand and respect the principle of agency. We pray that life’s experiences will help them regain their desire and ability to live the gospel. They are still our children, and we will love and care about them always. We do not lock the doors of our house nor the doors to our heart.

“Some people feel they cannot accept or fulfill a Church calling if one of their children is straying. As we accept the calling and do our best, we may have a profound spiritual effect on those we love the most. If we think other families don’t have any difficulties or any problems, we just don’t know them well enough. . . .

“Certainly parents will make mistakes in their parenting process, but through humility, faith, prayer, and study, each person can learn a better way and in so doing bless the lives of family members now and teach correct traditions for the generations that follow.

“The Lord’s promises are sure: ‘I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go’ (Psalm 32:8). And ‘whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you’ (3 Nephi 18:20)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 10–11; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 10).

Family Home Evening

First Presidency—Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Charles W. Penrose

“To this end 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” (“Home Evening,” *Improvement Era*, June 1915, 733–34).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Take time to have a meaningful weekly home evening. With your husband presiding, participate in a spiritual and an uplifting home evening each week. Have your children actively involved. Teach them correct principles. Make this one of your great family traditions” (*To the Mothers in Zion*, 9).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

“The ideal way to transform your home into a house of learning is to hold family home evening faithfully. The Church has reserved Monday evening for that purpose. In 1915 the First Presidency instructed local leaders and parents to inaugurate a home evening, a time when parents should teach their families the principles of the gospel. The Presidency wrote: ‘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 influence and temptations which beset them.’

“President David O. McKay gave the same promise in 1965 and added that the youth will gain power ‘to choose righteousness and peace, and be assured an eternal place in the family circle of our Father.’ In 1976 the Presidency reaffirmed that ‘regular participation in family home evening will develop increased personal worth, family unity, love for our fellowmen, and trust in our Father in heaven.’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 86–87; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 70–71).

Elder Joe J. Christensen

“Hold family home evenings *every week* without fail. This is a wonderful time to share your testimony with your children. Give them an opportunity to share their feelings about the gospel. Help them learn to recognize when they feel the presence of the Spirit. Family home evenings will help create an island of refuge and security within your own home” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 14; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 12).

Family Council Processes**President Spencer W. Kimball**

“We also said last year that we have paused on some plateaus long enough, and then we gave an emphasis to councils—family councils, ward and stake councils, and on through to area and Churchwide councils.

“If you continue to observe carefully, you will see how all these developments are pointing us in one direction. As a people, we are being positioned to do more perfectly that which the Lord has given us to do” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1980, 5; or *Ensign*, May 1980, 4).

“Think of the learning that accompanies a family council on the family budget. How do Mom and Dad feel when a teenage son who, because he is included and understands the budgeting process, volunteers part of his summer’s income to help replace that tired refrigerator?” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 125; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 78).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Every family has problems and challenges. But successful families try to work together toward solutions instead of resorting to criticism and contention. They pray for each other, discuss, and give encouragement. Occasionally these families fast together in support of one of the family members.

“Strong families support each other.

“Successful families do things together: family projects, work, vacations, recreation, and reunions.

“Successful parents have found that it is not easy to rear children in an environment polluted with evil. Therefore, they take deliberate steps to provide the best of wholesome influences. Moral principles are taught. Good books are made available and read. Television watching is controlled. Good and uplifting music is provided. But most importantly, the scriptures are read and discussed as a means to help develop spiritual-mindedness” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 6–7; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 6).

“I mention family councils because of our persistent emphasis on family unity and family solidarity. By encouraging parents to hold family councils, we imitate in our homes a heavenly pattern” (in Conference Report, Mar.–Apr. 1979, 124; or *Ensign*, May 1979, 88).

President Stephen L. Richards

“The genius of our Church government is government through *councils*. . . . I have had enough experience to know the value of councils. Hardly a day passes but that I see the wisdom, God’s wisdom, in creating councils: to govern his Kingdom” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1953, 86).

Elder L. Tom Perry

"I would make the family home evening times on Monday night a family council meeting where children were taught by parents how to prepare for their roles as family members and prospective parents. Family home evening would begin with a family dinner together, followed by a council meeting, where such topics as the following would be discussed and training would be given: temple preparation, missionary preparation, home management, family finances, career development, education, community involvement, cultural improvement, acquisition and care of real and personal property, family planning calendars, use of leisure time, and work assignments. The evening could then be climaxed with a special dessert and time for parents to have individual meetings with each child" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 8–9; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 9).

"Each family organization should include a family council comprised of all members of the family unit. Here the basic responsibilities of the family organization can be taught to the children. They can learn how to make decisions and act upon those decisions. Too many are growing to marriageable age unprepared for this responsibility. Work ethics and self-preparedness can be taught in a most effective way in a family council. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., has paraphrased an old statement. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," he would say. 'But all play and no work makes Jack a useless boy.' (As quoted by Harold B. Lee, 'Administering True Charity,' address delivered at the welfare agricultural meeting, 5 Oct. 1968)" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 119; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 88).

See quotation on page 99.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

"Let us remember that the basic council of the Church is the family council. Fathers and mothers should apply diligently the principles I have discussed in their relationships with each other and with their children. As we do so, our homes can become a heaven on earth" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 34; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 26).

Perhaps the best gift parents can give their children is to love each other.

Elder Ronald E. Poelman

"Unity in temporal matters, as in spiritual matters, is essential to our success. At each step, consensus of the council members must be obtained, through prayer and discussion, to achieve that unity which is prerequisite to the Lord's help. To be effective, decisions must be reached by divine consensus, not by compromise. Participants are not competing advocates, representing special interests, but rather contributing members of a unified body" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1980, 126; or *Ensign*, May 1980, 91).

Good Marriages Bless Children**President Howard W. Hunter**

"You should express regularly to your wife and children your reverence and respect for her. Indeed, one of the greatest things a father can do for his children is to love their mother" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50).

Elder Delbert L. Stapley

"If parents are immature and cannot settle their differences without anger, fighting, and name-calling, a child becomes most insecure, and as he grows older he is apt to take up with the wrong type of friends just to get away from an unhappy home environment" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 45).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

"Often parents communicate most effectively with their children by the way they listen to and address each other. Their conversations showing gentleness and love are heard by our ever-alert, impressionable children" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 81; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 53).

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis

"Perhaps the best gift parents can give their children is to love each other, to enjoy each other, and even to hold hands and demonstrate their love by the manner in which they talk to each other" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 13; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 12).

Bishop Robert D. Hales

“It helps children to see that good parents can have differing opinions and that these differences can be worked out without striking, yelling, or throwing things. They need to see and feel calm communication with respect for each other’s viewpoints so they themselves will know how to work through differences in their own lives” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 9).

Parenting: An Eternal Perspective**President Spencer W. Kimball**

“From the beginning, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day 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).

President Howard W. Hunter

“The prophets of the past have spoken also of those who may not have opportunity to marry in this life. President Lorenzo Snow said:

“‘There is no Latter-day Saint who dies after having lived a faithful life who will lose anything because of having failed to do certain things when opportunities were not furnished him or her. In other words, if a young man or a young woman has no opportunity of getting married, and they live faithful lives up to the time of their death, they will have all the blessings, exaltation, and glory that any man or woman will have who had this opportunity and improved it. That is sure and positive’ (*The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, comp. Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984], p. 138).

“I believe President Snow’s statement to be true” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 49–50).

President Boyd K. Packer

“Although our thoughts are centered in this sacred and solemn assembly on the noble titles High Priest, President, Apostle, Prophet, Seer, Revelator, the heavens are not offended if we at once speak of father, mother, child, brother, sister, family—even dad, mom, grandma, grandpa, baby.

“If you are reverent and prayerful and obedient, the day will come when there will be revealed to you why the God of heaven has commanded us to address him as *Father*, and the Lord of the Universe as *Son*. Then you will have discovered the pearl of great price spoken of in the scriptures and willingly go and sell all that you have that you might obtain it.

“The great plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8, 16) revealed to prophets is the plan for a happy family. It is the love story between husband and wife, parents and children, that renews itself through the ages” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 8–9; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 9).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“‘Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels’ [in Conference Report, Oct. 1942, pp. 12–13].

“That message and warning from the First Presidency is needed more, not less, today than when it was given. And no voice from any organization of the Church on any level of administration equals that of the First Presidency” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 23).

“When one knows the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is cause to rejoice. The words *joy* and *rejoice* appear through the scriptures repetitively. Latter-day Saints are happy people. When one knows the doctrine, parenthood becomes a sacred obligation, the begetting of life a sacred privilege. Abortion would be unthinkable. No one would think of suicide. And all the frailties and problems of men would fade away” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 23; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 18).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“It follows that everything we have in the Church centers around celestial marriage, and that salvation is a family affair. . . .

“. . . Thus the family unit is the most important organization in time or in eternity.

“And thus we should have more interest in and concern for our families than for anything else in life.

“Every major decision should be made on the basis of the effect it will have on the family unit. Our

courtship, schooling, and choice of friends; our employment, hobbies, and place of residence; our social life, the organizations we join, and the service we render mankind; and above all, our obedience or the lack of it to the standards of revealed truth—all these things should be decided on the basis of their effect on the family unit.

“There is nothing in this world as important as the creation and perfection of family units of the kind contemplated in the gospel of Jesus Christ” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 27).

Elder M. Russell Ballard

“I stand in awe when I consider the great confidence Heavenly Father has placed in you and me when he allows us the privilege of being the mortal fathers and mothers to his eternal spirit offspring. We must never forget that he has a vested interest in every one of us, and we must realize how important each human soul is in God’s eternal plan. When we understand the importance of each soul, we can go before him confidently in prayer to seek his guidance and direction in our sacred assignment as parents. He said, ‘This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man’ (Moses 1:39). This seems to me to best sum up the important role that mortal parents have in the great eternal plan of life for each member of our families” (in Conference Report, Sept.–Oct. 1978, 99; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 66).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

“I am deeply moved that God finds His ultimate purpose and meaning in being a parent” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 47; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 36).

Elder J. Richard Clarke

“Throughout the ages, evil forces have attacked the family. Why do you suppose Satan is so obsessed with its dissolution? Because it stands for everything he wants and cannot have. He cannot be a husband, a father, or a grandfather. He cannot have posterity now or ever. Satan cannot even keep those he has led away from God. He has no eternal kingdom or inheritance” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 74; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 60).

The Joy of Parenthood

President Spencer W. Kimball

“We agree with Pestalozzi:

“Our home joys are the most delightful earth affords, and the joy of parents in their children is the most holy joy of humanity. It makes their hearts pure and good. It lifts them up to their Father in Heaven.’

“You and I well understand that this great, superior joy lies well within the realm of every set of parents, if they have properly performed their marriage and their family responsibilities and if high ideals of marriage and family life have prevailed” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 159; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 108).

President N. Eldon Tanner

“I can think of nothing sweeter than a home where a man is living his religion, magnifying his priesthood, with his wife supporting him in every way, where love and harmony exists, and where together they are trying to raise a family of righteous sons and daughters whom they can take back into the presence of their Heavenly Father. This may sound like an impossible dream, but I can assure you that there are thousands of such families within the Church, and it is something that can be a reality for every one of us as we accept and live the teachings of Jesus Christ. How fortunate a child is to live in such a home, and how great will be the joy of the parents in their posterity!” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 127; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 10).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“The ultimate end of all activity in the Church is that a man and his wife and their children can be happy at home and that the family can continue through eternity. All Christian doctrine is formulated to protect the individual, the home, and the family” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 17; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 15).

Elder James E. Faust

“While few human challenges are greater than that of being good parents, few opportunities offer greater potential for joy. Surely no more important work is to be done in this world than preparing our children to be God-fearing, happy, honorable, and productive. Parents will find no more fulfilling happiness than to

have their children honor them and their teachings. It is the glory of parenthood. John testified, 'I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth' (3 John 1:4)" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 40; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 32–33).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

"The commandment to honor our parents echoes the sacred spirit of family relationships in which—at their best—we have sublime expressions of heavenly love and care for one another. We sense the importance of these relationships when we realize that our greatest expressions of joy or pain in mortality come from the members of our families" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 17; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 15).

Teaching Children the Gospel

President Ezra Taft Benson

"These promises—increased love and harmony in the home, greater respect between parent and child, increased spirituality and righteousness—are not idle promises, but exactly what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said the Book of Mormon will help us draw nearer to God" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 7).

"We have not been using the Book of Mormon as we should. Our homes are not as strong unless we are using it to bring our children to Christ" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 65).

"We encourage parents to teach their children fundamental spiritual principles that will instill faith in God" ("Righteousness Exalteth a Nation," 5).

"What should we teach? The Lord has revealed the specific curriculum that parents should teach. Hear His words: 'Teach . . . unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence.' (Moses 6:57.)

"As further noted in this revelation, the fundamental doctrines consist of the doctrine of the Fall, the mission of Christ and His atonement, and the first principles and ordinances of the gospel, which include faith in Christ, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost as the means to a sanctified life (see Moses

6:58–59)" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 48; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 36).

President N. Eldon Tanner

"Parents also should teach their children early in life the glorious concept and fact that they are spirit children of God, and that choosing to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ is the only way to enjoy success and happiness here and eternal life hereafter. They must be taught that Satan is real and that he will use all agencies at his disposal to tempt them to do wrong, to lead them astray, make them his captives, and keep them from the supreme happiness and exaltation they could otherwise enjoy" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 58; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 8).

President Marion G. Romney

"There is another reason why we should read the Book of Mormon: By doing so we will fill and refresh our minds with a constant flow of that 'water' which Jesus said would be in us 'a well of water springing up into everlasting life' (John 4:14). We must obtain a continuing supply of this water if we are to resist evil and retain the blessings of being born again. . . .

"I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1980, 88, 90; or *Ensign*, May 1980, 66–67).

Elder Mark E. Petersen

"What will parents barter for the souls of their little children, these tiny ones who are given into their care by the Almighty himself, to whom they should teach the principles of righteousness, and whom these parents should lead into the proper pathways of life?" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 142; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 111).

Elder L. Tom Perry

“At the time I was a new parent, President David O. McKay presided over the Church. His counsel was clear and direct regarding our responsibilities to our children. He taught us the most precious gift a man and woman can receive is a child of God, and that the raising of a child is basically, fundamentally, and most exclusively a *spiritual* process.

“He directed us to basic principles we need to teach our children. The first and most important inner quality you can instill in a child is *faith in God*. The first and most important action a child can learn is *obedience*. And the most powerful tool you have with which to teach a child is *love*. (See *Instructor*, Dec. 1949, p. 620)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1983, 106; or *Ensign*, May 1983, 78).

Elder David B. Haight

“We are to teach and train our children in the ways of the Lord. Children should not be left to their own devices in learning character and family values, or in listening to and watching unsupervised music or television or movies as a means of gaining knowledge and understanding as to how to live their lives!

“The Lord has clearly commanded that parents are to teach their children to do good (see Alma 39:12) and to teach them ‘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, [or] the sin [shall] be upon the heads of the parents. . . .’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1992, 105; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 75–76).

Elder James E. Faust

“A principal purpose for discipline is to teach obedience. President David O. McKay stated: ‘Parents who fail to teach obedience to their children, if [their] homes do not develop obedience society will demand it and get it. It is therefore better for the home, with its kindness, sympathy and understanding, to train the child in obedience rather than callously to leave him to the brutal and unsympathetic discipline that society will impose if the home has not already fulfilled its obligation’ (*The Responsibility of Parents to Their Children*, p. 3)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 41–42; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 34).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

“They are to teach and guide their children ‘by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, . . . reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love’ (D&C 121:41–43). Parents then will earn the respect of their children, and children will honor their parents, unifying families” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 87–88; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 71).

Elder H. Verlan Andersen

“Although the Lord chastised the leading brethren, and indeed all parents in Zion, for parental delinquency, he indicated that repentance is possible. But he also said that if we did not repent, we would be removed out of our place. (See D&C 93:41–50.)

“Not only do the scriptures instruct us on when teaching is best done (see D&C 68:25–32; Deuteronomy 8:5–9) but also on what should and should not be taught (see Moroni 7:14–19; 2 Nephi 9:28–29) and who should and should not do the teaching (see 2 Nephi 28:14, 31; Mosiah 23:14)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 81).

Bishop Robert D. Hales

“My father taught me respect for the priesthood. While serving in the Aaronic Priesthood, we passed the sacrament using stainless steel sacrament trays which, as a result of spilled water, were often dulled with hard water spots. As a holder of the Aaronic Priesthood, I was responsible for helping prepare the sacrament. Father asked me to bring home the trays, and together we cleaned them with steel wool until every tray sparkled. When I passed the sacrament, I knew we had participated in making the sacrament ordinance a little more sacred. . . .

“I learned respect for womanhood from my father’s tender caring for my mother, my sister, and his sisters. Father was the first to arise from dinner to clear the table. My sister and I would wash and dry the dishes each night at Father’s request. If we were not there, Father and Mother would clean the kitchen together” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 9; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 9).

Teaching Children to Work

Doctrine and Covenants 68:31–32

“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.

“These things ought not to be, and must be done away from among them; wherefore, let my servant Oliver Cowdery carry these sayings unto the land of Zion.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“*Work together.* I do not know how many generations or centuries ago someone first said, ‘An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.’ Children need to work with their parents, to wash dishes with them, to mop floors with them, to mow lawns, to prune trees” (“Four Simple Things to Help Our Families and Our Nations,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1996, 7).

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

“Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

“‘In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread’ is not outdated counsel. It is basic to personal welfare. One of the greatest favors parents can do for their children is to teach them to work. Much has been said over the years about children and monthly allowances, and opinions and recommendations vary greatly. I’m from the ‘old school.’ I believe children should earn their money needs through service and appropriate chores. Some financial rewards to children may also be tied to educational effort and the accomplishment of other worthwhile goals. I think it is unfortunate for a child to grow up in a home where the seed is planted in the child’s mind that there is a family money tree that automatically drops ‘green stuff’ once a week or once a month” (*One for the Money*, 8).

Elder James E. Faust

“An essential part of teaching children to be disciplined and responsible is to have them learn to

work. As we grow up, many of us are like the man who said, ‘I like work; it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours’ (Jerome Klapka Jerome, in *The International Dictionary of Thoughts*, comp. John P. Bradley, Leo F. Daniels, and Thomas C. Jones [Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1969], p. 782). Again, the best teachers of the principle of work are the parents themselves. For me, work became a joy when I first worked alongside my father, grandfather, uncles, and brothers. I am sure that I was often more of an aggravation than a help, but the memories are sweet and the lessons learned are valuable. Children need to learn responsibility and independence. Are the parents personally taking the time to show and demonstrate and explain so that children can, as Lehi taught, ‘act for themselves and not . . . be acted upon?’ (2 Nephi 2:26)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 42; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 34).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

“The remarks of President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., given fifty-six years ago, are instructive today. He said: ‘It is the eternal, inescapable law that growth comes only from work and preparation, whether the growth be material, mental, or spiritual. Work has no substitute’ (in Conference Report, Apr. 1933, p. 103). More recently, Elder Howard W. Hunter counseled: ‘The first recorded instruction given to Adam after the Fall dealt with the eternal principle of work. The Lord said: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” (Gen. 3:19.) Our Heavenly Father loves us so completely that he has given us a commandment to work. This is one of the keys to eternal life. He knows that we will learn more, grow more, achieve more, serve more, and benefit more from a life of industry than from a life of ease’ (*Ensign*, Nov. 1975, p. 122)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 9; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 8).

Elder Joe J. Christensen

“*Teach your children to work and to take responsibility.* Especially in urban settings, too many children are growing up in an environment where they do not have enough to do. They are like the young thirteen-year-old boy who was asked what he did all day in the summer.

“He said, ‘Well, I get up in the morning about ten or eleven. Then my mom gets me something to eat. Then maybe I’ll go with some of the guys and play

a little basketball, maybe watch TV, and then go down to the mall and “hang out” for a while—sorta watch the girls and stuff.’ . . .

“I like what President Spencer W. Kimball has said on this topic:

“We want you parents to create work for your children” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 13; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 12).

A Father’s Duty

President Howard W. Hunter

See “Being a Righteous Husband and Father” on pages 206–9.

Elder James E. Faust

“I hasten to acknowledge that there are too many husbands and fathers who are abusive to their wives and children and from whom the wives and children need protection. Yet modern sociological studies powerfully reaffirm the essential influence of a caring father in the life of a child—boy or girl. In the past twenty years, as homes and families have struggled to stay intact, sociological studies reveal this alarming fact: much of the crime and many of the behavioral disorders in the United States come from homes where the father has abandoned the children. In many societies the world over, child poverty, crime, drug abuse, and family decay can be traced to conditions where the father gives no male nurturing. Sociologically it is now painfully apparent that fathers are not optional family baggage.

“We need to honor the position of the father as the primary provider for physical and spiritual support. I state this with no reluctance because the Lord has revealed that this obligation is placed upon husbands. ‘Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken’ (D&C 83:2). Further, ‘All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age’ (D&C 83:4). In addition, their spiritual welfare should be ‘brought to pass by the faith and covenant of their fathers’ (D&C 84:99). As regards little children, the Lord has promised that ‘great things may be required at the hands of their fathers’ (D&C 29:48).

“It is useless to debate which parent is most important. No one would doubt that a mother’s

influence is paramount with newborns and in the first years of a child’s life. The father’s influence increases as the child grows older. However, each parent is necessary at various times in a child’s development. Both fathers and mothers do many intrinsically different things for their children. Both mothers and fathers are equipped to nurture children, but their approaches are different. Mothers seem to take a dominant role in preparing children to live within their families, present and future. Fathers seem best equipped to prepare children to function in the environment outside the family.

Both mothers and fathers are equipped to nurture children, but their approaches are different.

“One authority states: ‘Studies show that fathers have a special role to play in building a child’s self-respect. They are important, too, in ways we really don’t understand, in developing internal limits and controls in children.’ He continues: ‘Research also shows that fathers are critical in establishment of gender in children. Interestingly, fatherly involvement produces stronger sexual identity and

character in both boys and girls. It is well established that the masculinity of sons and the femininity of daughters are each greater when fathers are active in family life’ (Karl Zinsmeister, “Do Children Need Fathers?” *Crisis*, Oct. 1992).

“Parents in any marital situation have a duty to set aside personal differences and encourage each other’s righteous influence in the lives of their children. . . .

“Perhaps we regard the power bestowed by Elijah as something associated only with formal ordinances performed in sacred places. But these ordinances become dynamic and productive of good only as they reveal themselves in our daily lives. Malachi said that the power of Elijah would turn the *hearts* of the fathers and the children to each other. The heart is the seat of the emotions and a conduit for revelation (see Malachi 4:5–6). This sealing power thus reveals itself in family relationships, in attributes and virtues developed in a nurturing environment, and in loving service. These are the cords that bind families together, and the priesthood advances their development. In imperceptible but real ways, the ‘doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul [and thy home] as the dews from heaven’ (D&C 121:45).

“I so testify that the blessings of the priesthood, honored by fathers and husbands and revered by

wives and children, can indeed cure the cancer that plagues our society. I plead with you, Fathers, come home. Magnify your priesthood calling; bless your families through this sacred influence, and experience the rewards promised by our Father and God. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 44–45, 47; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 35, 37).

Elder Horacio A. Tenorio

“In ancient times a fortress required regular inspections to ensure that no weak spots developed that an enemy could take advantage of, and guards in the watchtowers ensured that no enemy could approach undetected. In other words, once a city was fortified, a constant effort was made to maintain the fortress so that it could serve its purpose.

“By establishing a security system of our own, we can prevent the enemy from finding and exploiting weaknesses in our family fortress through which he could gain access to, and harm, our most precious treasure, our family.

“One of the watchtowers on our fortress can be the regular habit of a father’s interview with each member of his family. Personal interviews are an important resource in maintaining the integrity of our fortress. Through them we become better acquainted with our children, learn about their problems and concerns, and establish open communication and trust that will enable us to foresee any danger, help them make decisions, and support them during difficult times. Our Heavenly Father has given us as parents the stewardship of caring for and protecting our families. It is a responsibility that we cannot and must not delegate.

“In Doctrine and Covenants section 93, verses 39 and 40, it says:

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

““But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.’

“A loving interview guided by the Spirit can give direction to our children’s lives, bring about necessary adjustments or changes, and may even result in miracles” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 29–30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 23–24).

A Mother’s Duty

President David O. McKay

“Motherhood consists of three principal attributes or qualities: namely, (1) the power to bear, (2) the ability to rear, (3) the gift to love. . . .

“This ability and willingness properly to rear children, the gift to love, and eagerness, yes, longing to express it in soul development, make motherhood the noblest office or calling in the world” (*Gospel Ideals*, 453).

See President Spencer W. Kimball’s quotation on page 237.

See President Ezra Taft Benson, *To the Mothers in Zion* on pages 352–57.

See President Gordon B. Hinckley’s quotation on page 77.

See President Gordon B. Hinckley, “Women of the Church,” on pages 357–60.

See Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “The Great Plan of Happiness,” on pages 259–63.

See “The Divine Work of Women” on pages 347–49.

Disciplining with Love

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Love is the very essence of family life. Why is it that the children we love become so frequently the targets of our harsh words? Why is it that these children who love their fathers and mothers sometimes speak as if with daggers that cut to the quick? ‘There is beauty all around,’ *only* ‘when there’s love at home’ (*Hymns*, no. 294)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 83; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 67).

Elder James E. Faust

“To have successful homes, values must be taught, and there must be rules, there must be standards, and there must be absolutes. Many societies give parents very little support in teaching and honoring moral values. A number of cultures are becoming essentially valueless, and many of the younger people in those societies are becoming moral cynics. . . .

“. . . Child rearing is so individualistic. Every child is different and unique. What works with one may not work with another. I do not know who is wise enough to say what discipline is too harsh or what

is too lenient except the parents of the children themselves, who love them most. It is a matter of prayerful discernment for the parents. Certainly the overarching and undergirding principle is that the discipline of children must be motivated more by love than by punishment. . . . Direction and discipline are, however, certainly an indispensable part of child rearing. If parents do not discipline their children, then the public will discipline them in a way the parents do not like. Without discipline, children will not respect either the rules of the home or of society” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 40–41; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 32–34).

Elder Ben B. Banks

“*Discipline with love.* “Discipline” and “punishment” are not synonymous. Punishment suggests hurting, paying someone back for a wrong committed. Discipline implies an action directed toward a goal . . . of helping the recipient to improve himself” (William E. Homan, ‘How to Be a Better Parent,’ *Reader’s Digest*, Oct. 1969, p. 188). Discipline should always be with love” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 40; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 29).

Personal Righteousness Prepares Parents

President Brigham Young

“No man can ever become a ruler in the Kingdom of God, until he can perfectly rule himself; then is he capable of raising a family of children who will rise up and call him blessed” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 265).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Setting your home in order is keeping the commandments of God. This brings harmony and love in the home between you and your companion and between you and your children. It is daily family prayer. It is teaching your family to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is each family member keeping the commandments of God. It is you and your companion being worthy to receive a temple recommend, all family members receiving the ordinances of exaltation, and your family being sealed together for eternity. It is being free from excessive debt, with family members paying honest tithes and offerings” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 48–49; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 36).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“*Pray together.* Is prayer such a difficult thing? Would it be so hard to encourage fathers and mothers to get on their knees with their little children and address the throne of Deity to express gratitude for blessings, to pray for those in distress . . . ? How mighty a thing is prayer” (“Four Simple Things to Help Our Families and Our Nations,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1996, 8).

“Your children will know the security of a home where dwells the Spirit of the Lord. . . . They will grow up with a sense of appreciation, having heard their parents in prayer express gratitude for blessings great and small. They will mature with faith in the living God” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 83; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 72).

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

“Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“Parents, can we first consider the most painful part of your problem? If you want to reclaim your son or daughter, why don’t you leave off trying to alter your child just for a little while and concentrate on yourself. The changes must begin with you, not with your children.

“You can’t continue to do what you have been doing (even though you thought it was right) and expect to unproduce some behavior in your child, when your conduct was one of the things that produced it.

“There! It’s been said! After all the evading, all the concern for wayward children. After all the blaming of others, the care to be gentle with parents. It’s out!

“It’s you, not the child, that needs immediate attention.

“Now parents, there is substantial help for you if you will accept it. I add with emphasis that the help we propose is not easy, for the measures are equal to the seriousness of your problem. There is no patent medicine to effect an immediate cure.

“And parents, if you seek for a cure that ignores faith and religious doctrine, you look for a cure where it never will be found. When we talk of religious principles and doctrines and quote scripture, interesting, isn’t it, how many don’t feel comfortable with talk like that. But when we talk

about your problems with your family and offer a solution, then your interest is intense.

“Know that you can’t talk about one without talking about the other, and expect to solve your problems. Once parents know that there is a God and that we are his children, they can face problems like this and win.

“If you are helpless, he is not.

“If you are lost, he is not.

“If you don’t know what to do next, he knows.

“It would take a miracle, you say?

“Well, if it takes a miracle, why not” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 119–20).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Small equivocations in parents can produce large deviations in their children!” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1992, 89; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 66).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“Modern revelation commands parents to ‘teach their children to pray’ (D&C 68:28). This requires parents to learn and pray with the special language of prayer. We learn our native language simply by listening to those who speak it. This is also true of the language with which we address our Heavenly Father. The language of prayer is easier and sweeter to learn than any other tongue. We should give our children the privilege of learning this language by listening to their parents use it in the various prayers offered daily in our homes” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 20; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 18).

Spending Time with Children

President Howard W. Hunter

“Effective family leadership, brethren, requires both quantity and quality time. The teaching and governance of the family must not be left to your wife alone, to society, to school, or even to the Church” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50).

President Thomas S. Monson

“So frequently we mistakenly believe that our children need more things, when in reality their silent pleadings are simply for more of our time. The accumulation of wealth or the multiplication of assets belies the Master’s teaching:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 80; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 62).

Elder James E. Faust

“The little things are the big things sewn into the family tapestry by a thousand threads of love, faith, discipline, sacrifice, patience, and work” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 43; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 35).

Elder L. Tom Perry

“There are two areas I would determine to improve if that privilege were granted to me to have young children in our home once again.

“The first would be to spend more time as husband and wife in a family executive committee meeting learning, communicating, planning, and organizing to better fulfill our roles as parents.

“The second wish I would like, if I could have those years over, would be to spend more family time” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 49; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 37).

“Build traditions in your families that will bring you together, for they can demonstrate your devotion, love, and support for one another. For each of the members of your family, these events would include blessings of children, baptisms, other priesthood ordinances, graduations, missionary farewells, homecomings, and, of course, marriages. If distance, missions, or ill health prevent personal reunions, write one of those special letters that will be treasured in family histories. Sharing these occasions as a family will help us build a foundation established upon a rock” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 29; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 23).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

See quotation on page 242.

Elder A. Theodore Tuttle

“Prepare now! Take steps now to strengthen your family. Spend time together. Establish and maintain family traditions that build happy memories” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 39; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 28).

Elder Ben B. Banks

“Do things together. Vacations, recreational activities, and family work projects give parents good opportunities to teach the importance of developing a good work ethic. Doing things together gives a child and parent an opportunity to share their attention in a common objective” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 40; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 29).

THE GREATEST CHALLENGE IN THE WORLD—GOOD PARENTING

*Elder James E. Faust
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Oct. 1990, 39–43;
or Ensign, Nov.
1990, 32–35*

Being a Parent Is a Divine Calling

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I ask for your faith and prayers this afternoon as I feel moved upon to discuss a subject which I have chosen to call the greatest challenge in the world. It has to do with the privilege and responsibility of being good parents. On this subject there are about as many opinions as there are parents, yet there are few who claim to have all of the answers. I am certainly not one of them.

I feel that there are more outstanding young men and women among our people at present than at any other moment in my lifetime. This presupposes that most of these fine young people have come from good homes and have committed, caring parents. Even so, the most conscientious parents feel that they may have made some mistakes. One time, when I did a thoughtless thing, I remember my own mother exclaiming, “Where did I fail?”

The Lord has directed, “Bring up your children in light and truth” (D&C 93:40). To me, there is no more important human effort.

Being a father or a mother is not only a great challenge, it is a divine calling. It is an effort requiring consecration. President David O. McKay stated that being parents is “the greatest trust that

has been given to human beings” (*The Responsibility of Parents to Their Children* [pamphlet, n.d.], p. 1).

Creating Successful Homes

While few human challenges are greater than that of being good parents, few opportunities offer greater potential for joy. Surely no more important work is to be done in this world than preparing our children to be God-fearing, happy, honorable, and productive. Parents will find no more fulfilling happiness than to have their children honor them and their teachings. It is the glory of parenthood. John testified, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 1:4). In my opinion, the teaching, rearing, and training of children requires more intelligence, intuitive understanding, humility, strength, wisdom, spirituality, perseverance, and hard work than any other challenge we might have in life. This is especially so when moral foundations of honor and decency are eroding around us. To have successful homes, values must be taught, and there must be rules, there must be standards, and there must be absolutes. Many societies give parents very little support in teaching and honoring moral values. A number of cultures are becoming essentially valueless, and many of the younger people in those societies are becoming moral cynics.

To have successful homes, values must be taught.

As societies as a whole have decayed and lost their moral identity and so many homes are broken, the best hope is to turn greater attention and effort to the teaching of the next generation—our children. In order to do this, we must first reinforce the primary teachers of children. Chief among these are the parents and other family members, and the best environment should be in the home. Somehow, some way, we must try harder to make our homes stronger so that they will stand as sanctuaries against the unwholesome, pervasive moral dry rot around us. Harmony, happiness, peace, and love in the home can help give children the required inner strength to cope with life’s challenges. Barbara Bush, wife of President George Bush, a few months ago said to the graduates of Wellesley College:

“But whatever the era, whatever the times, one thing will never change: Fathers and mothers, if you have children, they must come first. You must read to your children and you must hug your

children and you must love your children. Your success as a family, our success as a society, depends not on what happens in the White House but on what happens inside your house" (*Washington Post*, 2 June 1990, p. 2).

To be a good father and mother requires that the parents defer many of their own needs and desires in favor of the needs of their children. As a consequence of this sacrifice, conscientious parents develop a nobility of character and learn to put into practice the selfless truths taught by the Savior Himself.

I have the greatest respect for single parents who struggle and sacrifice, trying against almost superhuman odds to hold the family together. They should be honored and helped in their heroic efforts. But any mother's or father's task is much easier where there are two functioning parents in the home. Children often challenge and tax the strength and wisdom of both parents. . . .

Parents Must Set the Example

When parents try to teach their children to avoid danger, it is no answer for parents to say to their children, We are experienced and wise in the ways of the world, and we can get closer to the edge of the cliff than you. Parental hypocrisy can make children cynical and unbelieving of what they are taught in the home. For instance, when parents attend movies they forbid their children to see, parental credibility is diminished. If children are expected to be honest, parents must be honest. If children are expected to be virtuous, parents must be virtuous. If you expect your children to be honorable, you must be honorable.

Among the other values children should be taught are respect for others, beginning with the child's own parents and family; respect for the symbols of faith and patriotic beliefs of others; respect for law and order; respect for the property of others; respect for authority. Paul reminds us that children should "learn first to shew piety at home" (1 Timothy 5:4).

Disciplining Children

One of the most difficult parental challenges is to appropriately discipline children. Child rearing is so individualistic. Every child is different and unique. What works with one may not work with another. I do not know who is wise enough to say what discipline is too harsh or what is too lenient except

the parents of the children themselves, who love them most. It is a matter of prayerful discernment for the parents. Certainly the overarching and undergirding principle is that the discipline of children must be motivated more by love than by punishment. Brigham Young counseled, "If you are ever called upon to chasten a person, never chasten beyond the balm you have within you to bind up" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:124–25). Direction and discipline are, however, certainly an indispensable part of child rearing. If parents do not discipline their children, then the public will discipline them in a way the parents do not like. Without discipline, children will not respect either the rules of the home or of society.

A principal purpose for discipline is to teach obedience. President David O. McKay stated: "Parents who fail to teach obedience to their children, if [their] homes do not develop obedience society will demand it and get it. It is therefore better for the home, with its kindness, sympathy and understanding to train the child in obedience rather than callously to leave him to the brutal and unsympathetic discipline that society will impose if the home has not already fulfilled its obligation" (*The Responsibility of Parents to Their Children*, p. 3).

Teaching Children to Work

An essential part of teaching children to be disciplined and responsible is to have them learn to work. As we grow up, many of us are like the man who said, "I like work; it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours" (Jerome Klapka Jerome, in *The International Dictionary of Thoughts*, comp. John P. Bradley, Leo F. Daniels, and Thomas C. Jones [Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1969], p. 782). Again, the best teachers of the principle of work are the parents themselves. For me, work became a joy when I first worked alongside my father, grandfather, uncles, and brothers. I am sure that I was often more of an aggravation than a help, but the memories are sweet and the lessons learned are valuable. Children need to learn responsibility and independence. Are the parents personally taking the time to show and demonstrate and explain so that children can, as Lehi taught, "act for themselves and not . . . be acted upon"? (2 Nephi 2:26).

Luther Burbank, one of the world's greatest horticulturists, said, "If we had paid no more attention to our plants than we have to our children,

we would now be living in a jungle of weeds” (in *Elbert Hubbard’s Scrap Book* [New York: Wm. H. Wise and Co., 1923], p. 227).

Special Challenges for Parents

Children are also beneficiaries of moral agency by which we are all afforded the opportunity to progress, grow, and develop. That agency also permits children to pursue the alternate choice of selfishness, wastefulness, self-indulgence, and self-destruction. Children often express this agency when very young.

Let parents who have been conscientious, loving, and concerned and who have lived the principles of righteousness as best they could be comforted in knowing that they are good parents despite the actions of some of their children. The children themselves have a responsibility to listen, obey, and, having been taught, to learn. Parents cannot always answer for all their children’s misconduct because they cannot ensure the children’s good behavior. Some few children could tax even Solomon’s wisdom and Job’s patience.

There is often a special challenge for those parents who are affluent or overly indulgent. In a sense, some children in those circumstances hold their parents hostage by withholding their support of parental rules unless the parents acquiesce to the children’s demands. Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said, “Those who do too much *for* their children will soon find they can do nothing *with* their children. So many children have been so much *done for* they are almost *done in*” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, p. 150; or *Ensign*, May 1975, p. 101). It seems to be human nature that we do not fully appreciate material things we have not ourselves earned.

There is a certain irony in the fact that some parents are so anxious for their children to be accepted by and be popular with their peers; yet these same parents fear that their children may be doing the things their peers are doing.

Helping Children Internalize Values

Generally, those children who make the decision and have the resolve to abstain from drugs, alcohol, and illicit sex are those who have adopted and internalized the strong values of their homes as lived by their parents. In times of difficult decisions they are most likely to follow the teachings of their parents rather than the example of their peers or the

sophistries of the media which glamorize alcohol consumption, illicit sex, infidelity, dishonesty, and other vices. They are like Helaman’s two thousand young men who “had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them” from death (Alma 56:47). “And they rehearsed . . . the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it” (56:48).

What seems to help cement parental teachings and values in place in children’s lives is a firm belief in Deity. When this belief becomes part of their very souls, they have inner strength. So, of all that is important to be taught, what should parents teach? The scriptures tell us that parents are to teach their children “faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost,” and “the doctrine of repentance” (D&C 68:25). These truths must be taught in the home. They cannot be taught in the public schools, nor will they be fostered by the government or by society. Of course, Church programs can help, but the most effective teaching takes place in the home.

A Thousand Threads of Love

Parental teaching moments need not be big or dramatic or powerful. We learn this from the Master Teacher. Charles Henry Parkhurst said:

“The completed beauty of Christ’s life is only the added beauty of little inconspicuous acts of beauty—talking with the woman at the well; . . . showing the young ruler the stealthy ambition laid away in his heart that kept him out of the kingdom of Heaven; . . . teaching a little knot of followers how to pray; . . . kindling a fire and broiling fish that his disciples might have a breakfast waiting for them when they came ashore from a night of fishing, cold, tired, and discouraged. All of these things, you see, let us in so easily into the real quality and tone of [Christ’s] interests, so specific, so narrowed down, so enlisted in what is small, so engrossed with what is minute” (“Kindness and Love,” in *Leaves of Gold* [Honesdale, Pa.: Coslet Publishing Co., 1938], p. 177).

And so it is with being parents. The little things are the big things sewn into the family tapestry by a thousand threads of love, faith, discipline, sacrifice, patience, and work.

Children of the Covenant

There are some great spiritual promises which may help faithful parents in this church. Children of eternal sealings may have visited upon them the divine promises made to their valiant forebears who nobly kept their covenants. Covenants remembered by parents will be remembered by God. The children may thus become the beneficiaries and inheritors of these great covenants and promises. This is because they are the children of the covenant (see Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, pp. 110–11).

God bless the struggling, sacrificing, honorable parents of this world. May He especially honor the covenants kept by faithful parents among our people and watch over these children of the covenant. I pray that this may be so in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

PLAN OF SALVATION

We who know God's plan for his children, we who have covenanted to participate, have a clear responsibility.

—Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“THE GREAT PLAN OF HAPPINESS”



*Elder Dallin H. Oaks
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Oct. 1993, 96–102;
or Ensign, Nov. 1993,
72–75*

Plan of Salvation a Road Map of Eternity

Questions like, Where did we come from? Why are we here? and Where are we going? are answered in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Prophets have called it the plan of salvation and “the great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8). Through inspiration we can understand this road map of eternity and use it to guide our path in mortality.

The gospel teaches us that we are the spirit children of heavenly parents. Before our mortal birth we had “a pre-existent, spiritual personality, as the sons and daughters of the Eternal Father” (statement of the First Presidency, *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1912, p. 417; see also Jeremiah 1:5). We were placed here on earth to progress toward our destiny of eternal life. These truths give us a unique perspective and different values to guide our decisions from those who doubt the existence of God and believe that life is the result of random processes.

The Council in Heaven

Our understanding of life begins with a council in heaven. There the spirit children of God were taught his eternal plan for their destiny. We had progressed as far as we could without a physical body and an experience in mortality. To realize a fulness of joy,

we had to prove our willingness to keep the commandments of God in a circumstance where we had no memory of what preceded our mortal birth.

In the course of mortality, we would become subject to death, and we would be soiled by sin. To reclaim us from death and sin, our Heavenly Father’s plan provided us a Savior, whose atonement would redeem all from death and pay the price necessary for all to be cleansed from sin on the conditions he prescribed (see 2 Nephi 9:19–24).

Satan had his own plan. He proposed to save *all* the spirit children of God, assuring that result by removing their power to choose and thus eliminating the possibility of sin. When Satan’s plan was rejected, he and the spirits who followed him opposed the Father’s plan and were cast out.

All of the myriads of mortals who have been born on this earth chose the Father’s plan and fought for it. Many of us also made covenants with the Father concerning what we would do in mortality. In ways that have not been revealed, our actions in the spirit world influence us in mortality.

Satan Seeks to Destroy God’s Plan

Although Satan and his followers have lost their opportunity to have a physical body, they are permitted to use their spirit powers to try to frustrate God’s plan. This provides the opposition necessary to test how mortals will use their freedom to choose. Satan’s most strenuous opposition is directed at whatever is most important to the Father’s plan. Satan seeks to discredit the Savior and divine authority, to nullify the effects of the Atonement, to counterfeit revelation, to lead people away from the truth, to contradict individual accountability, to confuse gender, to undermine marriage, and to discourage childbearing (especially by parents who will raise children in righteousness).

Gender, Marriage, and Childbearing Are Essential to the Plan

Maleness and femaleness, marriage, and the bearing and nurturing of children are all essential to the great plan of happiness. Modern revelation makes clear that what we call gender was part of our existence prior to our birth. God declares that he created “male and female” (D&C 20:18; Moses 2:27; Genesis 1:27). Elder James E. Talmage explained: “The distinction between male and female is no

condition peculiar to the relatively brief period of mortal life; it was an essential characteristic of our pre-existent condition” (*Millennial Star*, 24 Aug. 1922, p. 539).

To the first man and woman on earth, the Lord said, “Be fruitful, and multiply” (Moses 2:28; Genesis 1:28; see also Abraham 4:28). This commandment was first in sequence and first in importance. It was essential that God’s spirit children have mortal birth and an opportunity to progress toward eternal life. Consequently, all things related to procreation are prime targets for the adversary’s efforts to thwart the plan of God.

Necessity of the Fall

When Adam and Eve received the first commandment, they were in a transitional state, no longer in the spirit world but with physical bodies not yet subject to death and not yet capable of procreation. They could not fulfill the Father’s first commandment without transgressing the barrier between the bliss of the Garden of Eden and the terrible trials and wonderful opportunities of mortal life.

For reasons that have not been revealed, this transition, or “fall,” could not happen without a transgression—an exercise of moral agency amounting to a willful breaking of a law (see Moses 6:59). This would be a planned offense, a formality to serve an eternal purpose. The Prophet Lehi explained that “if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen” but would have remained in the same state in which he was created (2 Nephi 2:22).

“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; doing no good, for they knew no sin” (v. 23).

But the Fall was planned, Lehi concludes, because “all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things” (v. 24).

Eve’s Wisdom and Courage

It was Eve who first transgressed the limits of Eden in order to initiate the conditions of mortality. Her act, whatever its nature, was formally a transgression but eternally a glorious necessity to open the doorway toward eternal life. Adam showed his wisdom by doing the same. And thus Eve and “Adam fell that men might be” (v. 25).

Some Christians condemn Eve for her act, concluding that she and her daughters are somehow flawed by it. Not the Latter-day Saints! Informed by revelation, we celebrate Eve’s act and honor her wisdom and courage in the great episode called the Fall (see Bruce R. McConkie, “Eve and the Fall,” in *Woman* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979], pp. 67–68). Joseph Smith taught that it was not a “sin” because God had decreed it (see *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980], p. 63). Brigham Young declared, “We should never blame Mother Eve, not the least” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:145). Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said: “I never speak of the part Eve took in this fall as a sin, nor do I accuse Adam of a sin. . . . This was a transgression of the law, but not a sin . . . for it was something that Adam and Eve had to do!” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56], 1:114–15).

Contrast between Sin and Transgression

This suggested contrast between a *sin* and a *transgression* reminds us of the careful wording in the second article of faith: “We believe that men will be punished for their own *sins*, and not for Adam’s *transgression*” (italics added). It also echoes a familiar distinction in the law. Some acts, like murder, are crimes because they are inherently wrong. Other acts, like operating without a license, are crimes only because they are legally prohibited. Under these distinctions, the act that produced the Fall was not a sin—inherently wrong—but a transgression—wrong because it was formally prohibited. These words are not always used to denote something different, but this distinction seems meaningful in the circumstances of the Fall.

First Parents Knew the Fall’s Necessity

Modern revelation shows that our first parents understood the necessity of the Fall. Adam declared, “Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God” (Moses 5:10).

Note the different perspective and the special wisdom of Eve, who focused on the purpose and effect of the great plan of happiness: “Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil,

and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient" (Moses 5:11). In his vision of the redemption of the dead, President Joseph F. Smith saw "the great and mighty ones" assembled to meet the Son of God, and among them was "our glorious Mother Eve" (D&C 138:38–39).

When we understand the plan of salvation, we also understand the purpose and effect of the commandments God has given his children. He teaches us correct principles and invites us to govern ourselves. We do this by the choices we make in mortality.

We live in a day when there are many political, legal, and social pressures for changes that confuse gender and homogenize the differences between men and women. Our eternal perspective sets us against changes that alter those separate duties and privileges of men and women that are essential to accomplish the great plan of happiness. We do not oppose all changes in the treatment of men and women, since some changes in laws or customs simply correct old wrongs that were never grounded in eternal principles.

Use and Misuse of Creative Power

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.

The expression of our procreative powers is pleasing to God, but he has commanded that this be confined within the relationship of marriage. President Spencer W. Kimball taught that "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" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, . . . p. 311).

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 Book of Mormon teaches that unchastity is "most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost" (Alma 39:5). In our own day the First Presidency of the Church has declared

the doctrine of this church "that sexual sin—the illicit sexual relations of men and women—stands, in its enormity, next to murder" (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75], 6:176). Some who do not know the plan of salvation behave like promiscuous animals, but Latter-day Saints—especially those who are under sacred covenants—have no such latitude. We are solemnly responsible to God for the destruction or misuse of the creative powers he has placed within us.

Abortion

The ultimate act of destruction is to take a life. That is why abortion is such a serious sin. Our attitude toward abortion is not based on revealed knowledge of when mortal life begins for legal purposes. It is fixed by our knowledge that according to an eternal plan, all of the spirit children of God must come to this earth for a glorious purpose, and that individual identity began long before conception and will continue for all the eternities to come. We rely on the prophets of God, who have told us that while there may be "rare" exceptions, "the practice of elective abortion is fundamentally contrary to the Lord's injunction, 'Thou shalt not . . . kill, nor do anything like unto it' (Doctrine and Covenants 59:6)" (*1991 Supplement to the 1989 General Handbook of Instructions*, p. 1).

Our knowledge of the great plan of happiness also gives us a unique perspective on the subject of marriage and the bearing of children. In this we also run counter to some strong current forces in custom, law, and economics.

Marriage Is Necessary in God's Plan

Marriage is disdained by an increasing number of couples, and many who marry choose to forgo children or place severe limits on their number. In recent years strong economic pressures in many nations have altered the traditional assumption of a single breadwinner per family. Increases in the number of working mothers of young children inevitably signal a reduced commitment of parental time to nurturing the young. The effect of these reductions is evident in the rising numbers of abortions, divorces, child neglect, and juvenile crime.

We are taught that marriage is necessary for the accomplishment of God's plan, to provide the

approved setting for mortal birth, and to prepare family members for eternal life. "Marriage is ordained of God unto man," the Lord said, "that the earth might answer the end of its creation; and that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made" (D&C 49:15–17).

Our concept of marriage is motivated by revealed truth, not by worldly sociology. The Apostle Paul taught, "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11). President Spencer W. Kimball explained, "Without proper and successful marriage, one will never be exalted" (*Marriage and Divorce* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], p. 24).

According to custom, men are expected to take the initiative in seeking marriage. That is why President Joseph F. Smith directed his prophetic pressure at men. He said, "No man who is marriageable is fully living his religion who remains unmarried" (*Gospel Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 275). We hear of some worthy LDS men in their thirties who are busy accumulating property and enjoying freedom from family responsibilities without any sense of urgency about marriage. Beware, brethren. You are deficient in a sacred duty.

Bear and Nurture Children

Knowledge of the great plan of happiness also gives Latter-day Saints a distinctive attitude toward the bearing and nurturing of children.

In some times and places, children have been regarded as no more than laborers in a family economic enterprise or as insurers of support for their parents. Though repelled by these repressions, some persons in our day have no compunctions against similar attitudes that subordinate the welfare of a spirit child of God to the comfort or convenience of parents.

The Savior taught that we should not lay up treasures on earth but should lay up treasures in heaven (see Matthew 6:19–21). In light of the ultimate purpose of the great plan of happiness, I believe that the ultimate treasures on earth and in heaven are our children and our posterity.

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, p. 6; or *Ensign*, May 1979, p. 6). When married couples postpone childbearing until after they have satisfied their material goals, the mere passage of time assures that they seriously reduce their potential to participate in furthering our Heavenly Father's plan for all of his spirit children. Faithful Latter-day Saints cannot afford to look upon children as an interference with what the world calls "self-fulfillment." Our covenants with God and the ultimate purpose of life are tied up in those little ones who reach for our time, our love, and our sacrifices.

How many children should a couple have? All they can care for! Of course, to care for children means more than simply giving them life. Children must be loved, nurtured, taught, fed, clothed, housed, and well started in their capacities to be good parents themselves. Exercising faith in God's promises to bless them when they are keeping his commandments, many LDS parents have large families. Others seek but are not blessed with children or with the number of children they desire. In a matter as intimate as this, we should not judge one another.

President Gordon B. Hinckley gave this inspired counsel to an audience of young Latter-day Saints:

"I like to think of the positive side of the equation, of the meaning and sanctity of life, of the purpose of this estate in our eternal journey, of the need for the experiences of mortal life under the great plan

of God our Father, of the joy that is to be found only where there are children in the home, of the blessings that come of good posterity. When I think of these values and see them taught and observed, then I am willing to leave the question of numbers to the man and the woman and the Lord" ("If I Were You, What Would I Do?" *Brigham Young University 1983–84 Fireside and Devotional Speeches* [Provo: University Publications, 1984], p. 11).

The great plan of happiness also gives Latter-day Saints a distinctive attitude toward the bearing and nurturing of children.

No Blessing Will Be Denied

Some who are listening to this message are probably saying, "But what about me?" We know that many worthy and wonderful Latter-day Saints currently lack the ideal opportunities and essential requirements for their progress. Singleness, childlessness, death, and divorce frustrate ideals and postpone the

fulfillment of promised blessings. In addition, some women who desire to be full-time mothers and homemakers have been literally compelled to enter the full-time workforce. But these frustrations are only temporary. The Lord has promised that in the eternities no blessing will be denied his sons and daughters who keep the commandments, are true to their covenants, and desire what is right.

Many of the most important deprivations of mortality will be set right in the Millennium, which is the time for fulfilling all that is incomplete in the great plan of happiness for all of our Father's worthy children. We know that will be true of temple ordinances. I believe it will also be true of family relationships and experiences.

Do All Things in Wisdom and Order

I pray that we will not let the challenges and temporary diversions of mortality cause us to forget our covenants and lose sight of our eternal destiny. We who know God's plan for his children, we who

have covenanted to participate, have a clear responsibility. We must desire to do what is right, and we must do all that we can in our own circumstances in mortality.

In all of this, we should remember King Benjamin's caution to "see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27). I think of that inspired teaching whenever I feel inadequate, frustrated, or depressed.

When we have done all that we are able, we can rely on God's promised mercy. We have a *Savior*, who has taken upon him not just the sins, but also "the pains and the sicknesses of his people . . . that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:11–12). He is our Savior, and when we have done all that we can, he will make up the difference, in his own way and in his own time. Of that I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

PORNOGRAPHY

*You cannot afford in any degree
to become involved with
pornography, whatever its form.*

—President Gordon B. Hinckley

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Effects of Pornography on Dating, Marriages, and Families

President Spencer W. Kimball

“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” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1974, 7).

“We hope that our parents and leaders will not tolerate pornography. It is really garbage, but today is peddled as normal and satisfactory food. Many writers seem to take delight in polluting the atmosphere with it. Seemingly, it cannot be stopped by legislation. There is a link between pornography and the low, sexual drives and perversions. We live in a culture which venerates the orgasm, streaking, trading wives, and similar crazes. How low can humans plunge! We pray with our Lord that we may be kept from being in the world. It is sad that decent people are thrown into a filthy area of mental and spiritual pollution. We call upon all of our people to do all in their power to offset this ugly revolution.

“It is ridiculous to imply that pornography has no effect. There is a definite relationship to crime. Murder, robbery, rape, prostitution, and commercialized vice are fed on this immorality. Sex crime statistics seem to reflect a relationship between crime and pornography.

“It is utterly without redeeming social value. We urge our families to protect their children in every way possible. We live in a permissive world, but we must make certain we do not become a part of that permissive world, that degenerate world. We are shocked at the depths to which many people of this world go to assert their freedom. We fear that the

trends of permissiveness toward immorality are destroying the moral fabric of our generation. . . .

“Every form of homosexuality is sin. Pornography is one of the approaches to that transgression. There is no halfway” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, 7–8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 7–8).

“Pornography degrades sex and humanity. Sex is an extremely delicate part of our human relationships. When you assault that and degrade it, you make it an animalistic act and it is an assault on our humanity generally.

“As that spreads, it has an over-all effect on our population. Obscenity is counter to civilization. It attacks our basic beliefs. It’s an attack on the family ethic.’ (Larry Parrish, U.S. Assistant Attorney, in “War on Pornography,” p. 76.) . . .

“Sins spawned by pornography unfortunately perpetuate other serious transgressions, including abortion” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1976, 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 6).

“We need continually to fortify our homes and families and defend them against the onslaught of evils such as divorce, broken families, brutality, and abuse, especially of wives and children. We need to constantly guard against immorality, pornography, and sexual permissiveness that would destroy the purity of the family members, young and old” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1979, 5; or *Ensign*, May 1979, 5).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Virtue is akin to holiness, an attribute of godliness. A priesthood holder should actively seek for that which is virtuous and lovely and not that which is debasing or sordid. Virtue will garnish his thoughts unceasingly (see D&C 121:45). How can any man indulge himself in the evils of pornography, profanity, or vulgarity and consider himself totally virtuous?” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 60; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 46).

President Harold B. Lee

“There are insidious forces among us that are constantly trying to knock at our doors and trying to lay traps for our young men and women, particularly those who are unwary and unsophisticated in the ways of the world. I speak of the battle against liquor by the drink, gambling, prostitution, pornography, and our efforts to aid Christian people who desire

to have one day dedicated to keeping the Sabbath day holy" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 54).

President Howard W. Hunter

"Be faithful in your marriage covenants in thought, word, and deed. Pornography, flirtations, and unwholesome fantasies erode one's character and strike at the foundation of a happy marriage. Unity and trust within a marriage are thereby destroyed. One who does not control his thoughts and thus commits adultery in his heart, if he does not repent, shall not have the Spirit but shall deny the faith and shall fear (see D&C 42:23; 63:16)" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

"As we have been reminded, this is a season of great evil in the world. No one needs to be reminded of that. We are constantly exposed to the muck and filth of pornography, to salacious and evil behavior totally unbecoming anyone who holds the priesthood of God" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 68; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 51).

"There is an ever-growing plague of pornography swirling about us. . . . Many a man who has partaken of forbidden fruit and then discovered that he has destroyed his marriage, lost his self-respect, and broken his companion's heart, has come to realize that the booby-trapped jungle trail he has followed began with the reading or viewing of pornographic material. . . .

"Portrayals of sexual perversion, violence, and bestiality become increasingly available for those who succumb to their lures. As this happens, religious activities are likely to become less attractive because the two do not mix any more than oil and water mix" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 66–67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 45).

"You need not be his victims. You can rise above his wiles and entreaties. Get rid of the titillating entertainment, the pornography that leads to evil desires and reprehensible activity. Wives, look upon your husbands as your precious companions and live worthy of that association" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 98; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 74).

"You cannot afford in any degree to become involved with pornography, whatever its form. You simply cannot afford to become involved in immoral practices—or to let down the bars of sexual restraint.

The emotions that stir within you which make boys attractive to girls and girls attractive to boys are part of a divine plan. But they must be restrained, subdued, and kept under control, or they will destroy you and make you unworthy of many of the great blessings which the Lord has in store for you" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 99; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 71).

"Let me read to you from a letter I received from a man ashamed to sign his name. He writes:

"I am a 35-year-old male and am a convert to the Church of more than ten years. For most of my adult life I have been addicted to pornography. I am ashamed to admit this. My addiction is as real as that of an alcoholic or a drug addict.

"I was first introduced to this material as a child. I was molested by an older male cousin, and pornography was used to attract my interest. I am convinced that this exposure at an early age to sex and pornography is at the root of my addiction today. I think it is ironic that those who support the business of pornography say that it is a matter of freedom of expression. I have no freedom. I have lost my free agency because I have been unable to overcome this. It is a trap for me, and I can't seem to get out of it. Please, please, please, plead with the brethren of the Church to not only avoid but eliminate the sources of pornographic material in their lives. . . .

"Finally, President Hinckley, please pray for me and others in the Church who may be like me to have the courage and strength to overcome this terrible affliction.'

"Brethren, there is neither happiness nor peace to be gained from surrendering to the weakness of indulging in these things which degrade and destroy. When such material is on television, turn off the set. Stop being a boob in front of the tube. Avoid titillating videotapes as you would a foul disease. They are in the same category. Stay away from pornographic magazines and other destructive literature. There is too much of good to see; there is too much of wonderful reading to be experienced to waste time and destroy character and willpower in submitting to such destructive rot.

"Be strong—in standing for the right. We live in an age of compromise and acquiescence. In situations with which we are daily confronted, we know what is right, but under pressure from our peers and the

beguiling voices of those who would persuade us, we capitulate. We compromise. We acquiesce. We give in, and we are ashamed of ourselves. As men of the priesthood we must cultivate the strength to follow our convictions” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1992, 72–73; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 51–52).

President Thomas S. Monson

“Whatever you read, listen to, or watch makes an impression on you.

“Pornography is especially dangerous and addictive. Curious exploration of pornography can become a controlling habit, leading to coarser material and to sexual transgression.

“Don’t be afraid to walk out of a movie, turn off a television set, or change a radio station if what’s being presented does not meet your Heavenly Father’s standards. In short, if you have any question about whether a particular movie, book, or other form of entertainment is appropriate, don’t see it, don’t read it, don’t participate” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 60; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 46).

President James E. Faust

“Surfing the Internet may draw us into that which, if pursued, can destroy our marriages, our homes, and even our lives” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 20; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 17).

Elder Ezra Taft Benson

“The Lord knew that in the last days Satan would try to destroy the family unit. He knew that by court edict, pornography would be allowed to prosper” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 23).

Elder Thomas S. Monson

“The beetle of pornography is doing his deadly task—undercutting our will, destroying our immunity, and stifling that upward reach within each of us” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 96; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 66).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

“A diet of violence or pornography dulls the senses, and future exposures need to be rougher and more extreme. Soon the person is desensitized and is unable to react in a sensitive, caring, responsible manner, especially to those in his own home and family. Good people can become infested with this

material and it can have terrifying, destructive consequences” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 108; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 71).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“A little pornography may not only lead to child and spouse abuse, but it slowly sucks out the marrow of self-esteem” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1992, 91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 67).

Elder M. Russell Ballard

“We must not take lightly the confession of a recently executed killer on the impact pornography and violence in media had on his life. The Apostle Paul warned that men can become ‘past feeling . . . [giving] themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness’ (Ephesians 4:19). In Proverbs we read, ‘As [a man] thinketh . . . , so is he’ (23:7). A mind exposed to violence and immorality cannot escape the negative impact of such exposure” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 99; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 79).

Movies and Videos

President Ezra Taft Benson

“We counsel you, young men, not to pollute your minds with such degrading matter, for the mind through which this filth passes is never the same afterward. Don’t see R-rated movies or vulgar videos or participate in any entertainment that is immoral, suggestive, or pornographic. Don’t listen to music that is degrading” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 58; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 45).

Elder Joe J. Christensen

“The Savior is counting on you to avoid the immoral trash that surrounds you in the media.

“Satan has made great inroads into the lives of some Latter-day Saints through the evil in the media. I am confident that the great majority of you have not been guilty of serious sexual sin, but many are placing themselves in a path that could lead to it. A bishop reported that he had observed that the spiritual level of the young priesthood bearers in his ward was declining. Through his personal interviews with them, he discovered that many of them were watching R-rated movies. When he asked them where they went to see such trash, they said, ‘We don’t go anywhere. We watch them

at home. We have cable television, and when our parents are gone we watch anything we want to.’

“Fathers, you may want to reconsider having unrestricted cable or unsupervised television sets in your home and particularly in your children’s bedrooms.

“It is very unreasonable to suppose that exposure to profanity, nudity, sex, and violence has no negative effects on us. We can’t roll around in the mud without getting dirty.

“It is a concern that some of our young Latter-day Saints, as well as their parents, regularly watch R-rated and other inappropriate movies and videos—one more reason why the ‘devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice’ (3 Nephi 9:2).

“Just a few months ago the Lord’s prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, shared with the youth, and with all of us, this clear and unmistakable counsel:

“‘Be clean. I cannot emphasize that enough. Be clean. It is so very, very important, and you at your age are in such temptation all the time. It is thrown at you on television. It is thrown at you in books and magazines and videos. You do not have to rent

them. Don’t do it. Just don’t do it. Don’t look at them. If somebody proposes that you sit around all night watching some of that sleazy stuff, you say, ‘It’s not for me.’ Stay away from it’ (Denver, Colorado, youth meeting, 14 Apr. 1996).

“The Lord and His living prophets are counting on you to avoid the trash that surrounds you in the media. When anyone chooses to ignore or defiantly go against the counsel of the living prophet, he is on very shaky ground” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 55; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 40).

Elder H. Burke Peterson

“Again I say, leave it alone. Turn it off, walk away from it, burn it, erase it, or destroy it. I know it is hard counsel we give when we say movies that are R-rated, and many with PG-13 ratings, are produced by satanic influences. Our standards should not be dictated by the rating system. I repeat, because of what they *really* represent, these types of movies, music, and tapes serve the purposes of the author of all darkness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 60; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 43).

PRIDE

*Essentially, pride is a
“my will” rather than “thy will”
approach to life.*

—President Ezra Taft Benson

CLEANSING THE INNER VESSEL



*President Ezra Taft Benson
President of the Church
In Conference Report,
Apr. 1986, 3, 5–6;
or Ensign, May 1986,
4, 6–7*

Watchmen—what of the night? We must respond by saying that all is not well in Zion. As Moroni counseled, we must cleanse the inner vessel (see Alma 60:23), beginning first with ourselves, then with our families, and finally with the Church.

Changed People!

A prophet of God stated, “Ye shall clear away the bad according as the good shall grow . . . until the good shall overcome the bad.” (Jacob 5:66.) It takes a Zion people to make a Zion society, and we must prepare for that. . . .

Pride

May I now discuss a subject of grave concern that deserves deeper development than we have time. It is the subject of pride.

In the scriptures there is no such thing as righteous pride. It is always considered as a sin. We are not speaking of a wholesome view of self-worth, which is best established by a close relationship with God. But we are speaking of pride as the universal sin, as someone has described it.

Mormon writes that “the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction” (Moroni 8:27). The Lord says in the

Doctrine and Covenants, “Beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old” (D&C 38:39).

“Humble Yourselves before God”

Essentially, pride is a “my will” rather than “thy will” approach to life. The opposite of pride is humbleness, meekness, submissiveness (see Alma 13:28), or teachableness.

In the early days of the restored church, the Lord warned two of its prominent members about pride. To Oliver Cowdery, He said, “Beware of pride, lest thou shouldst enter into temptation” (D&C 23:1). To Emma Smith, He said, “Continue in the spirit of meekness, and beware of pride” (D&C 25:14).

“Thou shalt not be proud in thy heart,” the Lord warns us (D&C 42:40). “Humble yourselves before God,” says the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 4:10).

When the earth is cleansed by burning in the last days, the proud shall be as stubble. (See 3 Nephi 25:1; D&C 29:9; 64:24.)

The great and spacious building which Lehi saw was the pride of the world where the multitude of the earth was gathered. (See 1 Nephi 11:35–36.) Those who walked the straight and narrow path and held onto the word of God and partook of the love of God were mocked and scorned by those in the building. (See 1 Nephi 8:20, 27, 33; 11:25.)

“The humble followers of Christ” are few (2 Nephi 28:14).

Not My Will But Thine

Pride does not look up to God and care about what is right. It looks sideways to man and argues who is right. Pride is manifest in the spirit of contention.

Was it not through pride that the devil became the devil? Christ wanted to serve. The devil wanted to rule. Christ wanted to bring men to where He was. The devil wanted to be above men.

Christ removed self as the force in His perfect life. It was not *my* will, but *thine* be done.

Pride is characterized by “What do I want out of life?” rather than by “What would God have me do with my life?” It is self-will as opposed to God’s will. It is the fear of man over the fear of God.

Humility responds to God’s will—to the fear of His judgments and the needs of those around us. To the

proud, the applause of the world rings in their ears; to the humble, the applause of heaven warms their hearts.

Someone has said, “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man.” Of one brother, the Lord said, “I, the Lord, am not well pleased with him, for he seeketh to excel, and he is not sufficiently meek before me” (D&C 58:41).

The “Learned, and the Rich”

The two groups in the Book of Mormon that seemed to have the greatest difficulty with pride are the “learned, and the rich” (2 Nephi 28:15). But the word of God can pull down pride. (See Alma 4:19.)

With pride, there are many curses. With humility, there come many blessings. For example, “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 humble will “be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge” (D&C 1:28). The Lord is “merciful unto those who confess their sins with humble hearts” (D&C 61:2). Humility can turn away God’s anger. (See Helaman 11:11.)

Must Cleanse the Inner Vessel

My beloved brethren and sisters, as we cleanse the inner vessel, there will have to be changes made in our own personal lives, in our families, and in the Church. The proud do not change to improve, but defend their position by rationalizing. Repentance means change, and it takes a humble person to change. But we can do it.

We have made some wonderful strides in the past. We will be lengthening our stride in the future. To do so, we must first cleanse the inner vessel by awaking and arising, being morally clean, using the Book of Mormon in a manner so that God will lift the condemnation, and finally conquering pride by humbling ourselves.

We can do it. I know we can. That we will do so is my prayer for all of us. God bless you for all the good you have done and will be doing. I leave my blessings on all of you and do so in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

BEWARE OF PRIDE



*President Ezra Taft Benson
President of the Church
In Conference Report,
Apr. 1989, 3–7;
or Ensign, May 1989,
4–7*

My beloved brethren and sisters, I rejoice to be with you in another glorious general conference of the Church. How grateful I am for the love, prayers, and service of the devoted members of the Church throughout the world.

May I commend you faithful Saints who are striving to flood the earth and your lives with the Book of Mormon. Not only must we move forward in a monumental manner more copies of the Book of Mormon, but we must move boldly forward into our own lives and throughout the earth more of its marvelous messages.

This sacred volume was written for us—for our day. Its scriptures are to be likened unto ourselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23).

The Sin of Pride

The Doctrine and Covenants tells us that the Book of Mormon is the “record of a fallen people” (D&C 20:9). Why did they fall? This is one of the major messages of the Book of Mormon. Mormon gives the answer in the closing chapters of the book in these words: “Behold, the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction” (Moroni 8:27). And then, lest we miss that momentous Book of Mormon message from that fallen people, the Lord warns us in the Doctrine and Covenants, “Beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old” (D&C 38:39).

I earnestly seek an interest in your faith and prayers as I strive to bring forth light on this Book of Mormon message—the sin of pride. This message has been weighing heavily on my soul for some time. I know the Lord wants this message delivered now.

“Beware of Pride”

In the premortal council, it was pride that felled Lucifer, “a son of the morning” (2 Nephi 24:12–15;

see also D&C 76:25–27; Moses 4:3). At the end of this world, when God cleanses the earth by fire, the proud will be burned as stubble and the meek shall inherit the earth (see 3 Nephi 12:5, 25:1; D&C 29:9; Joseph Smith—History 1:37; Malachi 4:1).

Three times in the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord uses the phrase “beware of pride,” including a warning to the second elder of the Church, Oliver Cowdery, and to Emma Smith, the wife of the Prophet (D&C 23:1; see also D&C 25:14; 38:39).

God’s Definition of Pride

Pride is a very misunderstood sin, and many are sinning in ignorance (see Mosiah 3:11; 3 Nephi 6:18). In the scriptures there is no such thing as righteous pride—it is always considered a sin. Therefore, no matter how the world uses the term, we must understand how God uses the term so we can understand the language of holy writ and profit thereby (see 2 Nephi 4:15; Mosiah 1:3–7; Alma 5:61).

Most of us think of pride as self-centeredness, conceit, boastfulness, arrogance, or haughtiness. All of these are elements of the sin, but the heart, or core, is still missing.

The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. *Enmity* means “hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition.” It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us.

Enmity toward God

Pride is essentially competitive in nature. We pit our will against God’s. When we direct our pride toward God, it is in the spirit of “my will and not thine be done.” As Paul said, they “seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (Philippians 2:21).

Our will in competition to God’s will allows desires, appetites, and passions to go unbridled (see Alma 38:12; 3 Nephi 12:30).

The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives (see Helaman 12:6). They pit their perceptions of truth against God’s great knowledge, their abilities versus God’s priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works.

Our enmity toward God takes on many labels, such as rebellion, hard-heartedness, stiff-neckedness, unrepentant, puffed up, easily offended, and sign seekers. The proud wish God would agree with

them. They aren’t interested in changing their opinions to agree with God’s.

Enmity toward Fellowmen

Another major portion of this very prevalent sin of pride is enmity toward our fellowmen. We are tempted daily to elevate ourselves above others and diminish them (see Helaman 6:17; D&C 58:41).

The proud make every man their adversary by pitting their intellects, opinions, works, wealth, talents, or any other worldly measuring device against others. In the words of C. S. Lewis: “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. . . . It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone” (*Mere Christianity* [New York: Macmillan, 1952], pp. 109–10).

In the pre-earthly council, Lucifer placed his proposal in competition with the Father’s plan as advocated by Jesus Christ (see Moses 4:1–3). He wished to be honored above all others (see 2 Nephi 24:13). In short, his prideful desire was to dethrone God (see D&C 29:36; 76:28).

Consequences of Pride

The scriptures abound with evidences of the severe consequences of the sin of pride to individuals, groups, cities, and nations. “Pride goeth before destruction” (Proverbs 16:18). It destroyed the Nephite nation and the city of Sodom (see Moroni 8:27; Ezekiel 16:49–50).

It was through pride that Christ was crucified. The Pharisees were wroth because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, which was a threat to their position, and so they plotted His death (see John 11:53).

Saul became an enemy to David through pride. He was jealous because the crowds of Israelite women were singing that “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7; see also 18:6, 8).

The proud stand more in fear of men’s judgment than of God’s judgment (see D&C 3:6–7; 30:1–2; 60:2). “What will men think of me?” weighs heavier than “What will God think of me?”

King Noah was about to free the prophet Abinadi, but an appeal to his pride by his wicked priests sent Abinadi to the flames (see Mosiah 17:11–12). Herod

sorrowed at the request of his wife to behead John the Baptist. But his prideful desire to look good to “them which sat with him at meat” caused him to kill John (Matthew 14:9; see also Mark 6:26).

Fear of men’s judgment manifests itself in competition for men’s approval. The proud love “the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42–43). Our motives for the things we do are where the sin is manifest. Jesus said He did “always those things” that pleased God (John 8:29). Would we not do well to have the pleasing of God as our motive rather than to try to elevate ourselves above our brother and outdo another?

Some prideful people are not so concerned as to whether their wages meet their needs as they are that their wages are more than someone else’s. Their reward is being a cut above the rest. This is the enmity of pride.

When pride has a hold on our hearts, we lose our independence of the world and deliver our freedoms to the bondage of men’s judgment. The world shouts louder than the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. The reasoning of men overrides the revelations of God, and the proud let go of the iron rod (see 1 Nephi 8:19–28; 11:25; 15:23–24).

Manifestations of Pride

Pride is a sin that can readily be seen in others but is rarely admitted in ourselves. Most of us consider pride to be a sin of those on the top, such as the rich and the learned, looking down at the rest of us (see 2 Nephi 9:42). There is, however, a far more common ailment among us—and that is pride from the bottom looking up. It is manifest in so many ways, such as faultfinding, gossiping, backbiting, murmuring, living beyond our means, envying, coveting, withholding gratitude and praise that might lift another, and being unforgiving and jealous.

Disobedience is essentially a prideful power struggle against someone in authority over us. It can be a parent, a priesthood leader, a teacher, or ultimately God. A proud person hates the fact that someone is above him. He thinks this lowers his position.

Selfishness is one of the more common faces of pride. “How everything affects me” is the center of all that matters—self-conceit, self-pity, worldly self-fulfillment, self-gratification, and self-seeking.

Pride results in secret combinations which are built up to get power, gain, and glory of the world (see Helaman 7:5; Ether 8:9, 16, 22–23; Moses 5:31). This fruit of the sin of pride, namely secret combinations, brought down both the Jaredite and the Nephite civilizations and has been and will yet be the cause of the fall of many nations (see Ether 8:18–25).

Another face of pride is contention. Arguments, fights, unrighteous dominion, generation gaps, divorces, spouse abuse, riots, and disturbances all fall into this category of pride.

Contention in our families drives the Spirit of the Lord away. It also drives many of our family members away. Contention ranges from a hostile spoken word to worldwide conflicts. The scriptures tell us that “only by pride cometh contention” (Proverbs 13:10; see also Proverbs 28:25).

The scriptures testify that the proud are easily offended and hold grudges (see 1 Nephi 16:1–3). They withhold forgiveness to keep another in their debt and to justify their injured feelings.

The proud do not receive counsel or correction easily (see Proverbs 15:10; Amos 5:10). Defensiveness is used by them to justify and rationalize their frailties and failures (see Matthew 3:9; John 6:30–59). The proud depend upon the world to tell them whether they have value or not. Their self-esteem is determined by where they are judged to be on the ladders of worldly success. They feel worthwhile as individuals if the numbers beneath them in achievement, talent, beauty, or intellect are large enough. Pride is ugly. It says, “If you succeed, I am a failure.”

If we love God, do His will, and fear His judgment more than men’s, we will have self-esteem.

“A Damning Sin”

Pride is a damning sin in the true sense of that word. It limits or stops progression (see Alma 12:10–11). The proud are not easily taught (see 1 Nephi 15:3, 7–11). They won’t change their minds to accept truths, because to do so implies they have been wrong.

Pride adversely affects all our relationships—our relationship with God and His servants, between husband and wife, parent and child, employer and employee, teacher and student, and all mankind. Our degree of pride determines how we treat our God and

our brothers and sisters. Christ wants to lift us to where He is. Do we desire to do the same for others?

Pride fades our feelings of sonship to God and brotherhood to man. It separates and divides us by “ranks,” according to our “riches” and our “chances for learning” (3 Nephi 6:12). Unity is impossible for a proud people, and unless we are one we are not the Lord’s (see Mosiah 18:21; D&C 38:27; 105:2–4; Moses 7:18).

The Cost of Pride

Think of what pride has cost us in the past and what it is now costing us in our own lives, our families, and the Church.

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 (see D&C 58:43).

Think of the many who are less-active members of the Church because they were offended and their pride will not allow them to forgive or fully sup at the Lord’s table.

Think of the tens of thousands of additional young men and couples who could be on missions except for the pride that keeps them from yielding their hearts unto God (see Alma 10:6; Helaman 3:34–35).

Think how temple work would increase if the time spent in this godly service were more important than the many prideful pursuits that compete for our time.

The Universal Sin

Pride affects all of us at various times and in various degrees. Now you can see why the building in Lehi’s dream that represents the pride of the world was large and spacious and great was the multitude that did enter into it (see 1 Nephi 8:26, 33; 11:35–36).

Pride is the universal sin, the great vice. Yes, pride is the universal sin, the great vice.

Humility: The Antidote for Pride

The antidote for pride is humility—meekness, submissiveness (see Alma 7:23). It is the broken heart and contrite spirit (see 3 Nephi 9:20; 12:19; D&C 20:37; 59:8; Psalm 34:18; Isaiah 57:15; 66:2). As Rudyard Kipling put it so well:

*The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart.
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,*

*An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget.*

(“God of Our Fathers, Known of Old,” *Hymns*, no. 80.)

Choose to Be Humble

God will have a humble people. Either we can choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble. Alma said, “Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble” (Alma 32:16).

Let us choose to be humble.

We can choose to humble ourselves by conquering enmity toward our brothers and sisters, esteeming them as ourselves, and lifting them as high or higher than we are (see D&C 38:24; 81:5; 84:106).

We can choose to humble ourselves by receiving counsel and chastisement (see Jacob 4:10; Helaman 15:3; D&C 63:55; 101:4–5; 108:1; 124:61, 84; 136:31; Proverbs 9:8).

We can choose to humble ourselves by forgiving those who have offended us (see 3 Nephi 13:11, 14; D&C 64:10).

We can choose to humble ourselves by rendering selfless service (see Mosiah 2:16–17).

We can choose to humble ourselves by going on missions and preaching the word that can humble others (see Alma 4:19; 31:5; 48:20).

We can choose to humble ourselves by getting to the temple more frequently.

We can choose to humble ourselves by confessing and forsaking our sins and being born of God (see D&C 58:43; Mosiah 27:25–26; Alma 5:7–14, 49).

We can choose to humble ourselves by loving God, submitting our will to His, and putting Him first in our lives (see 3 Nephi 11:11; 13:33; Moroni 10:32).

Let us choose to be humble. We can do it. I know we can.

The Great Stumbling Block to Zion

My dear brethren and sisters, we must prepare to redeem Zion. It was essentially the sin of pride that kept us from establishing Zion in the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It was the same sin of pride that brought consecration to an end among the Nephites (see 4 Nephi 1:24–25).

Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion. I repeat:
Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion.

We must cleanse the inner vessel by conquering
pride (see Alma 6:2–4; Matthew 23:25–26).

We must yield “to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,”
put off the prideful “natural man,” become “a saint

through the atonement of Christ the Lord,” and
become “as a child, submissive, meek, humble”
(Mosiah 3:19; see also Alma 13:28).

That we may do so and go on to fulfill our divine
destiny is my fervent prayer in the name of Jesus
Christ, amen.

PRINCIPLES

*A principle is an enduring truth,
a law, a rule you can adopt to
guide you in making decisions.*

—President Boyd K. Packer

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Ezra Taft Benson

“We should make daily study of the scriptures a lifetime pursuit. . . .

“ . . . One of the most important things you can do . . . is to immerse yourselves in the scriptures. Search them diligently. Feast upon the words of Christ. Learn the doctrine. Master the principles” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 47).

President Boyd K. Packer

“That word *principle* in the revelation is a very important one. A principle is an enduring truth, a law, a rule you can adopt to guide you in making decisions. Generally principles are not spelled out in detail. That leaves you free to find your way with an enduring truth, a principle, as your anchor” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 22; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 17).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“From doctrine, we learn principles of conduct, how to respond to problems of everyday living, even to failures, for they too are provided for in the doctrines” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 26; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 20).

“Some things cannot be changed. Doctrine cannot be changed.

“Principles which have been revealed,’ President Wilford Woodruff said, ‘for the salvation and exaltation of the children of men . . . are principles you cannot annihilate. *They are principles that no combination of men can destroy.* They are principles that can never die. . . . They are beyond the reach of man to handle or to destroy.’ [In *Journal of*

Discourses, 22:342; italics added.]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 22).

“*Organization, programs, procedures, policies, and principles*—all are important. But they are not of equal importance. . . .

“If you do not know the *principles*—by principles I mean the principles of the gospel, the doctrines, what’s in the revelations—if you do not know what the revelations say about justice or mercy, or what they reveal on reproof or forgiveness, how can you make inspired decisions in those difficult cases that require your judgement? . . .

“There are principles of the gospel underlying every phase of Church administration. These are *not* explained in the handbooks. They are found in the scriptures. They are the substance of and the purpose for the revelations.

“Procedures, programs, the administrative policies, even some patterns of organization are subject to change. We are quite free, indeed, quite obliged to alter them from time to time. But the *principles, the doctrines, never change.* . . .

“. . . What we really need is a revival of the basic gospel principles in the lives of all the Latter-day Saints. The true essence of priesthood administration is not a procedure—it is in principle, in doctrine!

“The prophet Joseph Smith gave us the key. He said, with reference to administration, ‘I teach them correct *principles* and they govern themselves.’” (“Principles,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1985, 6, 8).

Elder James E. Faust

“Great temporal and spiritual strength flows from following those who have the keys of the kingdom of God in our time. Personal strength and power result from obedience to eternal principles taught by the living legates of the Lord” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 97; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 74).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Orthodoxy ensures balance between the gospel’s powerful and correct principles. . . . But the gospel’s principles do require synchronization. When pulled apart from each other or isolated, men’s interpretations and implementations of these doctrines may be wild” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 97; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 78).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“As you seek spiritual knowledge, search for principles. Carefully separate them from the detail used to explain them. Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application to a wide variety of circumstances. A true principle makes decisions clear even under the most confusing and compelling circumstances. It is worth great effort to organize the truth we gather to simple statements of principle” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 117; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 86).

“Man has always benefitted from obedience to true principles. The fearless Polynesians in precarious craft crossed an immense ocean for destinations thousands of miles away. That feat was accomplished not by chance but by adherence to sound principles of celestial navigation. They prepared carefully and did not succumb to temptations to deviate from their course or delay en route. In like manner, you and I can be assured of reaching worthy objectives in life by understanding and consistently following correct principles rooted in revealed truth.

“Principles are anchors of safety. They are like the steel anchors a mountaineer uses to conquer otherwise impossible cliffs. They will help you have confidence in new and unfamiliar circumstances. They will provide you protection in life’s storms of adversity.

“All of the self-inflicted tragedy that occurs today from violation of the Lord’s commandments could be avoided by careful, consistent observance of revealed truth. The productive power of correct principles can make your life a joyous, satisfying experience. . . .

“Joseph Smith’s inspired statement, ‘I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves,’ still applies (quoted by John Taylor, in *Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1851, p. 339). The Lord uses that pattern with us. You will find correct principles in the teachings of the Savior, His prophets, and the scriptures—especially the Book of Mormon.

“While easy to find, true principles are not easy to live until they become an established pattern of life. They will require you to dislodge false ideas. They can cause you wrenching battles within the secret chambers of your heart and decisive encounters to overcome temptation, peer pressure, and the false allure of the ‘easy way out.’ Yet as you resolutely follow correct principles, you will forge strength of character available to you in times of urgent need. Your consistent adherence to principle overcomes the alluring yet false lifestyles that surround you. Your faithful compliance to correct principles will generate criticism and ridicule from others, yet the results are so eternally worthwhile that they warrant your every sacrifice.

“Now, the most important principle I can share: Anchor your life in Jesus Christ, your Redeemer. Make your Eternal Father and His Beloved Son the most important priority in your life—more important than life itself, more important than a beloved companion or children or anyone on earth. Make their will your central desire. Then all that you need for happiness will come to you” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 40–41, 43; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 32, 34).

PRIORITIES AND BALANCE

*Search your hearts
and courageously assess the
priorities in your life.*

—Elder M. Russell Ballard

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“The highest challenge we have in mortality is to use our free agency well, making right choices in the interplay of time and talents. Time is one of the blessings we are given. Generally speaking, it is we who let ourselves get fragmented too much. It is the result of not establishing (and then persisting in) certain priorities in our life. I am not denying the reality of the challenge you put, but neither do I think it is unmanageable” (*Deposition of a Disciple*, 68).

“Does all this mean that in letting go of the world, it will be easy to set priorities? No! It is often harder, for now we choose, *not* between task A, which is a tainted task, and B, which is good; but now we must allot time and talent between C, which is important and good, and D, which is good and important” (*Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward*, 19).

“Just as the Lord was able to summarize His priorities so succinctly that it is his ‘work and . . . glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man’ (Moses 1:39), so we, too, will need to be able to manage our time and talents in such a way that we, too, know our real priorities and focus on them. When we are settled in our hearts on that which really matters, then our talent and time as well as our treasure will be thus deployed!” (*We Will Prove Them Herewith*, 66–67).

Spiritual Priorities

President Spencer W. Kimball

“I am impressed that our various Church programs are like keys on the keyboard of a piano. Some of the keys are used much more often than others, but all of them are needed from time to time to produce

harmony and balance in our lives. So often, therefore, what we are doing in our various talks and meetings is to remind ourselves of the need for balance, the need for fresh emphasis here or there, and the need to do the things that matter most without leaving the other things undone” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 70; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 46).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims of our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 13; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 4).

“To be successful, we must have the Spirit of the Lord. We have been taught that the Spirit will not dwell in unclean tabernacles. Therefore, one of our first priorities is to make sure our own personal lives are in order” (*Come unto Christ*, 92).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“Our priorities determine what we seek in life. ‘Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness’ (JST Matthew 6:38), Jesus taught his disciples. As we read in modern revelation: ‘Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich.’ (D&C 6:7.)” (*Pure in Heart*, 6).

Elder M. Russell Ballard

“Sometimes we need a personal crisis to reinforce in our minds what we really value and cherish. The scriptures are filled with examples of people facing crises before learning how to better serve God and others. Perhaps if you, too, search your hearts and courageously assess the priorities in your life, you may discover, as I did, that you need a better balance among your priorities” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 14–15; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 13).

Family Priorities

President Spencer W. Kimball

“The Lord says in definite terms: ‘Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else.’ (D&C 42:22.)

“The words *none else* eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes preeminent in the life of the husband or wife, and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 310–11).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“The question is sometimes asked by younger priesthood holders, ‘Where do I place my greatest priorities—to the Church, to my family, or to my profession?’ I have answered that question by emphasizing that heads of families have four major responsibilities. Certainly the first is to the home and family. There should be no question about this. A man may succeed in business or his Church calling, but if he fails in his home he will face eternity in disappointment. . . . Home is the place where the Lord intended a father’s greatest influence to be felt” (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 509–10).

Elder John A. Widtsoe

“The Church is composed of homes. Church and home cannot be separated. Neither one come first. They are one” (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 318).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Given the gravity of current conditions, would parents be willing to give up just one outside thing, giving that time and talent instead to the family? Parents and grandparents, please scrutinize your schedules and priorities in order to ensure that life’s prime relationships get more prime time. Even consecrated and devoted Brigham Young was once told by the Lord, ‘Take especial care of your family’ (D&C 126:3). Sometimes it is the most conscientious who need this message the most!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 121; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 90).

A LETTER TO CHURCH MEMBERS FROM THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

Presidents Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, James E. Faust

Church News, 27 Feb. 1999, 3

To: Members of the Church throughout the World
(To Be Read in Sacrament Meeting and Delivered by Home Teachers)

Dear Brothers and Sisters: . . .

We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. 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.

We urge bishops and other Church officers to do all they can to assist parents in seeing that they have time and help, where needed, as they nurture their families and bring them up in the way of the Lord. Wherever possible, Sunday meetings, other than those under the three-hour schedule and perhaps council meetings on early Sunday mornings or firesides later in the evening, should be avoided so that parents may be with their children. As we strengthen families, we will strengthen the entire Church.

Faithfully your brethren,
The First Presidency

PARENTS IN ZION



President Boyd K. Packer

*Acting President
of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

*In Conference Report,
Oct. 1998, 27–30;
or Ensign, Nov.
1998, 22*

Parents in Zion

In 1831 the Lord gave a revelation to parents in Zion.¹ It is about parents that I wish to speak.

I have served in the Quorum of the Twelve for 28 years, and 9 years as an Assistant to the Twelve. Put together, that makes 37 years—exactly half my life.

But I have another calling which I have held even longer. I am a parent—a father and a grandfather. It took years to earn the *grandfather* title—another 20 years the title of *great-grandfather*. These titles—*father, grandfather, mother, grandmother*—carry responsibility and an authority which comes in part from experience. Experience is a compelling teacher.

Balancing Family and Church

My calling in the priesthood defines my position in the Church; the title *grandfather*, my position in the family. I want to talk about both of them together.

Parenthood stands among the most important activities to which Latter-day Saints may devote themselves. Many members face conflicts as they struggle to balance their responsibility as parents together with faithful activity in the Church.

There are things vital to the well-being of a family which can be found only by going to church. There is the priesthood, which empowers a man to lead and bless his wife and children, and covenants which bind them together forever.

The Church was commanded to “meet together often”² and told, “When ye are assembled together ye shall instruct and edify each other.”³ Alma the Elder and Alma the Younger gave the same instruction to their people.⁴

We are commanded to “turn the heart[s] of the fathers to the children, and the heart[s] of the children to their fathers.”⁵

The Lord addressed Joseph Smith Jr. by name and said, “You have not kept the commandments, and must needs stand rebuked.”⁶ He had failed to teach his children. That is the only time the word *rebuke* is used in correcting him.

His counselor Frederick G. Williams was under the same condemnation: “You have not taught your children light and truth.”⁷ Sidney Rigdon was told the same thing, as was Bishop Newel K. Whitney,⁸ and the Lord added, “What I say unto one I say unto all.”⁹

Church’s Inspired Guidance for Families

We have watched the standards of morality sink ever lower until now they are in a free-fall. At the same time we have seen an outpouring of inspired guidance for parents and for families.

The whole of the curriculum and all of the activities of the Church have been restructured and correlated with the home:

- Ward teaching became home teaching.
- Family home evening was reestablished.

- Genealogy was renamed family history and set to collect records of all the families.
- And then the historic proclamation on the family was issued by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles.
- The family became, and remains, a prevailing theme in meetings, conferences, and councils.
- All as a prelude to an unprecedented era of building temples wherein the authority to seal families together forever is exercised.

Can you see the spirit of inspiration resting upon the servants of the Lord and upon parents? Can we understand the challenge and the assault now leveled at the family?

Use Care in Scheduling Activities

In providing out-of-home activities for the family, we must use care; otherwise, we could be like a father

determined to provide everything for his family. He devotes every energy to that end and succeeds; only then does he discover that what they needed most—to be together as a family—has been neglected. And he reaps sorrow in place of contentment.

How easy it is, in our desire to provide schedules of programs and activities, to overlook the responsibilities of the parent and the essential need for families to have time together.

We must be careful lest programs and activities of the Church become too heavy for some families to carry. The principles of the gospel, where understood and applied, strengthen and protect both individuals and families. Devotion to the family and devotion to the Church are not different and separate things.

Keep Family and Church in Perspective

I recently saw a woman respond when it was said of another, “Since she had the new baby, she isn’t doing anything in the Church.” You could almost see a baby in her arms as she protested with emotion: “She *is* doing something in the Church. She gave that baby life. She nurtures and teaches it. She is doing the most important thing that she can do in the Church.”

How would you respond to this question: “Because of their handicapped child, she is confined to the

There are things vital to the well-being of a family which can be found only by going to church.

home and he works two jobs to meet the extra expenses. They seldom attend—can we count them as active in the Church?”

And have you ever heard a woman say, “My husband is a very good father, but he’s never been a bishop or a stake president or done anything important in the Church.” In response to that, a father vigorously said, “What is more important in the Church than being a good father?”

Faithful attendance at church, together with careful attention to the needs of the family, is a near-perfect combination. In church we are taught the great plan of happiness.¹⁰ At home we apply what we have learned. Every call, every service in the Church brings experience and valuable insights which carry over into family life.

Would our perspective be more clear if we could, for a moment, look upon parenthood as a calling in the Church? Actually, it is so much more than that; but if we could look at it that way for a moment, we could reach a better balance in the way we schedule families.

Do Not Burden Families Unnecessarily

I do not want anyone to use what I say to excuse them in turning down an inspired call from the Lord. I *do* want to encourage leaders to carefully consider the home lest they issue calls or schedule activities which place an unnecessary burden on parents and families.

Recently I read a letter from a young couple whose callings in the Church frequently require them to hire a sitter for their small children in order for them to attend their meetings. It has become very difficult for both of them to be home with their children at the same time. Can you see something out of balance there?

Every time you schedule a youngster, you schedule a family—particularly the mother.

Consider the mother who, in addition to her own Church calling and that of her husband, must get her children ready and run from one activity to another. Some mothers become discouraged—even depressed. I receive letters using the word *guilt* because they cannot do it all.

Attending church is, or should be, a respite from the pressures of everyday life. It should bring peace and contentment. If it brings pressure and discouragement, then something is out of balance.

And the Church is not the only responsibility parents have. Other agencies have a very legitimate reason to call upon the resources of the family—schools, employers, community—all need to be balanced in.

Recently a mother told me her family had moved from a rural, scattered ward where, of necessity, activities were consolidated into one weekday night. It was wonderful. They had time for their family. I can see them sitting around the table together.

They moved west into a larger ward where members were closer to the chapel. She said, “Now our family is scheduled Tuesday night, Wednesday night, Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday night, and Sunday night. It is very hard on our family.”

Remember, when you schedule a youngster, you schedule a family—particularly the mother.

Most families try very hard; but some, when burdened with problems of health and finance, simply become exhausted trying to keep up, and eventually they withdraw into inactivity. They do not see that they are moving from the one best source of light and truth, of help with their family, into the shadows where danger and heartbreak await.

I must touch upon what must surely be the most difficult problem to solve. Some youngsters receive very little teaching and support at home. There is no question but that we must provide for them. But if we provide a constant schedule of out-of-home activities sufficient to compensate for the loss in those homes, it may make it difficult for attentive parents to have time to be with and teach their own children. Only prayer and inspiration can lead us to find this difficult balance.

Importance of Learning at Home

We often hear, “We must provide frequent and exciting activities lest our youth will go to less wholesome places.” Some of them will. But I have the conviction that if we teach parents to be responsible and allow them sufficient time, over the long course their children will be at home.

There, at home, they can learn what cannot be effectively taught in either Church or school. At home they can learn to work and to take responsibility. They learn what to do when they have children of their own.

For example, in the Church children are taught the principle of tithing, but it is at home that the principle is applied. At home even young children can be shown how to figure a tithe and how it is paid.

One time President and Sister Harold B. Lee were in our home. Sister Lee put a handful of pennies on a table before our young son. She had him slide the shiny ones to one side and said, "These are your tithing; these belong to the Lord. The others are yours to keep." He thoughtfully looked from one pile to the other and then said, "Don't you have any more dirty ones?" That was when the real teaching moment began!

Use the Ward Council to Establish Balance

The ward council is the perfect place to establish the balance between home and Church. Here the brethren of the priesthood, themselves fathers, and sisters of the auxiliaries, themselves mothers, can, with inspired insight, coordinate the work of the organizations, each of which serves different members of the family.

Members of the council can compare what each organization is providing for each member and how much time and money are required. They can unite rather than divide families and provide watch care over single parents, the childless, the unmarried, the elderly, the handicapped—and provide much more than just activities for the children and young people.

The ward council has resources often overlooked. For instance, grandparents, while not filling callings, can help young families who are finding their way along the same path they once walked.

The Lord warned parents, "Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, . . . 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."¹¹

The ward council is ideal for our present need. Here the home and the family can be anchored in place, and the Church can support rather than supplant the parents. Fathers and mothers will understand both their obligation to teach their children and the blessings provided by the Church.

Most Important Things Learned at Home

As the world grows ever more threatening, the powers of heaven draw ever closer to families and parents.

I have studied much in the scriptures and have taught from them. I have read much from what the prophets and apostles have spoken. They have had a profound influence upon me as a man and as a father.

But most of what I know about how our Father in Heaven really feels about us, His children, I have learned from the way I feel about my wife and my children and their children. This I have learned at home. I have learned it from my parents and from my wife's parents, from my beloved wife and from my children, and I can therefore testify of a loving Heavenly Father and of a redeeming Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 20:75.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 43:8.
4. See Mosiah 18:25; Alma 6:6.
5. Malachi 4:6; see also 3 Nephi 25:5–6; Doctrine and Covenants 2:2–3.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:47.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:41–42.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:44, 50.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 93:49.
10. See Alma 12:32.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.

KEEPING LIFE'S DEMANDS IN BALANCE



Elder M. Russell Ballard

*Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

*In Conference Report,
Apr. 1987, 15–18;
or Ensign, May 1987,
14–16*

A periodic review of the covenants we have made with the Lord will help us with our priorities and with balance in our lives. This review will help us

see where we need to repent and change our lives to ensure that we are worthy of the promises that accompany our covenants and sacred ordinances. Working out our own salvation requires good planning and a deliberate, valiant effort.

I have a few suggestions that I hope will be valuable to those of you concerned with balancing life's demands. These suggestions are very basic; their concepts can easily be overlooked if you are not careful. You will need a strong commitment and personal discipline to incorporate them into your life.

Use an Eternal Perspective to Set Priorities

First, think about your life and set your priorities. Find some quiet time regularly to think deeply about where you are going and what you will need to do to get there. Jesus, our exemplar, often “withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed” (Luke 5:16). We need to do the same thing occasionally to rejuvenate ourselves spiritually as the Savior did. Write down the tasks you would like to accomplish each day. Keep foremost in mind the sacred covenants you have made with the Lord as you write down your daily schedules.

Set Reasonable Short-Term Goals

Second, set short-term goals that you can reach. Set goals that are well balanced—not too many nor too few, and not too high nor too low. Write down your attainable goals and work on them according to their importance. Pray for divine guidance in your goal setting.

You recall that Alma said he would like to be an angel so he could “speak with the trump of God, . . . to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!” (Alma 29:1). He then said, “But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me. . . .

“ . . . Why should I desire more than to perform the work to which I have been called?” (Alma 29:3, 6).

Become Financially Responsible and Secure

Third, everyone faces financial challenges in life. Through wise budgeting, control your real needs and measure them carefully against your many wants in life. Far too many individuals and families have incurred too much debt. Be careful of the many attractive offers to borrow money. It is much easier to borrow money than it is to pay it back.

There are no shortcuts to financial security. There are no get-rich-quick schemes that work. Perhaps no one needs the principle of balance in their lives more than those who are driven toward accumulating “things” in this world.

Do not trust your money to others without a thorough evaluation of any proposed investment. Our people have lost far too much money by trusting their assets to others. In my judgment, we never will have balance in our lives unless our finances are securely under control.

The prophet Jacob said to his people: “Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy. Harken diligently unto me, and remember the words which I have spoken; and come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted, and let your soul delight in fatness” (2 Nephi 9:51).

Brothers and sisters, remember to always pay a full tithing.

Build Close Relationships with Family and Friends

Fourth, stay close to your spouse, children, relatives, and friends. They will help you keep a balance in your life. In a recent study by the Church, adults in the United States were asked to identify a time when they were very happy and to describe the experience. They were also asked to describe a time when they were very unhappy. For most people, one thing that had made them the most happy or the most sad was their personal relationships with others. Much less important were their personal health, employment, money, and other material things. Build relationships with your family and friends through open and honest communication.

A good marriage and good family relationships can be maintained through gentle, loving, thoughtful communication. Remember that often a glance, a wink, a nod, or a touch will say more than words. A sense of humor and good listening are also vital parts of good communication.

Study the Scriptures

Fifth, study the scriptures. They offer one of the best sources we have to keep in touch with the Spirit of the Lord. One of the ways I have gained my sure knowledge that Jesus is the Christ is through my study of the scriptures. President Ezra Taft Benson

has called upon members of the Church to make the study of the Book of Mormon a daily habit and a lifetime pursuit. The Apostle Paul's advice to Timothy is good counsel for each of us. He wrote, "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:15–16).

Rest, Exercise, and Relax

Sixth, many people, including me, have difficulty finding the time for sufficient rest, exercise, and relaxation. We must schedule time on our daily calendars for these activities if we are to enjoy a healthy and balanced life. Good physical appearance enhances our dignity and self-respect.

"Teach One Another the Gospel"

Seventh, the prophets have taught repeatedly that families should teach one another the gospel, preferably in a weekly family home evening. This family practice, if we are not very careful, can slowly drift away from us. We must not lose this special opportunity to "teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom" (D&C 88:77), which will lead families to eternal life.

Satan is always working to destroy our testimonies, but he will not have the power to tempt or disturb us beyond our strength to resist when we are studying the gospel and living its commandments.

Pray Often

My last suggestion is to pray often as individuals and as families. Parents need to exercise the discipline required to lead out and motivate children to join together for regular family prayers. Our youth can know the right decisions to make each day through constant, sincere prayer.

The prophet Alma summarized the importance of prayer in these words: "But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering" (Alma 13:28). When I am in tune spiritually, I find that I can balance everything in my life much more easily.

Do All Things in Wisdom and Order

I realize, brothers and sisters, that other suggestions could be added to these. However, I believe that when we focus on a few basic objectives, we are more likely to be able to manage the many demands that life makes on us. Remember, too much of anything in life can throw us off-balance. At the same time, too little of the important things can do the same thing. King Benjamin counseled "that all these things are done in wisdom and order" (Mosiah 4:27).

Often the lack of clear direction and goals can waste away our time and energy and contribute to imbalance in our lives. A life that gets out of balance is much like a car tire that is out of balance. It will make the operation of the car rough and unsafe. Tires in perfect balance can give a smooth and comfortable ride. So it is with life. The ride through mortality can be smoother for us when we strive to stay in balance. Our main goal should be to seek "immortality and eternal life" (Moses 1:39). With this as our goal, why not eliminate from our lives the things that clamor for and consume our thoughts, feelings, and energies without contributing to our reaching that goal?

Help Rather than Hinder

Just a word to Church leaders: Be very careful that what you ask from members will help them attain eternal life. For Church members to be able to balance their lives, Church leaders must be sure they do not require so much from members that they have no time to accomplish their personal and family goals.

Do Your Best Each Day

Not long ago, one of my children said, "Dad, sometimes I wonder if I will ever make it." The answer I gave to her is the same as I would give to you if you have had similar feelings. Just do the very best you can each day. Do the basic things and, before you realize it, your life will be full of spiritual understanding that will confirm to you that your Heavenly Father loves you. When a person knows this, then life will be full of purpose and meaning, making balance easier to maintain.

Live every day with joy in your heart, brothers and sisters. I humbly testify that life can be wonderful, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

PROBLEM SOLVING IN MARRIAGE

*Spiritual growth comes
by solving problems together—not
by running from them.*

—President Ezra Taft Benson

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Ezra Taft Benson

“My message is to return to the God-ordained fundamentals that will ensure love, stability, and happiness in our homes. . . .

“ . . . A husband and wife must attain righteous unity and oneness in their goals, desires, and actions.

“Marriage itself must be regarded as a sacred covenant before God. A married couple have an obligation not only to each other, but to God. He has promised blessings to those who honor that covenant.

“Fidelity to one’s marriage vows is absolutely essential for love, trust, and peace. Adultery is unequivocally condemned by the Lord.

“Husbands and wives who love each other will find that love and loyalty are reciprocated. This love will provide a nurturing atmosphere for the emotional growth of children. Family life should be a time of happiness and joy that children can look back on with fond memories and associations.

“Restraint and self-control must be ruling principles in the marriage relationship. Couples must learn to bridle their tongues as well as their passions.

“Prayer in the home and prayer with each other will strengthen your union. Gradually thoughts, aspirations, and ideas will merge into a oneness until you are seeking the same purposes and goals. Rely on the Lord, the teachings of the prophets, and the scriptures for guidance and help, particularly when there may be disagreements and problems.

“Spiritual growth comes by solving problems together—not by running from them. Today’s inordinate emphasis on individualism brings egotism and separation. Two individuals becoming ‘one flesh’ is still the Lord’s standard. (See Gen. 2:24.)

“The secret of a happy marriage is to serve God and each other. The goal of marriage is unity and oneness, as well as self-development. Paradoxically, the more we serve one another, the greater is our spiritual and emotional growth” (“Salvation—A Family Affair,” *Ensign*, July 1992, 2–4).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“We live in a day when the adversary stresses on every hand the philosophy of instant gratification. We seem to demand *instant* everything, including instant solutions to our problems.

“We are indoctrinated that somehow we should always be instantly emotionally comfortable. When that is not so, some become anxious—and all too frequently seek relief from counseling, from analysis, and even from medication.

“It was meant to be that life would be a challenge. To suffer some anxiety, some depression, some disappointment, even some failure is normal.

“Teach our members that if they have a good, miserable day once in a while, or several in a row, to stand steady and face them. Things will straighten out.

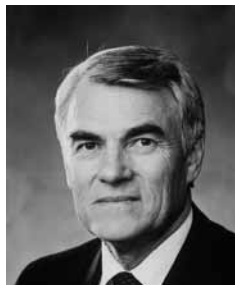
“There is great purpose in our struggle in life. . . .

“Bishop, those who come to you are children of God. Counsel them in the Lord’s own way. Teach them to ponder it in their minds, then to pray over their problems.

“Remember that soothing, calming effect of reading the scriptures. Next time you are where they are read, notice how things settle down. Sense the feeling of peace and security that comes. . . .

“In the name of Jesus Christ, amen” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 135–40; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 91–93).

MARRIAGE AND THE GREAT PLAN OF HAPPINESS



Elder Joe J. Christensen

*Of the Presidency
of the Seventy*

*In Conference Report,
Apr. 1995, 84–87;
or Ensign, May 1995,
64–66*

Barbara and I have been blessed with six children. Some years ago, when we had taken all of them to visit with their grandparents, my father said, “Joe, I think you and Barbara have started something you can’t stop.”

At this Easter season we declare to all the world that Jesus is the Christ and that through his holy priesthood and its sealing power, marriages and families need never stop—need never come to an end.

Today I would like to speak to all of you about our marriages. Here are eight practical suggestions that, hopefully, may be of value in strengthening our marriages, now and in the future.

Remember the Importance of Marriage

1. Remember the central importance of your marriage. Listen to these words from Elder Bruce R. McConkie on the importance of marriage in our Father in Heaven’s “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8):

“From the moment of birth into mortality to the time we are married in the temple, everything we have in the whole gospel system is to prepare and qualify us to enter that holy order of matrimony which makes us husband and wife in this life and in the world to come. . . .

“There is nothing in this world as important as the creation and perfection of family units” (“Salvation Is a Family Affair,” *Improvement Era*, June 1970, pp. 43–44).

Pray for the Success of Your Marriage

2. Pray for the success of your marriage. Years ago, when it was common for a General Authority to tour a mission and interview all the missionaries, Elder Spencer W. Kimball, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, was visiting with an elder who was just about to finish his mission.

“When you get released, Elder, what are your plans?” “Oh, I plan to go back to college.” And then with a smile he added, “Then I hope to fall in love and get married.”

Elder Kimball shared this wise counsel: “Well, don’t just pray to marry the one you love. *Instead, pray to love the one you marry.*”

We should pray to become more kind, courteous, humble, patient, forgiving, and, *especially*, less selfish.

In order to recognize our personal problems or weaknesses which hinder us from being better marriage partners, we should come to the Lord in prayer and reap the benefits of this powerful Book of Mormon promise: “If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness . . . ; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27).

And so the need to pray. Many Church leaders and marriage counselors indicate that they have not seen one marriage in serious trouble where the couple was still praying together daily. When problems arise and marriages are threatened, praying together as a couple may be the most important remedy.

Listen to Your Spouse

3. Listen. Make the time to listen to your spouse; even schedule it regularly. Visit with each other and assess how you are doing as a marriage partner.

Brother Brent Barlow posed a question to a group of priesthood brethren: “How many of you would like to receive a revelation?” Every hand went up. He then suggested that they all go home and ask their wives how they could be better husbands. He added, “I followed my own advice, and had a very informative discussion with [my wife] Susan for more than an hour that afternoon!” (“To Build a Better Marriage,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1992, p. 17). A conversation like that could be a revelation for any of us.

Have any of you brethren ever had your wife say something like I heard recently: “Joe, are you listening?” She wasn’t the only one who wondered if I was listening. Some time ago I was taking a nap and our little granddaughter Allison came and lifted up one of my eyelids and said, “Grandpa, are you in there?” We should be “in there” and responsive to our mate.

Avoid Ceaseless Pinpricking

4. Avoid “ceaseless pinpricking.” Don’t be too critical of each other’s faults. Recognize that none of us is perfect. We all have a long way to go to become as Christlike as our leaders have urged us to become.

“Ceaseless pinpricking,” as President Kimball called it, can deflate almost any marriage (“Marriage and Divorce,” *1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1977], p. 148).

Generally each of us is painfully aware of our weaknesses, and we don’t need frequent reminders. Few people have ever changed for the better as a result of constant criticism or nagging. If we are not careful, some of what we offer as *constructive* criticism is actually *destructive*.

At times it is better to leave some things unsaid. As a newlywed, Sister Lola Walters read in a magazine that in order to strengthen a marriage, couples should have regular, candid sharing sessions in which they would list any mannerisms they found to be annoying. She wrote:

“We were to name five things we found annoying, and I started off. . . . I told him that I didn’t like the way he ate grapefruit. He peeled it and ate it like an orange! Nobody else I knew ate grapefruit like that. Could a girl be expected to spend a lifetime, and even eternity, watching her husband eat grapefruit like an orange? . . .

“After I finished [with my five], it was his turn to tell the things he disliked about me. [He] said, ‘Well, to tell the truth, I can’t think of anything I don’t like about you, Honey.’

“Gasp.

“I quickly turned my back, because I didn’t know how to explain the tears that had filled my eyes and were running down my face.”

Sister Walters concluded, “Whenever I hear of married couples being incompatible, I always wonder if they are suffering from what I now call the Grapefruit Syndrome” (“The Grapefruit Syndrome,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1993, p. 13).

Yes, at times, it is better to leave some things unsaid.

Keep Your Courtship Alive

5. Keep your courtship alive. Make time to do things together—just the two of you. As important as it is to be with the children as a family, you need regular

weekly time alone together. Scheduling it will let your children know that you feel that your marriage is so important that you need to nurture it. That takes commitment, planning, and scheduling.

It doesn’t need to be costly. The time together is the most important element.

Once when my father-in-law was leaving the house after lunch to return to the field to work, my mother-in-law said, “Albert, you get right back in here and tell me you love me.” He grinned and jokingly said, “Elsie, when we were married, I told you I loved you, and if that ever changes, I’ll let you know.” It’s hard to overuse the expression “I love you.” Use it daily.

Be Quick to Say, “I’m Sorry”

6. Be quick to say, “I’m sorry.” As hard as it is to form the words, be swift to say, “I apologize, and please forgive me,” even though you are not the one who is totally at fault. True love is developed by those who are willing to readily admit personal mistakes and offenses.

When differences do arise, being able to discuss and resolve them is important, but there are instances when it is best to take a time-out. Biting your tongue and counting to ten or even a hundred is important. And occasionally, even letting the sun go down on your wrath can help bring you back to the problem in the morning more rested, calm, and with a better chance for resolution.

Occasionally we hear something like, “Why, we have been married for fifty years, and we have never had a difference of opinion.” If that is literally the case, then one of the partners is overly dominated by the other or, as someone said, is a stranger to the truth. Any intelligent couple will have differences of opinion. Our challenge is to be sure that we know how to resolve them. That is part of the process of making a good marriage better.

Live within Your Means

7. Learn to live within your means. Some of the most difficult challenges in marriage arise in the area of finances. “The American Bar Association . . . indicated that 89 percent of all divorces could be traced to quarrels and accusations over money” (Marvin J. Ashton, “One for the Money,” *Ensign*, July 1975, p. 72). Be willing to postpone or forgo some purchases in order to stay within your budget.

Pay your tithing first, and avoid debt insofar as possible. Remember that spending fifty dollars a month less than you receive equals happiness and spending fifty more equals misery. The time may have come to get out the scissors and your credit cards and perform what Elder Jeffrey R. Holland called some “plastic surgery” (“Things We Have Learned—Together,” *Ensign*, June 1986, p. 30).

Share Home and Family Responsibilities

8. Be a true partner in home and family responsibilities. Don't be like the husband who sits around home expecting to be waited on, feeling that earning the living is his chore and that his wife alone is responsible for the house and taking care of the children. The task of caring for home and family is more than one person's responsibility.

Remember that you are in this partnership together. Barbara and I have discovered that we can make our bed every morning in less than a minute and it's done for the day. She says that she lets me do it to help me feel good about myself all day, and I guess there may be something to that.

Find time to study the scriptures together, and follow this sound counsel from President Kimball: “When a husband and wife go together frequently to the holy temple, kneel in prayer together in their home with their family, go hand in hand to their religious meetings, keep their lives wholly chaste, mentally and physically, . . . and both are working together for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, then happiness is at its pinnacle” (*Marriage and Divorce* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], p. 24).

In summary:

- Remember the central importance of your marriage.
- Pray for its success.
- Listen.
- Avoid “ceaseless pinpricking.”
- Keep your courtship alive.
- Be quick to say, “I'm sorry.”
- Learn to live within your means.
- Be a true partner in home and family responsibilities.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ, that the tomb was empty on that third day, and that “as in Adam all

die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Thus with gratitude for the sealing power within the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, we can confidently say with the poet, “I shall but love thee better after death” (Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, no. 43, line 14). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

OVERCOMING THOSE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION: A FORMULA FOR FINDING UNITY IN MARRIAGE



Elder Robert E. Wells

*Of the First Quorum
of the Seventy*

*Ensign, Jan. 1987,
60–62*

Whenever two people live together, they are bound to have differences of opinion. Misunderstandings can easily arise over almost every aspect of their lives—important or unimportant—such as child discipline, housekeeping, meals, money management, decorating, which radio station to play, which movie to go to, and on and on.

Since to some extent each of us is a product of our past environments and experiences, it's only natural that we have occasional differences. People who grew up in the city do some things differently from those who grew up in the country. People from one part of the world do things differently from those in another part. Different ethnic, educational, financial, and religious backgrounds also produce differences in the ways we go about the daily details of living. There is also a natural difference between male and female points of view.

But being different doesn't necessarily mean that one person is right and the other is wrong—or that one way is better than another. Unity in marriage requires a willingness to compromise, a commitment to make the relationship work, and a dependence on the Lord. Even though there may be differences of opinion, habit, or background, husbands and wives can have “their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another.” (Mosiah 18:21.)

The Church has more than thirty thousand missionaries in the field today; yet serious problems

between companions are relatively few. Part of the reason is an excellent formula found in the *Missionary Handbook* given to all full-time missionaries. Here's what it says:

"Being able to communicate with your companion is a fundamental step in becoming a successful missionary. Hold an inventory session with your companion.

"This is a meeting in which you discuss and set goals for your work, your companion relationship, and your personal life. . . .

"Use this time to resolve any companion conflicts by bringing them out and solving them together." (pp. 25–26; stock no. PBMI4201.)

Of course, missionary companions are often either perfect strangers or only passing acquaintances when they are assigned to work together. Roommates, too, are often strangers—or friends who think they know each other well. But hopefully, a marriage begins on much stronger footing, with two people who have had sufficient time to come to know each other well.

Whatever the situation, the basic ideas behind the missionary inventory session are outlined in Doctrine and Covenants 6:19: "Admonish [your companion] in his faults, and also receive admonition of him. Be patient; be sober; be temperate; have patience, faith, hope and charity." Following are some of my observations on how to apply these ideas specifically to marriage.

Criticism

One of the hardest things to live with in any relationship is criticism, real or implied. Yet some husbands and wives demand sharply, "Why in the world did you do that?" or "I wouldn't have done it that way!" or "We don't do it that way where I come from!" or "That was a dumb thing to say." Repeated criticisms of this negative and acid nature can wear away the bonds of love until the marital fabric is weakened and ruined—with sad results for both parties.

Too often, criticism attacks tender, unprotected feelings. When we criticize, we are implying blame, censure, condemnation, reprobation, and denunciation—and we're setting ourselves up as judges, as if we were qualified to point out someone else's faults and weaknesses.

For some people, sharp questions or quick rejoinders are habits. Criticism is a form of humor for them, and

they enjoy feeling superior when they see someone else's discomfort. This is a tragic, sinful attitude that must be changed.

Talking It Out

The structure of any husband/wife discussion is, of course, flexible. It could be spontaneous, occurring whenever you or your partner sees a need. Or you could plan to hold a session regularly just to touch base—maybe weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Some prefer to keep it very informal; they discuss these items while driving in the car, while taking a walk, or while on a date together. Others prefer a more structured approach with an opening and closing prayer, a review of how things went last week (or last month), a look at the calendar for upcoming activities, and a discussion of personal and husband/wife goals.

However and whenever it is held, the discussion should focus on listening and understanding each other, solving problems, and giving loving support for the good things that are happening in the relationship.

I'd suggest that you start with the good things. Begin by expressing gratitude for each other and for your blessings. Tell your spouse the things you're most grateful for—things you most like about him or her. Be specific. Mention detailed instances and events that clearly illustrate good things your partner has done. And express your honest feelings of gratitude and love. Relationships thrive on positive thoughts, positive words, positive actions.

After sharing sincere feelings of gratitude and appreciation, you may feel that this is an appropriate time to discuss frustrations or problems in your relationship. As you do, remember Paul's words: "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband." (I Cor. 7:3.) Warmth, sensitivity, and consideration should be dominant feelings during the discussion.

One of you might begin by asking, "What can I do to be a better husband (or wife)?" Then the other responds kindly with ideas and suggestions.

As you share your feelings and give your partner suggestions, be humble and nonthreatening. Don't assume that you're always the offended one and that your spouse is the guilty one. Remember, too, that in many situations, it's not a matter of who is right and who is wrong—it's simply a matter of understanding each other.

I'd suggest that you avoid a written list of faults. This is a time when relying on memory is more considerate than reading a host of complaints. Another rule you might establish is for each of you to limit the number of suggestions you bring at one time—no more than two or three at most. That way the experience isn't as likely to be so overwhelming.

As you're the one receiving the suggestions, don't become defensive. Avoid the urge to say: "Don't nitpick! That doesn't happen very often!" Avoid the urge to ask for evidence that you're guilty: "When did I ever say that?" Recognize that if it's important enough for your companion to mention, it's something that is bothering him or her. And avoid the martyr's response: "You expect too much."

When your spouse suggests a way you can improve, you might respond by saying: "You're right. I should pick up my dirty clothes and keep the bedroom cleaner. Please forgive me—and please remind me when I forget. I appreciate your patience and help."

Then ask what else you can do to be a better partner, giving your companion a chance to bring up the other things he or she wants to talk about during the session.

After you've discussed those additional items, the tables are turned. It's time for the other partner to take the initiative and ask for suggestions for improvement.

The objective is to *understand each other's feelings*, to see things from the other person's point of view, and to discuss ways to resolve problems. Again, in many cases, it's not a matter of who is right or wrong; it's often just a matter of different habits and customs. But your willingness to talk about these matters and look for solutions shows a great deal of love and consideration.

Compromises are often necessary. As we compromise, we protect feelings and respect the other's right to be different. But items that *are* important are mentioned and resolved.

So, let's review this procedure proposed for your consideration and adaptation. After you have begun by expressing your love and appreciation for each other, your discussion might go something like this:

A husband asks: "Honey, what can I do to be a better husband? Be honest with me. I really want to know how I can improve."

His wife's response, given with kindness, might be: "There are a few little things that might help out. For example, you haven't seemed to notice, but lately you've contradicted me or disagreed with me several times in front of the children. That doesn't create a good atmosphere in our home, and it really confuses the children. I think it would be better for us and for them if we were more united."

The husband may not think he has really been guilty of this. But it does no good at all to be defensive and ask for specific illustrations of the last three times he has done this. If his wife thinks it's important enough to mention, he should realize that it's important enough for him to change his behavior.

He could say, "I'm sorry, dear, and I'll try to watch it. If you see this kind of situation developing, please help me by giving me a signal—such as saying that we haven't had a chance to discuss that subject alone yet."

Next, the wife might make the observation that her husband has been teasing a sensitive daughter too much about her boyfriends. Or she may remind him that the weekly date he promised as a New Year's resolution hasn't materialized.

Then it's her turn to ask, "Honey, what can I do to be a better wife?"

Her husband might then suggest with love that he has noticed several unbudgeted purchases lately, and encourage her to control impulse buying. Or he might mention that he prefers fried eggs to hard boiled, even if an article she read recently did caution against fried foods.

In such discussions between husband and wife, it is normal to point out many such details about living together. Some are of great consequence; others may seem trivial. But all are important for husband/wife harmony.

Turning to the Lord

Wisdom suggests that prayer is an important part of marriage. We must seek the Lord's help in understanding each other, resolving challenges, and reaching appropriate decisions—all without becoming defensive. Even more important, we must seek his help in changing our behavior and our hearts. As we invite the Lord to soften our hearts toward one another and as we sincerely repent of our weaknesses,

Wisdom suggests that prayer is an important part of marriage.

he will change our hearts. He will turn us from our selfish, petty, worldly attitudes and fill us with pure, Christlike love. No amount of talking and communicating will really resolve our differences unless our marriages are based upon true gospel principles, such as faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, and obedience.

As we draw near to the Lord, he can help us grow closer to one another. Only through his grace can we be blessed with Christlike love—the ability to “love thy wife [or husband] with all thy heart, and . . . cleave unto her [or him] and none else” (D&C 42:22).

PROPHETIC COUNSEL

Looking for the path to safety in the counsel of prophets makes sense to those with strong faith.

—Elder Henry B. Eyring

FINDING SAFETY IN COUNSEL



*Elder Henry B. Eyring
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Apr. 1997, 31–35;
or Ensign, May
1997, 24–26*

The Savior Wants to Lead Us to Safety

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 Nephi 10:5).

The Lord expressed the same lament in our own dispensation after describing the many ways in which He calls us to safety:

“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 trumpet, 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).

He Counsels Us through Prophets

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 His message 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.

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). 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.

In our own time, we have been warned with counsel on 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 [Spencer W.] Kimball give counsel on the importance of a mother in the home and then heard President [Ezra Taft] Benson quote him, and we have heard President [Gordon B.] Hinckley quote them both. The Apostle Paul wrote that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Corinthians 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.

Follow the Prophet or Choose Another Influence

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).

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.

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

The failure to take prophetic counsel lessens our power to take inspired counsel in the future.

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.

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.

Those with Priesthood Keys Lead Us to Safety

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.

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 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. 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.

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.

Accept Counsel Humbly

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).

Follow Counsel for the Safety of Others

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. 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.

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.)

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.

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.

Be Patient When Counsel Seems Not to Apply

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.

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.

SAME-GENDER ATTRACTION

Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

—The Family: A Proclamation to the World

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“What is your Church’s attitude toward homosexuality?”

“In the first place, we believe that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God. We believe that marriage may be eternal through exercise of the power of the everlasting priesthood in the house of the Lord.

“People inquire about our position on those who consider themselves so-called gays and lesbians. My response is that we love them as sons and daughters of God. They may have certain inclinations which are powerful and which may be difficult to control. Most people have inclinations of one kind or another at various times. If they do not act upon these inclinations, then they can go forward as do all other members of the Church. If they violate the law of chastity and the moral standards of the Church, then they are subject to the discipline of the Church, just as others are.

“We want to help these people, to strengthen them, to assist them with their problems and to help them with their difficulties. But we cannot stand idle if they indulge in immoral activity, if they try to uphold and defend and live in a so-called same-sex marriage situation. To permit such would be to make light of the very serious and sacred foundation of God-sanctioned marriage and its very purpose, the rearing of families” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 71).

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

“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” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

SAME-GENDER ATTRACTION



*Elder Dallin H. Oaks
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
Ensign, Oct. 1995,
7–14*

Every Latter-day Saint knows that God has forbidden all sexual relations outside the bonds of marriage. Most are also aware of the Savior’s teaching that it is sinful for a man to look upon and lust after a woman (see Matt. 5:28; D&C 42:23; 63:16).

Attraction between man and woman was instilled by the Creator to ensure the perpetuation of mortal life and to draw husband and wife together in the family setting he prescribed for the accomplishment of his purposes, including the raising of children. In contrast, deviations from God’s commandments in the use of procreative powers are grave sins. President Joseph F. Smith taught:

“Sexual union is lawful in wedlock, and if participated in with right intent is honorable and sanctifying. But without the bonds of marriage, sexual indulgence is a debasing sin, abominable in the sight of Deity.”¹

Some Latter-day Saints face the confusion and pain that result when a man or a woman engages in sexual behavior with a person of the same sex, or even when a person has erotic feelings that could lead toward such behavior. How should Church leaders, parents, and other members of the Church react when faced with the religious, emotional, and family challenges that accompany such behavior or feelings? What do we say to a young person who reports that he or she is attracted toward or has erotic thoughts or feelings about persons of the same sex? How should we respond when a person announces that he is a homosexual or she is a lesbian and that

scientific evidence “proves” he or she was “born that way”? How do we react when persons who do not share our beliefs accuse us of being intolerant or unmerciful when we insist that erotic feelings toward a person of the same sex are irregular and that any sexual behavior of that nature is sinful?

Gospel Doctrines

Our attitudes toward these questions are dictated by gospel doctrines we know to be true.

1. God created us “male and female” (D&C 20:18; Moses 2:27; Gen. 1:27). What we call gender was an essential characteristic of our existence prior to our birth.²
2. The purpose of mortal life and the mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to prepare the sons and daughters of God for their destiny—to become like our heavenly parents.
3. Our eternal destiny—exaltation in the celestial kingdom—is made possible only through the atonement of Jesus Christ (through which we became and can remain “innocent before God” [D&C 93:38]) and is only available to a man and a woman who have entered into and been faithful to the covenants of an eternal marriage in a temple of God (see D&C 131:1–4; 132).
4. Through the merciful plan of our Father in Heaven, persons who desire to do what is right but through no fault of their own are unable to have an eternal marriage in mortal life will have an opportunity to qualify for eternal life in a period following mortality, if they keep the commandments of God and are true to their baptismal and other covenants.³
5. In addition to the cleansing effect of the Atonement, God has given us agency—the power to choose between good (the path of life) and evil (the path of spiritual death and destruction [see 2 Ne. 2:27; Moses 4:3]). Although the conditions of mortality can limit our freedom (such as by restricting our mobility or our power to act on certain options), when we have reached the age or condition of accountability (see Moro. 8:5–12; D&C 68:27; 101:78) no mortal or spiritual power can deprive us of our agency.
6. To accomplish one of the purposes of mortal life, it is essential that we be tested against opposition to see if we will keep the commandments of God (see 2 Ne. 2:11; Abr. 3:25–26). To provide that opposition, Satan and his followers are permitted to tempt us to use our agency and our freedom to choose evil and to commit sin.
7. Because Satan desires that “all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Ne. 2:27), his most strenuous efforts are directed at encouraging those choices and actions that will thwart God’s plan for his children. He seeks to undermine the principle of individual accountability, to persuade us to misuse our sacred powers of procreation, to discourage marriage and childbearing by worthy men and women, and to confuse what it means to be male or female.
8. In all of this, the devil, who has no body, seeks to persuade mortals to corrupt their bodies by “choos[ing] eternal death, according to the will of the flesh . . . , which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring [them] down to hell, that he may reign over [them] in his own kingdom” (2 Ne. 2:29).
9. The First Presidency has declared that “there is a distinction between [1] immoral thoughts and feelings and [2] participating in either immoral heterosexual or any homosexual behavior.”⁴ Although immoral thoughts are less serious than immoral behavior, such thoughts also need to be resisted and repented of because we know that “our thoughts will also condemn us” (Alma 12:14). Immoral thoughts (and the less serious feelings that lead to them) can bring about behavior that is sinful.
10. Because of God’s great love for his children, even the worst sinners (or almost all of them) will ultimately be rewarded with assignment to a kingdom of glory.⁵ Persons who have lived good lives and received most of the ordinances of salvation but have failed to qualify for exaltation through eternal marriage will be saved in a lesser place in the celestial kingdom where there is no eternal increase (see D&C 131:1–4).
11. In the midst of the challenges and choices of mortal life, we are all under the Savior’s commandment to “love one another” (John 15:12, 17). As the First Presidency said in a recent message:

“We are asked to be kinder with one another, more gentle and forgiving. We are asked to be slower to anger and more prompt to help. We are asked to extend the hand of friendship and resist the hand

of retribution. We are called upon to be true disciples of Christ, to love one another with genuine compassion, for that is the way Christ loved us.”⁶

Kindness, compassion, and love are powerful instruments in strengthening us to carry heavy burdens imposed without any fault of our own and to do what we know to be right.

Application of Doctrines and Responsibilities

These doctrines, commandments, and responsibilities guide us in answering the questions posed earlier in this article.

Our doctrines obviously condemn those who engage in so-called “gay bashing”—physical or verbal attacks on persons thought to be involved in homosexual or lesbian behavior.

We should extend compassion to persons who suffer from ill health, including those who are infected with HIV or who are ill with AIDS (who may or may not have acquired their condition from sexual relations). We should encourage such persons to participate in the activities of the Church.

Applying the First Presidency’s distinction to the question of same-sex relationships, we should distinguish between (1) homosexual (or lesbian) “thoughts and feelings” (which should be resisted and redirected), and (2) “homosexual behavior” (which is a serious sin).

We should note that the words *homosexual*, *lesbian*, and *gay* are adjectives to describe particular thoughts, feelings, or behaviors. We should refrain from using these words as nouns to identify particular conditions or specific persons. Our religious doctrine dictates this usage. It is wrong to use these words to denote a *condition*, because this implies that a person is consigned by birth to a circumstance in which he or she has no choice in respect to the critically important matter of sexual *behavior*.

Feelings are another matter. Some kinds of feelings seem to be inborn. Others are traceable to mortal experiences. Still other feelings seem to be acquired from a complex interaction of “nature and nurture.” All of us have some feelings we did not choose, but the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us that we still have the power to resist and reform our feelings (as needed) and to assure that they do not lead us to entertain inappropriate thoughts or to engage in sinful behavior.

Different persons have different physical characteristics and different susceptibilities to the various physical and emotional pressures we may encounter in our childhood and adult environments. We did not choose these personal susceptibilities either, but we do choose and will be accountable for the attitudes, priorities, behavior, and “lifestyle” we engraft upon them.

Essential to our doctrinal position on these matters is the difference between our freedom and our agency. Our freedom can be limited by various conditions of mortality, but God’s gift of agency cannot be limited by outside forces, because it is the basis for our accountability to him. The contrast between freedom and agency can be illustrated in the context of a hypothetical progression from feelings to thoughts to behavior to addiction. This progression can be seen on a variety of matters, such as gambling and the use of tobacco and alcohol.

Just as some people have different feelings than others, some people seem to be unusually susceptible to particular actions, reactions, or addictions. Perhaps such susceptibilities are inborn or acquired without personal choice or fault, like the unnamed ailment the Apostle Paul called “a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Cor. 12:7). One person may have feelings that draw him toward gambling, but unlike those who only dabble, he becomes a compulsive gambler. Another person may have a taste for tobacco and a susceptibility to its addiction. Still another may have an unusual attraction to alcohol and the vulnerability to be readily propelled into alcoholism. Other examples may include a hot temper, a contentious manner, a covetous attitude, and so on.

In each case (and in other examples that could be given) the feelings or other characteristics that increase susceptibility to certain behavior may have some relationship to inheritance. But the relationship is probably very complex. The inherited element may be nothing more than an increased likelihood that an individual will acquire certain feelings if he or she encounters particular influences during the developmental years. But regardless of our different susceptibilities or vulnerabilities, which represent only variations on our mortal freedom (in mortality we are only “free according to the flesh” [2 Ne. 2:27]), we remain responsible for the exercise of our agency in the thoughts we entertain and the behavior we

choose. I discussed this contrast in a talk I gave at Brigham Young University several years ago:

“Most of us are born with [or develop] thorns in the flesh, some more visible, some more serious than others. We all seem to have susceptibilities to one disorder or another, but whatever our susceptibilities, we have the will and the power to control our thoughts and our actions. This must be so. God has said that he holds us accountable for what we do and what we think, so our thoughts and actions must be controllable by our agency. Once we have reached the age or condition of accountability, the claim ‘I was born that way’ does not excuse actions or thoughts that fail to conform to the commandments of God. We need to learn how to live so that a weakness that is mortal will not prevent us from achieving the goal that is eternal.

“God has promised that he will consecrate our afflictions for our gain (see 2 Ne. 2:2). The efforts we expend in overcoming any inherited [or developed] weakness build a spiritual strength that will serve us throughout eternity. Thus, when Paul prayed thrice that his ‘thorn in the flesh’ would depart from him, the Lord replied, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Obedient, Paul concluded:

“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong’ (2 Cor. 12:9–10).

“Whatever our susceptibilities or tendencies [feelings], they cannot subject us to eternal consequences unless we exercise our free agency to do or think the things forbidden by the commandments of God. For example, a susceptibility to alcoholism impairs its victim’s freedom to partake without addiction, but his free agency allows him to abstain and thus escape the physical debilitation of alcohol and the spiritual deterioration of addiction.

“. . . Beware the argument that because a person has strong drives toward a particular act, he has no power of choice and therefore no responsibility for his

actions. This contention runs counter to the most fundamental premises of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Satan would like us to believe that we are not responsible in this life. That is the result he tried to achieve by his contest in the pre-existence. A person who insists that he is not responsible for the exercise of his free agency because he was ‘born that way’ is trying to ignore the outcome of the War in Heaven. We *are* responsible, and if we argue otherwise, our efforts become part of the propaganda effort of the Adversary.

“Individual responsibility is a law of life. It applies in the law of man and the law of God. Society holds people responsible to control their impulses so we can live in a civilized society. God holds his children responsible to control their impulses in order that they can keep his commandments and realize their eternal destiny. The law does not excuse the short-tempered man who surrenders to his impulse to pull a trigger on his tormentor, or the greedy man who surrenders to his impulse to steal, or the pedophile who surrenders to his impulse to satisfy his sexual urges with children. . . .

“There is much we do not know about the extent of freedom we have in view of the various thorns in the flesh that afflict us in mortality. But this much we do know; we *all* have our free agency and God holds us accountable for the way we use it in thought and deed. That is fundamental.”⁷

The Insights of Science

In contrast to our doctrinal approach, many persons approach the problems of same-sex attraction solely from the standpoint of current science. While I am not qualified as a scientist, with the aid of scientific literature and with the advice of qualified scientists and practitioners, I will attempt to refute the claim of some that scientific discoveries demonstrate that avowed homosexuals and lesbians were “born that way.”

We live in a time of accelerating scientific discoveries about the human body. We know that our inheritance explains many of our physical characteristics. At the same time, we also know that our behavior is profoundly influenced by psychosocial

We need to learn how to live so that a weakness that is mortal will not prevent us from achieving the goal that is eternal.

factors such as parental and sibling relationships (especially during the formative years) and the culture in which we live. The debate over whether, or the extent to which, specific behavior is attributable to “nature” or to “nurture” is centuries old. Its application to the subject of same-sex feelings and behaviors is only one manifestation of a highly complex subject on which scientific knowledge is still in its infancy.

Some scientists deny that behavior is genetically influenced.⁸ Others are advocates of evidence or theories suggesting that “there is substantial evidence for genetic influence on sexual orientation.”⁹

We are, of course, aware of evidence that inheritance explains susceptibilities to certain diseases like some cancers and some other illnesses like diabetes mellitus. There are also theories and some evidence that inheritance is a factor in susceptibilities to various behavior-related disorders like aggression, alcoholism, and obesity. It is easy to hypothesize that inheritance plays a role in sexual orientation. However, it is important to remember, as conceded by two advocates of this approach, that “the concept of substantial heritability should not be confused with the concept of inevitable heritability. . . . Most mechanisms probably involve interactions between constitutional predispositions and environmental events.”¹⁰

Wherever they fall along the spectrum between outright rejection and total acceptance of biological determinism of sexual orientation, most scientists concede that the current evidence is insufficient and that firm conclusions must await many additional scientific studies.

A study of fifty-six pairs of identical male twins in which one twin classified himself as “gay” reported that 52 percent of the co-twins also classified themselves as gay.¹¹ A similar study of female identical twins yielded approximately the same proportion of co-twins who classified themselves as gay (thirty-four of seventy-one pairs, 48 percent).¹² If these studies show some inherited influence on whatever causes a man or woman to classify himself or herself as homosexual or lesbian, it is clear that this influence is not determinative. As a prominent scientist observed, “Even the identical twin of a gay man has a 50 percent or more chance of being heterosexual—even though he has the exact same genes and is reared by the same parents.”¹³ We should also note that the results of these studies

(and others described below) are based on the subjects’ self-classifications, a shaky foundation for scientific conclusions when “there is still no universally accepted definition of homosexuality among clinicians and behavioral scientists—let alone a consensus regarding its origins.”¹⁴

In any emerging area of knowledge, a new source of evidence is most welcome. In July 1993, Dr. Dean Hamer made worldwide headlines when he announced that he had found “a statistically significant correlation between the inheritance of genetic markers [an identifiable strip of DNA] on chromosomal region Xq28 and sexual orientation in a selected group of . . . homosexual men and their relatives over age 18.” In other words, “it appears that Xq28 contains a gene that contributes to homosexual orientation in males.”¹⁵ Putting the most positive interpretation on his discovery, Dr. Hamer’s subsequent book concludes:

“We can make only educated guesses about the importance of Xq28 in the population at large. On the high side, the region couldn’t possibly influence more than 67 percent of gay men, the proportion ‘linked’ to this region in our highly selected group of gay siblings. On the low side, if much of homosexuality is caused by environmental factors, or by a large number of interacting genes, Xq28 could account for as little as a few percent of the variation in male sexual orientation. The median range, taken from our linkage data and from the available twin and family studies, suggests that Xq28 plays some role in about 5 to 30 percent of gay men. The broad range of these estimates is proof that much more work remains to be done.”¹⁶

“Some role in about 5 to 30 percent” of self-classified “gay” men surely falls far short of justifying the claim that science has shown that “homosexuality” is “caused by” genetic inheritance. One eminent scientist identified two of the uncertainties:

“What evidence exists thus far of innate biological traits underlying homosexuality is flawed. . . . Confirmation of genetic research purporting to show that homosexuality is heritable makes clear neither what is inherited nor how it influences sexual orientation.”¹⁷

In their impressive reappraisal of biologic theories of human sexual orientation, Drs. Byne and Parsons of Columbia University’s Department of Psychiatry offer these important cautions and suggestions:

“It is imperative that clinicians and behavioral scientists begin to appreciate the complexities of sexual orientation and resist the urge to search for simplistic explanations, either psychosocial or biologic.

“Conspicuously absent from most theorizing on the origins of sexual orientation is an active role of the individual in constructing his or her identity. . . . We propose an interactional model in which genes or hormones do not specify sexual orientation per se, but instead bias particular personality traits and thereby influence the manner in which an individual and his or her environment interact as sexual orientation and other personality characteristics unfold developmentally.”¹⁸

This observation, but one of many suggestions from scientists, is particularly persuasive because it takes account of the vital element of individual choice that we know to be a true principle of our mortal condition.

The Responsibilities of Church Officers and Members

In their 14 November 1991 letter concerning the importance of the law of chastity, the First Presidency declared: “Sexual relations are proper only between husband and wife appropriately expressed within the bonds of marriage. Any other sexual contact, including fornication, adultery, and homosexual and lesbian behavior, is sinful.”

Consistent with that direction, Church officers are responsible to call transgressors to repentance and to remind them of the principle the prophet Samuel taught the wicked Nephites: “Ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain; and ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head” (Hel. 13:38).

Persons cannot continue to engage in serious sin and remain members of the Church. And discipline can be given for encouraging sin by others. There is no Church discipline for improper thoughts or feelings (though there is encouragement to improve them), but there are consequences for behavior. In the same sermon in which he taught that men should not be “cast out,” the Savior commanded his servants

that “ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily . . . ; therefore if ye know that a man is unworthy . . . ye shall forbid him” (3 Ne. 18:28–29). The Savior also commanded, “But if he repent not he shall not be numbered among my people, that he may not destroy my people” (v. 31; see also Mosiah 26:36; Alma 5:56–61). Consequently, if transgressors do not respond to calls to repentance, the shepherds of the Church flock must take disciplinary action in fulfillment of their God-given responsibilities.

At the same time, we should always distinguish between sinful *acts* and inappropriate *feelings* or potentially dangerous *susceptibilities*. We should reach out lovingly to those who are struggling to resist temptation. The First Presidency did this in their 14 November 1991 letter. After reaffirming the sinful nature of “fornication, adultery, and homosexual and lesbian behavior,” the Presidency added:

“Individuals and their families desiring help with these matters should seek counsel from their bishop, branch president, stake or district president. We encourage Church leaders and members to reach out with love and understanding to those struggling with these issues. Many will respond to Christlike love and inspired counsel as they receive an invitation to come back and apply the atoning and healing power of the Savior. (See Isaiah 53:4–5; Mosiah 4:2–3.)”

Similarly, in a conference address on this same subject, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “I desire now to say with emphasis that our concern for the bitter fruit of sin is coupled with Christlike sympathy for its victims, innocent or culpable. We advocate the example of the Lord, who condemned the sin, yet loved the sinner. We should reach out with kindness and

comfort to the afflicted, ministering to their needs and assisting them with their problems.”¹⁹

Despite such invitations and assurances, the Church and its members continue to experience misunderstandings about our positions on these matters. Last fall in an interview with a television reporter, one of our Church officials was asked, “What is being done in the Church to try to stop the atmosphere of hate towards homosexuals?” Nine years ago, during a television interview on this subject, I was questioned about reports that the Church taught or

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implied “that these people are somehow pariahs . . . and these people hate themselves and that this is an attitude brought forth by the Church.”

More significantly, we also receive such questions from faithful members. A recent letter is illustrative:

“Another concern we have is the way in which our sons and daughters are classified as people who practice deviant and lascivious behavior. Perhaps some do, but most do not. These young men and women want only to survive, have a spiritual life, and stay close to their families and the Church. It is especially damaging when these negative references are spoken from the pulpit. We believe such talks only create more depression and a tremendous amount of guilt, shame, and lack of self-worth, which they have endured throughout their entire lives. There is sometimes a real lack of the pure love of Christ expressed to help them through their ordeals. We will all appreciate anything you can do to help with the plight of these much misunderstood children of our Father in Heaven. If some of the General Authorities could express more sensitivity to this problem, it would surely help to avoid suicides and schisms that are caused within families. Many simply cannot tolerate the fact that Church members judge them as ‘evil people,’ and they, therefore, find solace in gay-oriented lifestyles.”²⁰

These communications surely show the need for improvement in our communications with brothers and sisters who are struggling with problems—all types of problems. Each member of Christ’s church has a clear-cut doctrinal responsibility to show forth love and to extend help and understanding. Sinners, as well as those who are struggling to resist inappropriate feelings, are not people to be cast out but people to be loved and helped (see 3 Ne. 18:22–23, 30, 32). At the same time, Church leaders and members cannot avoid their responsibility to teach correct principles and righteous behavior (on all subjects), even if this causes discomfort to some.

Church leaders are sometimes asked whether there is any place in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for persons with homosexual or lesbian susceptibilities or feelings. Of course there is. The degree of difficulty and the pattern necessary to forgo behavior and to control thoughts will be different with different individuals, but the message of hope and the hand of fellowship offered by the Church is the same for all who strive.

I tried to describe the crucial distinctions in my answer to the television reporter who implied that the Church taught that “these people are somehow pariahs.” I said:

“The person that’s working [to resist] those tendencies ought not to feel himself to be a pariah. Now, quite a different thing is sexual relations outside of marriage. A person engaging in that kind of behavior should well feel guilt. They should well feel themselves estranged from God, who has given commandments against that kind of behavior. It’s not surprising to me that they would feel estranged from their church. What surprises me is that they would feel that the Church can revoke God’s commandments. . . . To the woman taken in adultery (which is a pretty good precedent for us), . . . [the Savior] was merciful and loving . . . , but he said, ‘Go thy way and sin no more.’ He loved the sinner; he condemned the sin. I think the Church does the same thing, imperfectly perhaps, but that’s what we teach our members: love the sinner, condemn the sin.”²¹

The struggles of those who are troubled by same-sex attraction are not unique. There are many kinds of temptations, sexual and otherwise. The duty to resist sin applies to all of them.

The most important help the Church can offer to persons who have surrendered to sin or to those who are struggling to resist it is to fulfill its divine mission to teach true doctrine and administer the divine ordinances of the restored gospel. The gospel applies on the same basis to everyone. Its central truth is our Savior’s atonement and resurrection, that we might have immortality and eternal life. To achieve that destiny, an eternal marriage is the divine and prescribed goal for every child of God, in this life or in the life to come. Nevertheless, this sacred goal must come about in the Lord’s way. For example, President Gordon B. Hinckley has declared that “marriage should not be viewed as a therapeutic step to solve problems such as homosexual inclinations or practices.”²²

Through Christ and his church, those who struggle can obtain help. This help comes through fasting and prayer, through the truths of the gospel, through church attendance and service, through the counsel of inspired leaders, and, where necessary, through professional assistance with problems that require such help. Another important source of help is the strengthening influence of loving brothers and sisters. All should understand that persons (and

their family members) struggling with the burden of same-sex attraction are in special need of the love and encouragement that is a clear responsibility of Church members, who have signified by covenant their willingness “to bear one another’s burdens” (Mosiah 18:8) “and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2).

The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who gives us the light and the strength to overcome the obstacles of mortality and to use our God-given agency to choose the behavior that will lead us to our divine destiny. We are promised: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

Conclusion

The differing perspectives of scientific evidence and religious doctrine can be likened to the difference between studying about an automobile by observing its operation and disassembling and analyzing its various parts or by reading the operator’s manual written by the manufacturer. Much can be learned by observation and analysis, but that method will yield only partial knowledge of the function and potential of a machine. The best and most complete knowledge about the operation and potential of a machine will be revealed by studying the manual written by its manufacturer. The operator’s manual for our bodies and souls is the scriptures, written by the God who created us and interpreted by his prophets. These are the best sources of knowledge about the purpose of life and the behavior and thoughts we should cultivate in order to live in happiness and to achieve our divine destiny.

All who struggle with the challenges of mortality can identify with the lament in the psalm of Nephi: “O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.

“I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me” (2 Ne. 4:17–18).

To have the will and strength to resist sin, we must trust in God and pray for his help. Nephi rejoiced in the Lord, who had supported him and led him through his afflictions (see v. 20). “Why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh?” Nephi asked

(v. 27), adding a prayer that the Lord would redeem his soul and “make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin” (v. 31).

Nephi concludes with words that apply directly to those who seek to find their way through the difficulties discussed in this article:

“O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh. Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man or maketh flesh his arm.

“Yea, I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh” (vs. 34–35).

He who has commanded us to be perfect has shed his blood to provide us the opportunity to achieve our divine destiny. His confidence in our ability to achieve eternal life is manifest in his incredible invitation: “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Ne. 27:27).

Notes

1. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939), p. 309.
2. Statement of the First Presidency, 31 Jan. 1912; printed in *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1912, p. 417; see also *Millennial Star*, 24 Aug. 1922, p. 539.
3. Lorenzo Snow, *Millennial Star*, 31 Aug. 1899, p. 547; discussed in Dallin H. Oaks, *Pure in Heart* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), pp. 61–62.
4. Letter of the First Presidency, 14 Nov. 1991.
5. See D&C 76; discussed in Dallin H. Oaks, “Apostasy and Restoration,” *Ensign*, May 1995, pp. 86–87.
6. “An Easter Greeting from the First Presidency,” *Church News*, 15 Apr. 1995, p. 1.
7. “Free Agency and Freedom,” *Brigham Young University 1987–88 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (Provo: BYU Publications, 1988), pp. 46–47; the edited version printed here is found in Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure* (Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), pp. 13–15.
8. R. C. Lewontin and others, *Not in Our Genes* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); R. Hubbard and E. Wald, *Exploding the Gene Myth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).

9. R. C. Friedman and J. Downey, "Neurobiology and Sexual Orientation: Current Relationships," *Journal of Neuropsychiatry* 5 (1993): 149.
10. Ibid.
11. J. M. Bailey and R. C. Pillard, "A Genetic Study of Male Sexual Orientation," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 48 (1991): 1089-96.
12. J. M. Bailey, R. C. Pillard, and others, "Heritable Factors Influence Sexual Orientation in Women," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 50 (1993): 217-23.
13. D. Hamer and P. Copeland, *The Science of Desire* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p. 218.
14. W. Byne and B. Parsons, "Human Sexual Orientation: The Biologic Theories Reappraised," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 50 (1993): 228.
15. Dean Hamer and others, "A Linkage Between DNA Markers on the X Chromosome and Male Sexual Orientation," *Science* 261 (16 July 1993): 321-27.
16. *The Science of Desire*, pp. 145-46.
17. W. Byne, "The Biological Evidence Challenged," *Scientific American*, May 1994, pp. 50, 55.
18. Byne and Parsons, "Human Sexual Orientation," pp. 236-37.
19. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Reverence and Morality," *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 47.
20. Letter to Dallin H. Oaks, 3 Sept. 1994.
21. Television interview with Elder Dallin H. Oaks, 3 Dec. 1986; answer not telecast; excerpts printed in "Apostle Reaffirms Church's Position on Homosexuality," *Church News*, 14 Feb. 1987, pp. 10, 12.
22. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Reverence and Morality," p. 47.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

The only legitimate employment of the powers of procreation is between husband and wife who have been legally and lawfully married.

—Elder Boyd K. Packer

SELECTED TEACHINGS

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

“Homosexual activity is a serious sin. If you find yourself struggling with same-gender attraction, seek counsel from your parents and bishop. They will help you” (*For the Strength of Youth: Fulfilling Our Duty to God*, 28).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“I have time to discuss one other question: ‘Why does the Church become involved in issues that come before the legislature and the electorate?’

“I hasten to add that we deal only with those legislative matters which are of a strictly moral nature or which directly affect the welfare of the Church. We have opposed gambling and liquor and will continue to do so. We regard it as not only our right but our duty to oppose those forces which we feel undermine the moral fiber of society. Much of our effort, a very great deal of it, is in association with others whose interests are similar. We have worked with Jewish groups, Catholics, Muslims, Protestants, and those of no particular religious affiliation, in coalitions formed to advocate positions on vital moral issues. Such is currently the case in California, where Latter-day Saints are working as part of a coalition to safeguard traditional marriage from forces in our society which are attempting to redefine that sacred institution. God-sanctioned marriage between a man and a woman has been the basis of civilization for thousands of years. There is no justification to redefine what marriage is. Such is not our right, and those who try will find themselves answerable to God.

“Some portray legalization of so-called same-sex marriage as a civil right. This is not a matter of civil rights; it is a matter of morality. Others question our constitutional right as a church to raise our voice on

an issue that is of critical importance to the future of the family. We believe that defending this sacred institution by working to preserve traditional marriage lies clearly within our religious and constitutional prerogatives. Indeed, we are compelled by our doctrine to speak out.

“Nevertheless, and I emphasize this, I wish to say that our opposition to attempts to legalize same-sex marriage should never be interpreted as justification for hatred, intolerance, or abuse of those who profess homosexual tendencies, either individually or as a group. As I said from this pulpit one year ago, our hearts reach out to those who refer to themselves as gays and lesbians. We love and honor them as sons and daughters of God. They are welcome in the Church. It is expected, however, that they follow the same God-given rules of conduct that apply to everyone else, whether single or married” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 53–54).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“The only legitimate employment of the powers of procreation is between husband and wife who have been legally and lawfully married. Anything other than this violates the commandments of God himself. And as Alma said, ‘I say unto you, if ye speak against it, it matters not, for the word of God must be fulfilled’ (Alma 5:58). . . .

“Already I have warned that the awesome powers of the adversary will be employed to entice all mankind to sinfully use the sacred power of procreation. Do not yield, for every debt of transgression must be paid” (*Things of the Soul*, 113–14).

“World leaders and court judges agree that the family must endure if we are to survive. At the same time, they use the words *freedom* and *choice* as tools to pry apart the safeguards of the past and loosen up the laws on marriage, abortion, and gender. In so doing, they promote the very things which threaten the family” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 24; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 19).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“We live in a day when there are many political, legal, and social pressures for changes that confuse gender and homogenize the differences between men and women. Our eternal perspective sets us against changes that alter those separate duties and privileges of men and women that are essential to accomplish the great plan of happiness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 99; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 73).

SELFISHNESS

*Selfishness is the
antithesis of love.*

—Elder Spencer W. Kimball

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President David O. McKay

“I know of no better way to bring about harmony in the home, in the neighborhood, in organizations, peace in our country, and in the world than for every man and woman first to eliminate from his or her heart the enemies of harmony and peace such as hatred, selfishness, greed, animosity, and envy” (*Gospel Ideals*, 292).

President Spencer W. Kimball

“It all comes back to one word, doesn’t it: Selfishness” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 313).

“Every divorce is the result of selfishness on the part of one or the other or both parties to a marriage contract. Someone is thinking of self—comforts, conveniences, freedoms, luxuries, or ease. Sometimes the ceaseless pinpricking of an unhappy, discontented, and selfish spouse can finally add up to serious physical violence. Sometimes people are goaded to the point where they erringly feel justified in doing the things which are so wrong. Nothing, of course, justifies sin. . . .

“The marriage that is based upon selfishness is almost certain to fail. The one who marries for

wealth or the one who marries for prestige or social plane is certain to be disappointed. The one who marries to satisfy vanity and pride or who marries to spite or to show up another person is fooling only himself. But the one who marries to give happiness as well as receive it, to give service as well as to receive it, and who looks after the interests of the two and then the family as it comes will have a good chance that the marriage will be a happy one” (“Marriage and Divorce,” 148–49).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

“Selfishness so often is the basis of money problems, which are a very serious and real factor affecting the stability of family life. Selfishness is at the root of adultery, the breaking of solemn and sacred covenants to satisfy selfish lust. Selfishness is the antithesis of love. It is a cankerous expression of greed. It destroys self-discipline. It obliterates loyalty. It tears up sacred covenants. It afflicts both men and women” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 73).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“In our failures, there is usually disguised selfishness, the overreaching for ‘a bridge too far.’ Whether in financial or civic ruin or in infidelity and divorce, proud selfishness is usually there. Lack of intellectual humility is there among those who have deliberately cultivated their doubts in order, they think, to release themselves from their covenants. Some nurture their grievances assiduously. Were their grievances, instead, Alma’s seed of faith, they would have long ago nourished a mighty tree of testimony” (*Meek and Lowly*, 6–7).

Every divorce is the result of selfishness on the part of one or the other or both parties to a marriage contract.

SELF-RELIANCE

The principle of self-reliance is spiritual as well as temporal.

—Elder Boyd K. Packer

SELF-RELIANCE



Elder Boyd K. Packer

*Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

*In Speeches of the Year,
1975, 346–47, 354–60;
see also Ensign, Aug. 1975,
86–89*

Self-reliance . . . has application in emotional and in spiritual things.

I have become very anxious over the amount of counseling that we seem to need in the Church, and the network of counseling services that we keep building up without once emphasizing the principle of self-reliance as it is understood in the welfare program. There are too many in the Church who seem to be totally dependent, emotionally and spiritually, upon others. They subsist on some kind of emotional welfare. They are unwilling to sustain themselves. They become so dependent that they endlessly need to be shored up, lifted up, endlessly need encouragement, and they contribute little of their own.

I have been concerned that we may be on the verge of doing to ourselves emotionally (and therefore spiritually) what we have been working so hard for generations to avoid materially. If we lose our emotional and spiritual self-reliance, we can be weakened quite as much, perhaps even more, than when we become dependent materially. On one hand, we counsel bishops to avoid abuses in the Church welfare program. On the other hand, we seem to dole out counsel and advice without the slightest thought that the member should solve the problem himself or turn to his family. Only when those resources are inadequate should he turn to the Church.

We recognize at once that it would be folly to develop welfare production projects to totally sustain all of the members of the Church in every material need. We ought likewise to be very thoughtful before we develop a vast network of counseling programs with all of the bishops and branch presidents and everyone else, doling out counsel in an effort to totally sustain our members in every emotional need.

If we are not careful, we can lose the power of individual revelation. The Lord said to Oliver Cowdery, and it has meaning for all of us:

“Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

“But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

“But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong.”
(D&C 9:7–9) . . .

Guidelines for Emotional and Spiritual Independence

Now, if you are willing to agree that the basic principles underlying the Church welfare program have application in your emotional and spiritual life—specifically, that independence, industry, thrift, self-reliance, and self-respect should be developed; that work be enthroned as a ruling principle in your life; that the evils of an emotional or spiritual dole should be avoided; and that the aim of the Church is to help the members to help themselves—then I have some principles and some suggestions for you.

We mentioned earlier that there should not be the slightest embarrassment for any member of the Church to receive welfare assistance, provided he has exhausted his own personal resources first and those available in his family. Likewise, there should not be the slightest embarrassment on the part of any member of the Church who needs counsel to receive that counsel. At times it may be crucial that you seek and that you accept counsel.

When you are discouraged and feel that you cannot solve a problem on your own, you may be right, but at least you are obligated to try. Every personal resource available to you should be committed before

you take another step, and you have powerful resources. The Book of Mormon declares this one, which is often overlooked:

“For the Spirit is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free.

“And men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil.” (2 Nephi 2:4–5; emphasis added)

It is critically important that you understand that you already know right from wrong, that you’re innately, inherently, and intuitively good. When you say, “I can’t! I can’t solve my problems!” I want to thunder out, “Don’t you realize who you are? Haven’t you learned yet that you are a son or a daughter of Almighty God? Do you not know that there are powerful resources inherited from Him that you can call upon to give you steadiness and courage and great power?”

Most of you have been taught the gospel all your lives. All of you know the difference between good and evil, between right and wrong. Isn’t it time then that you decide that you’re going to do right? In so doing you’re making a choice. Not just *a* choice, but you’re making *the* choice. Once you’ve decided that, with no fingers crossed, no counterfeiting, no reservations or hesitancy, the rest will all fall into place.

Most people who come for counsel to the stake presidents, branch presidents, bishops, and others, and to us as General Authorities, don’t come because they are confused and they are not able to see the difference between right and wrong. They come because they’re tempted to do something that deep down they know is wrong, and they want that decision ratified.

When you have a problem, work it out in your own mind first. Ponder on it and analyze it and meditate on it. Pray about it. I’ve come to learn that major decisions can’t be forced. You must look ahead and have vision. What was it the prophet said in the Old Testament? “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18).

Ponder on things a little each day and don’t always be in the crisis of making major decisions on the spur of the moment. If you’re looking ahead in life, you can see major problems coming down the road toward you from some considerable distance. By the time you meet one another, you are able at the very beginning to take charge of the conversation. Once in a while a major decision will jump out at

you from the side of the road and startle the wits out of you, but not very often. If you’ve already decided that you’re going to do what is right and let all of the consequences follow, even those encounters won’t hurt you.

I have learned that the best time to wrestle with major problems is early in the morning. Your mind is then fresh and alert. The blackboard of your mind has been erased by a good night’s rest. The accumulated distractions of the day are not in your way. Your body has been rested also. That’s the time to think something through very carefully and to receive personal revelation.

I’ve heard President Harold B. Lee begin many a statement about matters involving revelation with an expression something like this: “In the early hours of the morning, while I was pondering upon that subject,” and so on. He made it a practice to work on the problems that required revelation in the fresh, alert hours of the early morning.

The Lord knew something when He directed in the Doctrine and Covenants, “Cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated” (D&C 88:124). . . .

I counsel our children to do their critical studying in the early hours of the morning when they’re fresh and alert, rather than to fight physical weariness and mental exhaustion at night. I’ve learned that the dictum “Early to bed, early to rise” is powerful. When under pressure—for instance, when I was preparing this talk—you wouldn’t find me burning the midnight oil. Much rather I’d be early to bed and getting up in the wee hours of the morning, when I could be close to Him who guides this work.

Now, about revelation. We have all been taught that revelation is available to each of us individually. The question I’m most often asked about revelation is, “How do I know when I have received it? I’ve prayed about it and fasted over this problem and prayed about it and prayed about it, and I still don’t quite know what to do. How can I really tell whether I’m being inspired so I won’t make a mistake?”

First, do you go to the Lord with a problem and ask Him to make your decision for you? Or do you work and meditate and pray and then make a decision yourself? Measure the problem against what you know to be right and wrong, and then make the decision. Then, ask Him if the decision is right or if

it is wrong. Remember what He said to Oliver Cowdery about working it out in your mind.

Listen to this sentence if you don't hear anything else: If we foolishly ask our bishop or branch president or the Lord to make a decision for us, there's precious little self-reliance in that. Think what it costs every time you have somebody else make a decision for you.

I think I should mention one other thing, and I hope this won't be misunderstood. We often find young people who will pray with great exertion over matters that they are free to decide for themselves. Suppose, if you will, that a couple had money available to build a house. Suppose they had prayed endlessly over whether they should build an Early American style, a ranch style, modern-style architecture, or perhaps a Mediterranean style. Has it ever occurred to you that perhaps the Lord just plain doesn't care? Let them build what they want to build. It's their choice. In many things we can do just what we want.

Now, there *are* some things he cares about very much. If you're going to build that house, then be honest and pay for the material that goes into it and do a decent job of building it. When you move into it, live righteously in it. Those are the things that count.

On occasions I've had to counsel people that the Lord would probably quite willingly approve the thing they intend to do even when they want to. It's strange when they come and almost feel guilty about doing something because they want to, even when it's righteous. The Lord is very generous with the freedom He gives us. The more we learn to follow the right, the more we are spiritually self-reliant, the more our freedom and our independence are affirmed. "If ye continue in my word," He said, "then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31–32). . . .

"How is it that ye do not keep the commandments of the Lord? How is it that ye will perish, because of the hardness of your hearts? Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you" (see 1 Nephi 15:7–11).

In conclusion, if we lose the spirit and power of individual revelation, we have lost much in this Church. You have great and powerful resources. You, through prayer, can solve your problems without

endlessly going to those who are trying so hard to help others.

Now, if you start receiving revelations for anyone else's jurisdiction, you know immediately that you're out of order, that they come from the wrong source.

If you become so dependent and insecure that prayer and the answer to prayer are such that you are hesitant to rely on them, then you are weak.

If we follow a course where, on one hand, we would carefully scrutinize an order for welfare products and yet, on the other hand, dole out counsel and advice without sending you to your own storehouse of knowledge and inspiration, then we have done you a disservice.

This Church relies on individual testimony. Each must earn his own testimony. It is then that you can stand and say, as I can say, that I know that God lives, that He is our Father, that we have a child-parent relationship with Him. I know that He is close, that we can go to Him and appeal, and then, if we will be obedient and listen and use every resource, we will have an answer to our prayers.

This is His church. God lives. Jesus is the Christ. We have a prophet presiding over this Church. Every one of us and every other soul on this earth can know that. I bear witness of that. I know that He lives and affirm this witness to you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

BECOMING SELF-RELIANT



*Elder L. Tom Perry
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Oct. 1991, 87–90;
or Ensign, Nov.
1991, 64–66*

Nephi's Self-Reliance

Lehi and his family, after wandering in the wilderness for eight years, came to a land they called Bountiful because it was a place of much fruit and wild honey. They came to a great sea, and they rejoiced unto the Lord because He had preserved them. After they had been in the land Bountiful for a space of many days, the Lord spoke to Nephi and said, "Arise, and get thee into the mountain" (1 Nephi 17:7).

Nephi obeyed the Lord; he went into the mountain and prayed. And the Lord commanded Nephi, “Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters” (1 Nephi 17:8).

Then Nephi asked the Lord, “Whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?” (1 Nephi 17:9).

The Lord instructed Nephi where he could find ore, but then Nephi was on his own. In 1 Nephi, chapter 17, we read:

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did make a bellows wherewith to blow the fire, of the skins of beasts; and after I had made a bellows, that I might have wherewith to blow the fire, I did smite two stones together that I might make fire. . . .

“And it came to pass that I did make tools of the ore which I did molten out of the rock” (17:11, 16).

This is one of the more interesting stories we have in the scriptures because it tells of an instance in which the Lord provided help but then stepped aside to allow one of His sons to exercise his own initiative. I have sometimes wondered what would have happened if Nephi had asked the Lord for tools instead of a place to find the ore to make the tools. I doubt the Lord would have honored Nephi’s request. You see, the Lord knew that Nephi could make the tools, and it is seldom the Lord will do something for us that we can do for ourselves.

Importance of Self-Reliance

The Lord does help when we go to Him in times of need, especially when we are committed to His work and respond to His will. But the Lord only helps those who are willing to help themselves. He expects His children to be self-reliant to the degree they can be.

Brigham Young instructed the Saints, “Instead of searching after what the Lord is going to do for us, let us inquire what we can do for ourselves” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 293).

Independence and self-reliance are critical to our spiritual and temporal growth. Whenever we get into situations which threaten our self-reliance, we will find our freedoms

threatened as well. If we increase our dependence on anything or anyone except the Lord, we will find an immediate decrease in our freedom to act. As President Heber J. Grant declared, “Nothing destroys the individuality of a man, a woman, or a child as much as the failure to be self-reliant” (“Address,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Oct. 1937, p. 627).

Never before in my life has the doctrine of self-reliance been more needed to be preached and encouraged for the benefit of the Saints. We live in a time of rapid change. Governments are rising and falling. Industries are blooming and then all too soon becoming obsolete. New discoveries in science are soon overshadowed by new findings. Unless we are continuously expanding our understanding and vision, we too will become out-of-date. Research tells us that individuals entering the labor market today will be forced to find three to five different career paths during their productive years.

What must we do to become more self-reliant?

A Family Tradition

My parents established a family tradition in our home which was fun for me in my early years and has become even more meaningful as I reflect back on it as the years have passed. On the first birthday of each child, the family would gather in the living room. In the center of the living room floor, our parents would place articles for the one-year-old child to select. The selection to be made might indicate an interest the child would pursue in life. The articles were the Bible, a child’s bottle filled with milk, a toy, and a savings bank filled with coins. The child was placed on one side of the room and the family on the other side. Family members would encourage the child to crawl toward the objects and make a selection. This was all in fun, of course.

I was told that I selected the bank and went into finance as my profession. I watched my brother Ted select the scriptures, and he pursued law as his chosen profession. Over the years he has relied on the scriptures as a basis for his judgments. My youngest brother, Bob, was the well-rounded member of the family. He crawled over, sat down on the Bible, put the bottle of milk in his mouth, and then held the toy in one hand and the bank in the other.

Independence and self-reliance are critical to our spiritual and temporal growth.

Spiritual Nourishment

Now I propose to you that in this entertaining family activity we can find the most fundamental principles of self-reliance. First, the scriptures represent our need for spiritual nourishment. In the scriptures, the Lord reveals His will to His children. From the very beginning of time, He has instructed His prophets to record His communications with them for the benefit of His children. The holy scriptures declare eternal values; they are the firm foundation on which we can build a successful mortal experience. We become more self-reliant when we study the holy scriptures, which teach the principles that provide a divine center to our lives here in mortality.

We should be comforted by the fact that we have the best text which has ever been written or ever will be written as our guide. We can turn to 2 Kings, the fifth chapter, and learn about obedience. We can study the life of Job and learn integrity. King Benjamin's address in Mosiah teaches industry. The life of Joseph, as told in Genesis 39, tells us what we should do when our standard of morality is being tested.

These are just a few examples of the lessons we could learn from the holy scriptures. They are lessons which have stood the test of time. Our challenge is to make them come alive in the hearts and minds of our families as we assume the responsibility to teach them.

Temporal Self-Reliance

Second, the bottle filled with milk symbolizes the physical body's need for nourishment. Our welfare services program has taught us by using the spokes of a wheel to define the essential elements of temporal self-reliance. The elements contained in the wheel are education; physical health; employment; home storage; resource management; and social, emotional, and spiritual strength.

This summer my wife and I had the opportunity to visit an eighty-year-old man who certainly demonstrated each of these elements in his life. He was born in a small Idaho town and worked long hours on the farm to finance his education. He spent his professional life teaching English and Spanish in a small high school. To set aside funds for missions and the education of his large family, he grew strawberry and raspberry crops to be picked and sold to the local markets. This labor occupied his summers.

Because these fruits were so labor-intensive, few people had the ambition to grow them. They were much-wanted crops. The demand was always there for as many berries as he could produce. He was never satisfied with the productivity of his crops, so he studied new varieties in an attempt to find the best producers. His backyard was literally an experimental farm for testing the variety of bushes that produced the sweetest and most abundant fruit in his particular climate. His studies yielded increased productivity. The labor kept him in good physical health. The fields of berries furnished automatic employment for his children each summer. The berries delivered to the market could be exchanged not only for cash but also for commodities to be used in their home storage. He managed his resources to build a beautiful home and supply the needs of his family.

This man loved to watch the Lord's system of multiplying and replenishing the earth, which gave him social, emotional, and spiritual strength. Now retired from active teaching, he continues to grow his berries, not for profit but for satisfaction. Six mornings each week during the berry harvest season, you will see him leading a parade of ten to twelve cars out of the city toward his berry patch. Families come to add to their home storage by picking the berries. I asked him the price per case if we supplied our own labor. He answered: "I don't know. My pay is seeing the look on people's faces as they leave the field holding the fruits of their labors in their arms."

I am convinced there are thousands of ways for families to build self-reliance by working together in productive pursuits. Perhaps a good family home evening discussion could produce some ideas to help make your family unit more temporally self-reliant.

Proper Use of Resources

Third, the toy I mentioned earlier represents the acquisition of things of the world. We are bombarded today with powerful media to acquire now and pay later in what are purported to be painless monthly installments. We live in an impatient world where everyone wants everything now. The acquisition of worldly goods seems to foster an appetite for more rather than any kind of lasting satisfaction.

Using our resources and worldly goods wisely and extending their life will help us become more self-reliant. I watched a young family move this summer,

and I was intrigued by the labels on the boxes coming out of the storage room. They read, "Clothing—Girls—2 years old," "Clothing—Girls—3 years old," and so on up. Clearly, this family had a well-conceived plan to maximize the usage of purchased items of clothing.

We live in a world blessed with so much abundance. Let us be certain that the resources with which we are blessed are never wasted.

Financial Well-Being

Finally, the fourth item—the bank. It is a symbol of our financial well-being. I learned a great lesson early in my business career. My boss called me into his office. I could tell he had something on his mind. He said, "Give me a definition of interest." Of course, I reached back in my training and gave him a definition I had learned from a textbook. He said, "No, no, no, that's not the one I want. You listen and remember this one: Them that understands it, earns it; and them that don't, pays it."

Now it doesn't take a genius to understand that before you can collect interest, you must first have some savings. Having savings while continuing

to increase one's standard of living requires understanding of one simple practice and then religiously applying it. After paying your tithing of 10 percent to the Lord, you pay yourself a predetermined amount directly into savings. That leaves you a balance of your income to budget for taxes, food, clothing, shelter, transportation, etc. It is amazing to me that so many people work all of their lives for the grocer, the landlord, the power company, the automobile salesman, and the bank and yet think so little of their own efforts that they pay themselves nothing.

Be prudent, wise, and conservative in your investment programs. It is by consistently and regularly adding to your investments that you will build your emergency and retirement savings. This will add to your progress in becoming self-reliant.

The principle of self-reliance is spiritual as well as temporal. It is not a doomsday program; it is something to be practiced each and every day of our lives. May we continue to hold fast to the eternal truths of self-reliance is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

SINGLE PARENTS

Even in single-parent families, the family continues on, for families are forever.

—Elder Ben B. Banks

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“To you single mothers and fathers, may I say a special word of appreciation for you. Your burdens are heavy. We know this. Your concerns are deep. There is never enough money. There is never enough time. Do the very best you can and plead with the Lord for His help that your children may grow in grace and understanding and achievement and, most importantly, in faith. If you do so, the day will come when you will get on your knees and, with tears in your eyes, thank the Lord for His blessings upon you” (“A Conversation with Single Adults,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1997, 63).

“Now to you single mothers, whatever the cause of your present situation, our hearts reach out to you. We know that many of you live in loneliness, insecurity, worry, and fear. For most of you there is never enough money. Your constant, brooding worry is anxiety for your children and their futures. Many of you find yourselves in circumstances where you have to work and leave your children largely to their own devices. But if when they are very small there is much of affection, there is shown much of love, there is prayer together, then there will more likely be peace in the hearts and strength in the character of your children. Teach them the ways of the Lord. Declared Isaiah, ‘All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children’ (Isa. 54:13).

“The more surely you rear your children in the ways of the gospel of Jesus Christ, with love and high expectation, the more likely that there will be peace in their lives.

“Set an example for them. That will mean more than all the teaching you can give them. Do not overindulge them. Let them grow up with respect

for and understanding of the meaning of labor, of working and contributing to the home and its surroundings, with some way of earning some of their own expense money. Let your sons save for missions, and encourage them to prepare themselves, not only financially, but spiritually and in an attitude to go out to serve the Lord without selfishness of any kind. I do not hesitate to promise that if you will do so, you will have reason to count your blessings” (“Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 99–100).

“The burdens that fall upon a young woman who alone must rear her child are unbelievably heavy and consuming. . . . The answer is straightforward. It lies in adherence to the principles of the gospel and the teaching of the Church. It lies in self-discipline” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 73; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 53).

“I have spoken on three or four occasions to the women of the Church during the past ten years. I have received in response to these various talks a substantial number of letters. I have kept some of them in a file marked ‘Unhappy Women.’

“. . . I wish to read you a portion of one of them that was received only last week. . . .

“Then came the crash. About a year ago he decided that he never loved me and that our marriage was a mistake from the beginning. He was convinced that there was nothing in our relationship for him. He filed for divorce and moved out. ‘Wait,’ I kept saying. ‘Oh, no. Stop! Don’t do this. Why are you leaving? What is wrong? Please, talk to me. Look at our children. What of all our dreams? Remember our covenants. No, no! Divorce is not the answer.’ He would not hear me. I thought I would die.

“Now I am a single parent. What an enormous load of heartache, pain, and loneliness is behind that statement. It explains so much trauma and so much anger from my teenage sons. It explains so many sleepless nights, so many family demands and needs. Why am I in this mess? What did I choose wrong? How will I ever get through school? How will I get through this week? Where is my husband? Where is the father of my children? I join the ranks of tired women whose husbands leave them. I have no money, no job. I have children to care for, bills to pay, and not much hope.” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 69–70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 50).

“To you who are divorced, please know that we do not look down upon you as failures because a marriage failed. In many, perhaps in most cases, you were not responsible for that failure. Furthermore, ours is the obligation not to condemn, but to forgive and to forget, to lift and to help. In your hours of desolation turn to the Lord, who said: ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . .’

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light’ (Matt. 11:28, 30.)

“The Lord will not deny you nor turn you away. The answers to your prayers may not be dramatic; they may not be readily understood or even appreciated. But the time will come when you will know that you have been blessed. For those of you who have children and struggle to rear them in righteousness, be assured that they will become a blessing and a comfort and a strength to you throughout all the years to come.

“Now to those of you who have lost a companion in death, our hearts go out to you with love and understanding. As a man once observed, ‘There exists no cure for a heart wounded with the sword of separation.’ (Hitopadesa, *Elbert Hubbard’s Scrapbook*, New York City: Wm. H. Wise and Co., 1923, p. 21.)

“With many of you, there is the gnawing pain of bereavement and fear. To you the Lord has said, ‘Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.’ (Matt. 5:4.)

“We know that for many of you, there are days of loneliness and nights of longing. But there is also that which comes from Him who said, ‘I, even I, am he that comforteth you.’ (Isa. 51:12.)

“The Lord is your strength. He is available to you, and, when invited, by His Spirit He will come to you.

“You, too, have great talents to enrich the lives of others. You will find comfort and strength as you lose yourself in their service. Your own troubles will be forgotten as you help others with theirs. Your burdens will become lighter as you lift the burdens of the downtrodden and the oppressed” (“To Single Adults,” *Ensign*, June 1989, 74).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

“Some mothers seem to have the capacity and energy to make their children’s clothes, bake, give piano lessons, go to Relief Society, teach Sunday

School, attend parent-teacher association meetings, and so on. Other mothers look upon such women as models and feel inadequate, depressed, and think they are failures when they make comparisons.

“We should not allow ourselves to be trapped into such damaging inferiority feelings. This is another tool of Satan. Many seem to put too much pressure on themselves to be a ‘supermom’ or ‘superwoman.’

“Sisters, do not allow yourselves to be made to feel inadequate or frustrated because you cannot do everything others seem to be accomplishing. Rather, each should assess her own situation, her own energy, and her own talents, and then choose the best way to mold her family into a team, a unit that works together and supports each other. Only you and your Father in Heaven know your needs, strengths, and desires. Around this knowledge your personal course must be charted and your choices made” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 11; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 9–10).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“President Benson has taught that a mother with children should be in the home. He also said, ‘We realize . . . that some of our choice sisters are widowed and divorced and that others find themselves in unusual circumstances where, out of necessity, they are required to work for a period of time. But these instances are the exception, not the rule’ (Ezra Taft Benson, *To the Mothers in Zion* [pamphlet, 1987], pp. 5–6). You in these unusual circumstances qualify for additional inspiration and strength from the Lord. Those who leave the home for lesser reasons will not” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 42–43; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 34).

Elder Ben B. Banks

“We cannot overemphasize the importance of parenthood and the family. Some Latter-day Saint families are what we refer to as the ‘traditional family,’ consisting of parents and children all together in a permanent relationship, with both mother and father sharing in the responsibility of caring for children. Others have witnessed the loss of one of the parents and become one of the many single-parent families. I am one who grew up in a single-parent home. My father lost his life as a result of a construction accident when I was two years old, leaving my mother with seven children to raise. Even in single-parent families, the family continues

on, for families are forever” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 39; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 29).

Elder J. Richard Clarke

“Now, I realize there are numerous single-parent families in the Church. . . . They are reluctant to impose on others and are frequently offended by insensitive remarks regarding their family status. This is also true of single adults who have yet to marry. They often feel cut off from the mainstream

of Mormon family life. They especially need to be part of a gospel kindred family, where blessings can be obtained from worthy priesthood bearers and role models can be found in quorum brotherhood and Relief Society sisterhood. Families in the ward can reach out and share loving concern. Within the Lord’s design, no one should be ignored. We are all members of the body of Christ” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 75; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 61).

TEMPLE PREPARATION

*Those keys—the keys to
seal and bind on earth, and
have it bound in heaven—
represent the consummate
gift from our God.*

—President Boyd K. Packer

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Temple Worthiness

President Howard W. Hunter

“I also invite the Latter-day Saints to look to the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of your membership. It is the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church worthy to enter the temple. It would please the Lord if every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend. The things that we must do and not do to be worthy of a temple recommend are the very things that ensure we will be happy as individuals and as families” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 8).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“These unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology. I urge our people everywhere, with all of the persuasiveness of which I am capable, to live worthy to hold a temple recommend, to secure one and regard it as a precious asset, and to make a greater effort to go to the house of the Lord and partake of the spirit and the blessings to be had therein. I am satisfied that every man or woman who goes to the temple in a spirit of sincerity and faith leaves the house of the Lord a better man or woman. There is need for constant improvement in all of our lives.

There is need occasionally to leave the noise and the tumult of the world and step within the walls of a sacred house of God, there to feel His spirit in an environment of holiness and peace” (in Conference Report, Sept.–Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53).

Covenants and Obligations

President Joseph Fielding Smith

“If a person violates a covenant, whether it be of baptism, ordination, marriage or anything else, the Spirit withdraws the stamp of approval, and the blessings will not be received” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:45).

Elder James E. Talmage

“The ordinances of the endowment embody certain obligations on the part of the individual, such as covenant and promise to observe the law of strict virtue and chastity, to be charitable, benevolent, tolerant and pure; to devote both talent and material means to the spread of truth and the uplifting of the race; to maintain devotion to the cause of truth; and to seek in every way to contribute to the great preparation that the earth may be made ready to receive her King,—the Lord Jesus Christ. With the taking of each covenant and the assuming of each obligation a promised blessing is pronounced, contingent upon the faithful observance of the conditions” (*House of the Lord*, 84).

Symbolism of the Temple

President Hugh B. Brown

“Here we will not only lay aside the clothing of the street, but the thoughts of the street, and will try not only to clothe our bodies in clean white linen but our minds in purity of thought” (*Continuing the Quest*, 38).

Elder John A. Widtsoe

“We live in a world of symbols. No man or woman can come out of the temple endowed as he should be, unless he has seen, beyond the symbol, the mighty realities for which the symbols stand” (“Temple Worship,” 62).

Purpose of the Endowment

The Prophet Joseph Smith

“You need an endowment, brethren, in order that you may be prepared and able to overcome all things” (*History of the Church*, 2:309).

President Brigham Young

“Let me give you a definition in brief. Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the house of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, . . . and gain your eternal exaltation” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 416).

President Joseph Fielding Smith

“It is a wonderful thing to come into the Church, but you cannot receive an exaltation until you have made covenants in the house of the Lord and received the keys and authorities that are there bestowed and which cannot be given in any other place on the earth today” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:253).

Elder John A. Widtsoe

“The temple endowment relates the story of man’s eternal journey; sets forth the conditions upon which progress in the eternal journey depends; requires covenants or agreements of those participating, to accept and use the laws of progress; gives tests by which our willingness and fitness for righteousness may be known, and finally points out the ultimate destiny of those who love truth and live by it” (*Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 178).

Understanding the Endowment

Elder John A. Widtsoe

“The endowment which was given by revelation can best be understood by revelation; and to those who seek most vigorously, with pure hearts, will the revelation be greatest” (“Temple Worship,” 63).

Elder Harold B. Lee

“When you enter a holy temple, you are by that course gaining fellowship with the Saints in God’s eternal kingdom, where time is no more. In the

temples of your God you are endowed not with a rich legacy of worldly treasure, but with a wealth of eternal riches that are above price.

“The temple ceremonies are designed by a wise Heavenly Father who has revealed them to us in these last days as a guide and a protection throughout our lives, that you and I might not fail to merit exaltation in the celestial kingdom where God and Christ dwell” (“Enter a Holy Temple,” *Improvement Era*, June 1967, 144).

Elder Carlos E. Asay

“A few years ago, in a seminar for new temple presidents and matrons, Elder James E. Faust, then of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, told about his being called to serve as a General Authority. He was asked only one question by President Harold B. Lee: ‘Do you wear the garments properly?’ to which he answered in the affirmative. He then asked if President Lee wasn’t going to ask him about his worthiness. President Lee replied that he didn’t need to, for he had learned from experience that how one wears the garment is the expression of how the individual feels about the Church and everything that relates to it. It is a measure of one’s worthiness and devotion to the gospel.

“There are some who would welcome a detailed dress code answering every conceivable question about the wearing of the temple garment. They would have priesthood leaders legislate lengths, specify conditions of when and how it should and should not be worn, and impose penalties upon those who missed the mark by a fraction of an inch. Such individuals would have Church members strain at a thread and omit the weightier matters of the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Matt. 23:23–26).

“Most Latter-day Saints, however, rejoice over the moral agency extended them by a loving Father in Heaven. They prize highly the trust placed in them by the Lord and Church leaders—a trust implied in this statement made by the Prophet Joseph Smith: ‘I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves.’ [As quoted by John Taylor, *Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1851, 339.]” (“The Temple Garment: ‘An Outward Expression of an Inward Commitment,’” *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 19).

ARRANGEMENTS FOR A TEMPLE MARRIAGE

Latter-day Saints are taught the importance of being married in the temple. There, the marriage of a bride and groom is sealed for eternity.

There are several details that must be attended to before you can be married in the temple. Some have to do with the laws of the Church and some with civil laws of the land. Since temples are located in many different countries, legal requirements differ.

If you are considering marriage in a certain temple, you should contact that temple and request the necessary information. For temple addresses, please ask your bishop. He should have a copy of the “All Temple Schedule” for the current year.

Listed below are some of the arrangements you should consider.

Laws of the Land

Serological Tests

Some areas require you to get blood tests to obtain a marriage license.

Marriage License

If civil law recognizes a temple marriage, you will need a marriage license valid in the civil jurisdiction in which the temple is located.

In the United States and Canada you must take to the temple a legal license that permits you to marry. This license can be obtained in the country or state/province in which the temple is located. In some locations you might have to establish residency before a license can be granted.

Consent

Depending on your age, you may need to have your parents with you to give written consent in order to obtain a marriage license.

Waiting Period

Some governmental entities require a waiting period between the date you apply for your license and the date that you may receive it.

Civil Ceremony Preceding Temple Sealing

Temple marriages in some countries are recognized by the law of the land. Laws in many other countries, however, require persons desiring to be sealed in these temples to be married civilly first.

Church Procedures

Witnesses

Two male members of the Church who have current temple recommends will serve as witnesses to your marriage. You may select your own witnesses, who will sign your marriage papers at the temple, or the temple will provide witnesses.

Temple Marriage Recommend

When going to the temple to receive your endowment or to be sealed in marriage, you must have two recommends: the temple recommend and the recommend for living ordinances. The first part you will use to return to the temple to do work for the dead. The latter part is the recommend for your endowment, marriage, or sealing. It includes information from your membership record, such as your parents’ names, your baptismal date, and your endowment date if you have been endowed previously. It must also indicate that you have come to the temple to be married.

Announcements and Invitations

Do *not* mail announcements or invitations until your temple marriage recommend is obtained to avoid possible embarrassment if the recommend is denied for any reason. Be aware that follow-up interviews may be scheduled as you near the date of your marriage.

Less than a Year

A person may not receive a temple recommend until one full year has passed following baptism and confirmation. If a couple is civilly married and then decides that they wish to be sealed in the temple, they must wait one year from the date of their civil marriage to be sealed. This restriction applies only to those people who could have been married in the temple initially but chose not to do so.

Time and Date

Couples should coordinate their wedding plans with the temple to make certain it will be open on the day and at the time they have chosen. Your bishop will have a schedule.

Endowment and Sealing

Couples who plan to be sealed must first receive their endowments. You can receive your endowment on the day of the sealing or before.

You should plan to spend three to four hours for your own endowment. The sealing, including the counsel given by the person who officiates, will take another forty-five minutes. When you are being endowed or sealed, you should be at the temple one hour before the session or sealing is scheduled.

Temple Clothing

Special white clothing is worn in the temple. You may rent it at the temple or take your own with you.

Wedding Dresses

Brides may wear their wedding dresses in the temple to be sealed. Dresses must be white, without heavy ornamentation, have long sleeves and a modest neckline, have all sheer material lined, and the train must be removable or be able to be pinned or hooked up out of the way. If there is any question about appropriateness, take the dress or fabric and pattern to the temple for approval. Brides may wear their wedding dresses during the endowment session but must remove the trains for the session. They may not wear gowns with long dress pants in the temple. Many temples have beautiful white dresses for those who might need one for their special occasion. Check with individual temples for availability.

Storage of Wedding Dress

Wedding gowns may be delivered to most temples before the sealing. The gowns will be taken to a bride's dressing room and held for you.

Number of Guests

Because the sealing rooms vary in size, you should inform the temple (when you make

reservations) how many guests you expect to attend your sealing. Only persons who have received their own endowment and have current temple recommends may attend the sealing. Most temples are not able to accommodate large groups. Therefore, invitations should be limited to family members and close friends.

Inform Guests of Time and Clothing Requirements

If you are receiving your endowment on your wedding day, you may want some guests to participate in an endowment session with you. Other guests may have time only to attend your sealing. In either case, you must inform these guests when they should arrive at the temple. Double-check this information with the temple.

Guests should be counseled to dress as they would to attend a sacrament meeting. Tuxedos or other formal wear is not appropriate. All guests must have current temple recommends.

Officiator

The temple presidency and other temple sealers are officially set apart to perform temple marriages. Because the General Authorities have heavy schedules, the Church members have been asked not to request them to perform marriages.

Language

Most temples have sessions in multiple languages. Check with the temple president to verify that your endowment and marriage will be in the language of your choice.

Taking Pictures on Temple Grounds

Cameras are not permitted inside the temple. After the sealing, pictures of the bride and groom can be taken on the temple grounds. Therefore, your photographer is not required to have a temple recommend.

Other Information

Each temple will supply you or your bishop with all the necessary information to plan your temple marriage. You can always telephone the temple (ask for the marriage clerk) or write to the temple president if you have questions.

Summary Checklist

Mark when completed:

- Contact temple to be married in and request necessary information. Date _____
- Reserve date and time for your marriage with the temple. Date _____ Time _____
- Make sure the number of invited guests is not larger than the reserved temple room.
- Indicate in your temple reservation the language you wish the ceremony to be conducted in.
- Inform invited guests of the temple's clothing requirements.
- If not already endowed, reserve a date and time for own endowment. Date _____ Time _____
- Invite those you wish to accompany you to be endowed, and inform them of the date and time.
- Obtain blood tests, if necessary.
 - Date _____ N/A _____
 - Marriage license
 - Residency required? Yes ___ No ___
 - Consent required? Yes ___ No ___
 - Waiting period required? Yes ___ No ___
- Civil ceremony required to precede temple sealing? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, date, time, by whom? _____ Arranged _____
- Arrange for witnesses for the temple ceremony.
- Have temple recommend with recommend for endowment and/or marriage. Date _____
- If married civilly, by our own choice, we have waited one year. N/A _____
- Temple garments. If not previously endowed, we have talked with our bishops about the purpose of garments. Date _____ Garments purchased _____
- Wedding dress: white ___ long sleeves ___ modest high neckline ___ sheer materials lined ___
- If desired, I will rent a white dress at the temple. Checked with temple for availability. N/A _____

THE HOLY TEMPLE



President Boyd K. Packer

*Acting President
of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

*Ensign, Feb. 1995,
32–36*

There are many reasons one should want to come to the temple. Even its external appearance seems to hint of its deeply spiritual purposes. This is much more evident within its walls. Over the door to the temple appears the tribute, “Holiness to the Lord.” When you enter any dedicated temple, you are in the house of the Lord.

In the temples, members of the Church who make themselves eligible can participate in the most exalted of the redeeming ordinances that have been revealed to mankind. There, in a sacred ceremony, an individual may be washed and anointed and instructed and endowed and sealed. And when we have received these blessings for ourselves, we may officiate for those who have died without having had the same opportunity. In the temples sacred ordinances are performed for the living and for the dead alike.

These Things Are Sacred

A careful reading of the scriptures reveals that the Lord did not tell all things to all people. There were some qualifications set that were prerequisite to receiving sacred information. Temple ceremonies fall within this category.

We do not discuss the temple ordinances outside the temples. It was never intended that knowledge of these temple ceremonies would be limited to a select few who would be obliged to ensure that others never learn of them. It is quite the opposite, in fact. With great effort we urge every soul to qualify and prepare for the temple experience. Those who have been to the temple have been taught an ideal: Someday every living soul and every soul who has ever lived shall have the opportunity to hear the gospel and to accept or reject what the temple offers. If this opportunity is rejected, the rejection must be on the part of the individual himself.

The ordinances and ceremonies of the temple are simple. They are beautiful. They are sacred. They

are kept confidential lest they be given to those who are unprepared. Curiosity is not a preparation. Deep interest itself is not a preparation. Preparation for the ordinances includes preliminary steps: faith, repentance, baptism, confirmation, worthiness, a maturity and dignity worthy of one who comes invited as a guest into the house of the Lord.

All who are worthy and qualify in every way may enter the temple, there to be introduced to the sacred rites and ordinances.

Worthy to Enter

Once you have some feeling for the value of temple blessings and for the sacredness of the ordinances performed in the temple, you would be hesitant to question the high standards set by the Lord for entrance into the holy temple.

You must possess a current recommend to be admitted to the temple. This recommend must be signed by the proper officers of the Church. Only those who are worthy should go to the temple. Your local bishop or branch president has the responsibility of making inquiries into your personal worthiness. This interview is of great importance, for it is an occasion to explore with an ordained servant of the Lord the pattern of your life. If anything is amiss in your life, the bishop will be able to help you resolve it. Through this procedure, as you counsel with the common judge in Israel, you can declare or can be helped to establish your worthiness to enter the temple with the Lord's approval.

The interview for a temple recommend is conducted privately between the bishop and the Church member concerned. Here the member is asked searching questions about his personal conduct and worthiness and about his loyalty to the Church and its officers. The person must certify that he is morally clean and is keeping the Word of Wisdom, paying a full tithe, living in harmony with the teachings of the Church, and not maintaining any affiliation or sympathy with apostate groups. The bishop is instructed that confidentiality in handling these matters with each interviewee is of the utmost importance.

Acceptable answers to the bishop's questions will ordinarily establish the worthiness of an individual to receive a temple recommend. If an applicant is not keeping the commandments or there is something

unsettled about his life that needs putting in order, it will be necessary for him to demonstrate true repentance before a temple recommend is issued.

After the bishop has conducted such an interview, a member of the stake presidency likewise interviews each of us before we go to the temple.

Taught from on High

Before going to the temple for the first time, or even after many times, it may help you to realize that the teaching in the temples is done in symbolic fashion. The Lord, the Master Teacher, gave much of His instruction in this way.

The temple is a great school. It is a house of learning. In the temples the atmosphere is maintained so that it is ideal for instruction on matters that are deeply spiritual. The late Elder John A. Widtsoe of the

Quorum of the Twelve was a distinguished university president and a world renowned scholar. He had great reverence for temple work and said on one occasion:

"The temple ordinances encompass the whole plan of salvation, as taught from time to time by the leaders of the Church, and elucidate matters difficult of understanding. There is no warping or twisting in fitting the temple teachings into the great scheme of salvation. The philosophical completeness of the endowment is one of the great arguments for the veracity of the temple ordinances. Moreover, this completeness of survey and expounding of the Gospel plan, makes temple worship one of the most effective methods in refreshing the memory concerning the whole structure of the Gospel" (*Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, p. 58).

If you will go to the temple and remember that the teaching is symbolic, you will never go in the proper spirit without coming away with your vision extended, feeling a little more exalted, with your knowledge increased as to things that are spiritual. The teaching plan is superb. It is inspired. The Lord Himself, the Master Teacher, taught His disciples constantly in parables—a verbal way to represent symbolically things that might otherwise be difficult to understand.

The temple is a great school. It is a house of learning.

The temple itself becomes a symbol. If you have seen one of the temples at night, fully lighted, you know what an impressive sight that can be. The house of the Lord, bathed in light, standing out in the darkness, becomes symbolic of the power and the inspiration of the gospel of Jesus Christ standing as a beacon in a world that sinks ever further into spiritual darkness.

Upon entering the temple you exchange your street clothing for the white clothing of the temple. This change of clothing takes place in the locker room, where each individual is provided with a locker and dressing space that is completely private. In the temple the ideal of modesty is carefully maintained. As you put your clothing in the locker you leave your cares and concerns and distractions there with them. You step out of this private little dressing area dressed in white and you feel a oneness and a sense of equality, for all around you are similarly dressed.

The Power to Seal

For those of you who look forward to a temple marriage, you may want to know what will occur. We do not quote the words of the sealing (marriage) ordinance outside of the temple, but we may describe the sealing room as being beautiful in its appointment, quiet and serene in spirit, and hallowed by the sacred work that is performed there.

Before the couple comes to the altar for the sealing ordinance it is the privilege of the officiator to extend, and of the young couple to receive, some counsel. These are among the thoughts that a young couple might hear on this occasion.

“Today is your wedding day. You are caught up in the emotion of your marriage. Temples were built as a sanctuary for such ordinances as this. We are not in the world. The things of the world do not apply here and should have no influence upon what we do here. We have come out of the world into the temple of the Lord. This becomes the most important day of your lives.

“You were born, invited to earth, by parents who prepared a mortal tabernacle for your spirit to inhabit. Each of you has been baptized. Baptism, a sacred ordinance, is symbolic of a cleansing, symbolic of death and resurrection, symbolic of coming forward in a newness of life. It contemplates repentance and a remission of sins. The sacrament

of the Lord’s Supper is a renewal of the covenant of baptism, and we can, if we live for it, retain a remission of our sins.

“You, the groom, were ordained to the priesthood. You had first conferred upon you the Aaronic Priesthood and probably have progressed through all the offices thereof—deacon, teacher, and priest. Then the day came when you were found worthy to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. That priesthood, the higher priesthood, is defined as the priesthood after the holiest order of God, or the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God (see Alma 13:18; Hel. 8:18; D&C 107:2–4). You were given an office in the priesthood. You are now an elder.

“Each of you has received your endowment. In that endowment you received an investment of eternal potential. But all of these things, in one sense, were preliminary and preparatory to your coming to the altar to be sealed as husband and wife for time and for all eternity. You now become a family, free to act in the creation of life, to have the opportunity through devotion and sacrifice to bring children into the world and to raise them and foster them safely through their mortal existence; to see them come one day, as you have come, to participate in these sacred temple ordinances.

“You come willingly and have been judged to be worthy. To accept one another in the marriage covenant is a great responsibility, one that carries with it blessings without measure.”

If we would understand both the history and the doctrine of temple work, we must understand what the sealing power is. We must envision, at least to a degree, why the *keys* of authority to employ the sealing power are crucial—crucial not just to the ordinance work of the temples but to all ordinance work in all the Church throughout the world.

The sealing power represents the transcendent delegation of spiritual authority from God to man. The keeper of that sealing power is the Lord’s chief representative here upon the earth, the President of the Church. That is the position of consummate trust and authority.

As has been said, much of the teaching relating to the deeper spiritual things in the Church, particularly in the temple, is symbolic. We use the word *keys* in a symbolic way. Here the keys of priesthood authority represent the limits of the power extended

from beyond the veil to mortal man to act in the name of God upon the earth. The words *seal* and *keys* and *priesthood* are closely linked together.

The keys of the sealing power are synonymous with the keys of the everlasting priesthood. “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? . . .

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

“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.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

“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. 16:13–19).

Peter was to hold the keys. Peter was to hold the sealing power, that authority which carried the power to bind or seal on earth or to loose on earth and it would be so in the heavens. Those keys belong to the President of the Church—to the prophet, seer, and revelator. That sacred sealing power is with the Church now. Nothing is regarded with more sacred contemplation by those who know the significance of this authority. Nothing is more closely held. There are relatively few men who have been delegated this sealing power upon the earth at any given time—in each temple are brethren who have been given the sealing power. No one can get it except from the prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

A clear statement follows regarding the sealing power as binding on all that we do for the living and the dead.

“Whenever the fulness of the gospel is on earth, the Lord has agents to whom he gives power to bind on earth and seal eternally in the heavens (Matt. 16:19; 18:18; Hel. 10:3–10; D&C 132:46–49.) . . .

“All things that are not sealed by this power have an end when men are dead. Unless a baptism has this enduring seal, it will not admit a person to the

celestial kingdom; unless an eternal marriage covenant is sealed by this authority, it will not take the participating parties to an exaltation in the highest heaven within the celestial world.

“All things gain enduring force and validity because of the sealing power. So comprehensive is this power that it embraces ordinances performed for the living and the dead, seals the children on earth up to their fathers who went before, and forms the enduring patriarchal chain that will exist eternally among exalted beings” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed., Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, p. 683).

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, we can endow and seal, and the Lord will honor our commitments.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said he was frequently asked the question, “‘Can we not be saved without going through with all those ordinances, etc?’ I would answer, No, not the fullness of salvation. Jesus said, ‘There are many mansions in my Father’s house, and I will go and prepare a place for you.’ *House* here named should have been translated kingdom; and any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law, and the whole law too” (*History of the Church*, 6:184).

Not without Opposition

Temples are the very center of the spiritual strength of the Church. We should expect that the adversary will try to interfere with us as a church and with us individually as we seek to participate in this sacred and inspired work. Temple work brings so much resistance because it is the source of so much spiritual power to the Latter-day Saints and to the entire Church.

At the Logan Temple cornerstone dedication, President George Q. Cannon made this statement:

“Every foundation stone that is laid for a Temple, and every Temple completed according to the order the Lord has revealed for his holy Priesthood, lessens the power of Satan on the earth, and increases the

power of God and Godliness, moves the heavens in mighty power in our behalf, invokes and calls down upon us the blessings of the Eternal Gods, and those who reside in their presence" (*Millennial Star*, 12 Nov. 1877, p. 743).

When members of the Church are troubled or when crucial decisions weigh heavily upon their minds, it is a common thing for them to go to the temple. It is a good place to take our cares. In the temple we can receive spiritual perspective. There, during the time of the temple service, we are "out of the world."

Sometimes our minds are so beset with problems, and there are so many things clamoring for attention at once that we just cannot think clearly and see clearly. At the temple the dust of distraction seems to settle out, the fog and the haze seem to lift, and we can "see" things that we were not able to see before and find a way through our troubles that we had not previously known.

The Lord will bless us as we attend to the sacred ordinance work of the temples. Blessings there will not be limited to our temple service. We will be blessed in all of our affairs.

Come to the Temple

No work is more of a protection to this church than temple work and the genealogical research that supports it. No work is more spiritually refining. No work we do gives us more power. No work requires a higher standard of righteousness.

Our labors in the temple cover us with a shield and a protection, both individually and as a people.

So come to the temple—come and claim your blessings. It is a sacred work.

The Lord will bless us as we attend to the sacred ordinance work of the temples.

THE TEMPLE GARMENT: "AN OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF AN INWARD COMMITMENT"



Elder Carlos E. Asay

*Emeritus Member
of the First Quorum
of the Seventy*

*Ensign, Aug. 1997,
18–23*

A few years ago, in a seminar for new temple presidents and matrons, Elder James E. Faust, then of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, told about his being called to serve as a General Authority. He was asked only one question by President Harold B.

Lee: "Do you wear the garments properly?" to which he answered in the affirmative. He then asked if President Lee wasn't going to ask him about his worthiness. President Lee replied that he didn't need to, for he had learned from experience that how one wears the garment is the expression of how the individual feels about the Church and everything that relates to it. It is a measure of one's worthiness and devotion to the gospel.

There are some who would welcome a detailed dress code answering every conceivable question about the wearing of the temple garment. They would have priesthood leaders legislate lengths, specify conditions of when and how it should and should not be worn, and impose penalties upon those who missed the mark by a fraction of an inch. Such individuals would have Church members strain at a thread and omit the weightier matters of the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Matt. 23:23–26).

Most Latter-day Saints, however, rejoice over the moral agency extended them by a loving Father in Heaven. They prize highly the trust placed in them by the Lord and Church leaders—a trust implied in this statement made by the Prophet Joseph Smith: "I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves."¹

Samuel the Lamanite declared:

“And now remember, remember, my brethren, that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free.

“He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil, and he hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death; and ye can do good and be restored unto that which is good, or have that which is good restored unto you; or ye can do evil, and have that which is evil restored unto you” (Hel. 14:30–31).

I believe there is a critical body of knowledge relating to the temple garment. When that knowledge is obtained, Latter-day Saints filled with faith wear the garment and wear it properly, not because someone is policing their actions but because they understand the virtues of the sacred clothing and want to “do good and be restored unto that which is good.” On the other hand, when one does not understand the sacred nature of the temple garment, the tendency is to treat it casually and regard it as just another piece of cloth.

The critical body of knowledge associated with the garment of the holy priesthood may be categorized under three headings: Armor of God, Historical Background, and Teachings of Modern Prophets. I shall present some information pertaining to each of these headings, hoping that the thoughts shared will provoke a greater appreciation of the garment and stir a greater resolve in the minds of Saints to wear it willfully and properly.

Armor of God

We are at war! Our enemy is not an invading army from a bordering nation or a navy of some overseas power. Bullets are not whizzing above our heads, nor are bombs exploding in and around our homes. Nevertheless, we are engaged in a life-and-death struggle with forces capable of thrashing us inside out and sending us down into the depths of spiritual defeat if we are not vigilant.

I refer, of course, to the “wrestle” against principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness in high places spoken of by the Apostle Paul (see Eph. 6:12). I refer to the onslaught of immorality, crime, substance abuse, and other insidious influences threatening our society. Such threatening influences, along with other imminent dangers, constitute “the wiles of the devil” (Eph.

6:11) against which we must stand in these “perilous times” (2 Tim. 3:1).

Paul counseled: “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” (Eph. 6:13). With his prophetic powers, Paul could foresee the wicked conditions that would exist on the earth in our modern day. Therefore, he urged all Saints to have their “loins girt about with truth” (Eph. 6:14), to put on “the breastplate of righteousness” (v. 14), to have their feet shod “with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (v. 15), to grasp “the shield of faith” (v. 16), to place on their heads “the helmet of salvation” (v. 17), to take “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (v. 17), and to pray always (see v. 18) so that they might be preserved. He knew that armor made of truth, righteousness, faith, spirit, and prayer would protect people from the “fiery darts” (v. 16) crafted and thrown by Satan and his henchmen.

There is, however, another piece of armor worthy of our consideration. It is the special underclothing known as the temple garment, or garment of the holy priesthood, worn by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who have received their temple endowment. This garment, worn day and night, serves three important purposes: it is a reminder of the sacred covenants made with the Lord in His holy house, a protective covering for the body, and a symbol of the modesty of dress and living that should characterize the lives of all the humble followers of Christ.

It is written that “the white garment symbolizes purity and helps assure modesty, respect for the attributes of God, and, to the degree it is honored, a token of what Paul regarded as taking upon one the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:13; cf. D&C 27:15). . . . Garments bear several simple marks of orientation toward the gospel principles of obedience, truth, life, and discipleship in Christ.”²

Much, much more could be said about the war for the souls of men and the whole armor of God. The war on the earth began in the days of Adam, continued down through the years with Moses and the children of Israel, and still rages in a dispensation known as the fulness of times—a dispensation ushered in by the revelations received through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Hence, the issue of protective coverings enabling us to withstand the fiery darts of Satan will continue to be of great significance.

We must put on the armor of God spoken of by the Apostle Paul and reiterated in a modern revelation (see D&C 27:15–18). We must also “put on the armor of righteousness” (2 Ne. 1:23) symbolized by the temple garment. Otherwise, we may lose the war and perish.

The heavy armor worn by soldiers of a former day, including helmets, shields, and breastplates, determined the outcome of some battles. However, the real battles of life in our modern day will be won by those who are clad in a spiritual armor—an armor consisting of faith in God, faith in self, faith in one’s cause, and faith in one’s leaders. The piece of armor called the temple garment not only provides the comfort and warmth of a cloth covering, it also strengthens the wearer to resist temptation, fend off evil influences, and stand firmly for the right.

Historical Background

It should be understood that “the things of the Lord” (2 Ne. 4:16) have included sacred clothing from the very beginning of this world. The scriptures contain many references to the wearing of special garments by the ancients. Prior to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were clad in sacred clothing. We read: “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21).

They received this clothing in a context of instruction on the Atonement, sacrifice, repentance, and forgiveness (see Moses 5:5–8). The temple garment given to Latter-day Saints is provided in a similar context. It is given to remind wearers of the continuing need for repentance, the need to honor binding covenants made in the house of the Lord, and the need to cherish and share virtue in our daily living so that promised blessings may be claimed.

Moses was commanded to place holy garments and priestly vestments upon Aaron and others, thus preparing them to officiate in the tabernacle. Said the Lord to Moses, “And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel . . . and thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty . . . that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office” (Ex. 28:1–3).

References to Aaron’s clothing and the vestments of the priesthood worn by selected leaders in Old Testament times are accompanied by expressions such as “precious garments,” “glorious garments,”

“garments of honor,” “coats of glory,” and “garments of salvation.”³ These expressions may apply more particularly to the raiment worn by those who officiated in tabernacle or temple rites; nevertheless, these descriptive words also apply to the sacred clothing worn on a daily basis by those “who call themselves by [God’s] name and are essaying to [become] saints” (D&C 125:2). The honor, glory, and precious nature of sacred garments, whether worn only in the temple or in everyday life under street clothes, transcends the material of which they are made. Their full worth and beauty is appreciated and regarded as precious or glorious when viewed through the “eye of faith” (Alma 5:15).

“The garment is inadequate without the thing that it signifies. . . . It won’t protect you unless you’re true and faithful to your covenant, and only to the degree to which you don’t dishonor your garment has it any significance at all. Only on that condition that you don’t dishonor it, that you’re pure, that you are true and faithful to your covenant—does the garment have any benefit,” wrote Hugh Nibley, an emeritus professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.⁴

Yes, garments have been worn by prophets and other righteous Saints throughout the ages, whenever the ordinances of the priesthood and the temple have been available to the children of men. When the Church was restored to the earth in our day, the sacred priesthood ordinances associated with the holy temple were revealed anew to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The revelations he received included instructions about the garment.

Many references are found in the scriptures relating to garments and clothing. Enoch declared: “I beheld the heavens open, and I was clothed with glory” (Moses 7:3). Jacob spoke of a day of judgment when “we shall have a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness; and the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness” (2 Ne. 9:14). Isaiah rejoiced, saying, “God . . . hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10). Alma referred to “all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white” (Alma 5:24). These and other prophetic statements suggest not only a cleanliness and purity within one’s soul, but also a spotless covering over

one's soul, signifying a life of goodness and devotion to God.

Teachings of Modern Prophets

I fear that too many Church members take for granted the promise of protection and blessings associated with the temple garment. Some wear it improperly, and others remove it to suit whims of circumstance. In such cases, the instructions of modern prophets, seers, and revelators are ignored and spiritual protection placed in jeopardy.

In a letter from the First Presidency dated 3 July 1974, Church members were reminded of the sacred nature of the garment: "The sacredness of the garment should be ever present and uppermost in the wearer's mind; . . . the blessings which flow from the observance of our covenants are sufficiently great to recompense for any mere inconvenience. To break our covenants is to forfeit the protection and blessings promised for obedience to them."⁵

And in a letter to priesthood leaders dated 10 October 1988, the First Presidency made the following important statements regarding how the garment should be worn: "Church members who have been clothed with the garment in the temple have made a covenant to wear it throughout their lives. This has been interpreted to mean that it is worn as underclothing both day and night. This sacred covenant is between the member and the Lord. Members should seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to answer for themselves any personal questions about the wearing of the garment. . . . The promise of protection and blessings is conditioned upon worthiness and faithfulness in keeping the covenant.

"The fundamental principle ought to be to wear the garment and not to find occasions to remove it. Thus, members should not remove either all or part of the garment to work in the yard or to lounge around the home in swimwear or immodest clothing. Nor should they remove it to participate in recreational activities that can reasonably be done with the garment worn properly beneath regular clothing. When the garment must be removed, such as for swimming, it should be restored as soon as possible.

"The principles of modesty and keeping the body appropriately covered are implicit in the covenant and should govern the nature of all clothing worn. Endowed members of the Church wear the garment

as a reminder of the sacred covenants they have made with the Lord and also as a protection against temptation and evil. *How it is worn is an outward expression of an inward commitment to follow the Savior.*"⁶

President Joseph F. Smith had strong feelings about the proper wearing of the garment. Said he: "The Lord has given unto us garments of the holy priesthood, and you know what that means. And yet there are those of us who mutilate them, in order that we may follow the foolish, vain and (permit me to say) indecent practices of the world. In order that such persons may imitate the fashions, they will not hesitate to mutilate that which should be held by them the most sacred of all things in the world, next to their own virtue, next to their own purity of life. They should hold these things that God has given unto them sacred, unchanged and unaltered from the very pattern in which God gave them. Let us have the moral courage to stand against the opinions of fashion, and especially where fashion compels us to break a covenant and so commit a grievous sin."⁷

In his book, *The Holy Temple*, Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained succinctly why it is so important to wear the garment properly.

"The garment represents sacred covenants. It fosters modesty and becomes a shield and protection to the wearer.

"The wearing of such a garment does not prevent members from dressing in the fashionable clothing generally worn in nations of the world. Only clothing that is immodest or extreme in style would be incompatible with wearing the garment."⁸

What more needs to be said about the garment and the way it is to be worn and treated? The principles are stated clearly, and it is left to the wearers and their consciences to live accordingly. People of faith need not be commanded in all things for they do not endeavor to excuse themselves in the least point or over the absence of a Mosaic code of conduct. But rather, they govern their dress and behavior as God and his prophets have decreed, allowing the justice, mercy, and long-suffering of God to have full sway in their hearts (see Alma 42:29–31).

A Reminder We Carry

I like to think of the garment as the Lord's way of letting us take part of the temple with us when we

leave. It is true that we carry from the Lord's house inspired teachings and sacred covenants written in our minds and hearts. However, the one tangible remembrance we carry with us back into the world is the garment. And though we cannot always be in the temple, a part of it can always be with us to bless our lives.

Don't forget that the word *garment* is used symbolically in the scriptures and gives expanded meaning to other words such as *white, clean, pure, righteous, modesty, covering, ceremonial, holy, priesthood, beautiful, perfection, salvation, undefiled, worthy, white raiment, shield, protection, spotless, blameless, armor, covenants, promises, blessings, respect, eternal life*, and so forth. All of these words occupy special places in the vocabularies of people sincerely essaying to become Saints.

Of one choice group of believers, it is written, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Rev. 3:4–5).

How wonderful it would be if all Church members walked with God in white and were numbered with the Saints in Sardis!

Remember always that our very salvation depends, symbolically, upon the condition of our garments. The prophet Alma told the members of the Church in his day that they could not be saved unless their garments were symbolically washed, cleansed, and made white through the blood of Jesus Christ. He taught:

"No man [can] be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be purified

until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins. . . .

"Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins?" (Alma 5:21, 27).

It is my prayer that our garments will be cleansed through the blood of Christ and that we will reaffirm in our minds and hearts the declaration "Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness, . . . and put on her beautiful garments" (D&C 82:14).

Notes

1. As quoted by John Taylor, *Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1851, 339.
2. Evelyn T. Marshall, "Garments," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. (1992), 2:534; emphasis added.
3. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:534.
4. "Sacred Vestments: A Preliminary Report," Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (1986), 13.
5. First Presidency Letter, 3 July 1974.
6. First Presidency Letter, 10 Oct. 1988; emphasis added.
7. *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1906, 813.
8. *The Holy Temple* (1980), 75.

TEMPORAL PREPAREDNESS

The principle of self-reliance stands behind the Church's emphasis on personal and family preparedness.

—President Spencer W. Kimball

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Spencer W. Kimball

"I like the way the Relief Society teaches personal and family preparedness as 'provident living.' This implies the husbanding of our resources, the wise planning of financial matters, full provision for personal health, and adequate preparation for education and career development, giving appropriate attention to home production and storage as well as the development of emotional resiliency" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 125; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 78).

Elder L. Tom Perry

"On a daily basis we witness widely fluctuating inflation; wars; interpersonal conflicts; national disasters; variances in weather conditions; innumerable forces of immorality, crime, and violence; attacks and pressures on the family and individuals; technological advances that make occupations obsolete; and so on. The need for preparation is abundantly clear. The great blessing of being prepared gives us freedom from fear, as guaranteed to us by the Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants: 'If ye are prepared ye shall not fear' (D&C 38:30).

"Just as it is important to prepare ourselves spiritually, we must also prepare ourselves for our temporal needs. Each of us needs to take the time to ask ourselves, What preparation should I make to care for my needs and the needs of my family?"

"We have been instructed for years to follow at least four requirements in preparing for that which is to come.

"First, gain an adequate education. . . .

"Second, live strictly within your income and save something for a rainy day. . . .

"Third, avoid excessive debt. . . .

"Fourth, acquire and store a reserve of food and supplies that will sustain life" (in Conference Report, Sept.–Oct. 1995, 46–47; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 35–36).

Health

President Spencer W. Kimball

"We teach our people to live the laws of health. It is paying important dividends in longer and more healthy lives" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 6; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 6).

"The principle of self-reliance stands behind the Church's emphasis on personal and family preparedness. . . . We hope that you are conscious of proper diet and health habits, that you may be fit physically and able to respond to the many challenges of life" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 120–21; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 79–80).

"We refrain from taking harmful substances into our body. Through wisdom and moderation in all things, we seek good health and a sense of physical well-being" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1978, 7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 6).

Employment and Finances

President Gordon B. Hinckley

"I urge you, brethren, to look to the condition of your finances. I urge you to be modest in your expenditures; discipline yourselves in your purchases to avoid debt to the extent possible. Pay off debt as quickly as you can, and free yourselves from bondage.

"This is a part of the temporal gospel in which we believe. May the Lord bless you, my beloved brethren, to set your houses in order. If you have paid your debts, if you have a reserve, even though it be small, then should storms howl about your head, you will have shelter for your wives and children and peace in your hearts" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 69–72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 52–54).

Elder Howard W. Hunter

“May we refer specifically to vocational work or employment. The employment we choose should be honorable and challenging. Ideally, we need to seek that work to which we are suited by interest, by aptitude, and by training. A man’s work should do more than provide adequate income; it should provide him with a sense of self-worth and be a pleasure—something he looks forward to each day. . . .

“There are impelling reasons for our sisters to plan toward employment also. We want them to obtain all the education and vocational training possible before marriage. If they become widowed or divorced and need to work, we want them to have dignified and rewarding employment. If a sister does not marry, she has every right to engage in a profession that allows her to magnify her talents and gifts” (“Prepare for Honorable Employment,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 122, 124).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“Do not ever belittle anyone, including yourself, nor count them, or you, a failure, if your livelihood has been modest. Do not ever look down on those who labor in occupations of lower income. There is great dignity and worth in any honest occupation. Do not use the word *menial* for any labor that improves the world or the people who live in it” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 121; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 84).

Elder M. Russell Ballard

“Brothers and sisters, what can we do to improve our family finances? May I suggest three important keys that will help us. They are *attitude*, *planning*, and *self-discipline*.

“The first key is to have a positive attitude toward ourselves.

“Attitude is an important part of the foundation upon which we build a productive life. In appraising our present attitude, we might ask: ‘Am I working to become my best self? Do I set worthy and attainable goals? Do I look toward the positive in life? Am I alert to ways that I can render more and better service? Am I doing more than is required of me?’ . . .

“Some people who lived through the Great Depression and the period following, when the government bestowed gratuities upon the people, developed a feeling that the world owed them a living. In that climate, the First Presidency said in 1936: ‘The aim of

the Church is to help the people to help themselves. Work is to be re-enthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership.’ (In Conference Report, Oct. 1936, p. 3.) . . .

“The love for work needs to be reenthroned in our lives. Every family should have a plan for work that touches the lives of each family member so that this eternal principle will be ingrained in their lives. . . .

“Brothers and sisters, let us discuss the second key, *planning*, which means to think out beforehand how we intend to reach our goals in life. Do we all have a plan to increase our value where we are employed? Have we taken the time to write down specific goals, and have we designed a plan of action to become more effective and productive? . . .

“The third key is to practice *self-discipline* both at our work and as we attempt to reduce our expenses in our homes. Regarding the latter, Church leaders should set the example by seeing that stake and ward financial requests are kept to a minimum. Members should—

“1. Avoid debt-pooling where exorbitant fees are charged. We may want to consolidate debts using a bank or credit union loan that can be repaid at a sensible interest rate over a reasonable length of time. We may need to stop using our credit cards.

“2. Exercise self-discipline by telling ourselves ‘We can’t afford it’ and refusing to take on further credit obligations.

“An argument was overheard one day. One spouse said, while scolding the other for extravagant spending, ‘How many times do I have to tell you that spending money before you get it is economically unsound?’

“‘Oh,’ said the other spouse, ‘I don’t know about that. This way, if you don’t get the money, at least you have something to show for it.’

“Please be patient and carefully control your purchases so that you will not become enslaved to your creditors.

“3. Make a budget and stick to it.

“4. Cut expenses by distinguishing between wants and needs. Economize by controlling the use of goods, services, and energy.

“5. Increase homemaking skills and have family members complete home and car repairs, when feasible.

“6. Invest wisely. Avoid speculations and get-rich-quick schemes.

“Brothers and sisters, every one of us has the potential to improve and increase his earning capacity. We are far better off if we can improve and become more valuable on our full-time jobs than if we attempt to hold two jobs or to have mothers leave home to join the work force.

“When we learn to expect more success than failure in life, we soon will develop an attitude of success.

“‘Nothing succeeds like success.’

“Remember—a positive attitude, a well-thought-out plan, and consistent self-discipline can help us improve our circumstances. Applying these keys in our daily work will help produce more income, and practicing them in our homes will help reduce expenses. When we combine these principles with keeping the commandments of God, we can learn to become better managers of our time and resources and become financially secure” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 115–18; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 85–87).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

“The foundation of self-reliance is hard work. Parents should teach their children that work is the prerequisite to achievement and success in every

worthwhile endeavor. Children of legal age should secure productive employment and begin to move away from dependence on parents. None of us should expect others to provide for us that which we can provide for ourselves” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 16).

Home Storage and Production

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Recognizing that the family is the basic unit of both the Church and society generally, we call upon Latter-day Saints everywhere to strengthen and beautify the home with renewed effort in these specific areas: food production, preservation, storage; the production and storage of nonfood items” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 170; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 124).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“I ask you earnestly, have you provided for your family a year’s supply of food, clothing, and, where possible, fuel? The revelation to produce and store food may be as essential to our temporal welfare today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 49; *To the Fathers in Israel*, 4).

TEMPTATIONS OF SATAN AND THE NATURAL MAN

*We cannot “come off conqueror,”
except we first “put off” the
selfish, natural man!*

—Elder Neal A. Maxwell

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Brigham Young

“Many think that the Devil has rule and power over both body and spirit. Now, I want to tell you that he does not hold any power over man, only so far as the body overcomes the spirit that is in a man, through yielding to the spirit of evil. The spirit that the Lord puts into a tabernacle of flesh, is under the dictation of the Lord Almighty; but the spirit and body are united in order that the spirit may have a tabernacle, and be exalted; and the spirit is influenced by the body, and the body by the spirit.

“In the first place the spirit is pure, and under the special control and influence of the Lord, but the body is of the earth, and is subject to the power of the Devil, and is under the mighty influence of that fallen nature that is of the earth. If the spirit yields to the body, the Devil then has power to overcome the body and spirit of that man, and he loses both” (in *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 69–70).

“We are the natural sons and daughters of our natural parents, and spiritually we are the natural children of the Father of light and natural heirs to his kingdom; and when we do an evil, we do it in opposition to the promptings of the Spirit of Truth that is within us. Man, the noblest work of God, was in his creation designed for an endless duration, for which the love of all good was incorporated in his nature. It was never designed that he should naturally do and love evil” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:305).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

“Satan is very much a personal, individual spirit being, but without a mortal body. His desires to seal each of us his are no less ardent in wickedness than our Father’s are in righteousness to attract us to his own eternal kingdom” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, 21).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

“Many things happened in the process of the Fall, including changes that came to the physical bodies of Adam and Eve. For one thing, they fell into ‘nature.’ . . .

“Part of the natural world Adam and Eve entered included the addition to their bodies of blood—a corruptible ingredient—in what had been to that point an uncorrupted body of bloodless flesh and bone. But even more important than such physical changes were the temptations of and threats to the spirit. Spiritual as well as physical separation from God came with the Fall. Humankind was cut off from the immediate personal companionship with God that Adam and Eve had enjoyed in the garden of Eden. As a result, they were distanced from the Holy Spirit and became less responsive to many of the things of righteousness. . . .

“Because this doctrine [of the natural man] is so basic to the plan of salvation and also because it is so susceptible to misunderstanding, we must note that these references to ‘natural’ evil emphatically do *not* mean that men and women are ‘inherently’ evil. There is a crucial difference. As spiritual sons and daughters of God, all mortal men and women are divine in origin and divine in their potential destiny. As Doctrine and Covenants 93:38–39 teaches, the spirit of every man, woman, and child ‘was innocent in the beginning.’ But it is also true that as a result of the Fall they are now in a ‘natural’ (fallen) world where the devil ‘taketh away light’ and where some elements of nature—including temporal human nature—need discipline, restraint, and refinement. It is as if men and women are given, as part of their next step in development along the path to godhood, raw physical and spiritual ingredients—‘natural’ resources, if you will. Those resources are not to run rampant but are to be harnessed and focused so that their power and potential (as is sometimes done with a ‘natural’ river or a ‘natural’ waterfall) can be channeled and thereby made even more productive and beneficial.

“Natural man, with all of his new and wonderful but as yet unbridled and unregenerated potential, must be made ‘submissive’ to the Holy Spirit, a spirit that still entices and lifts us upward. . . . Our deepest desires, our premortal yearnings, are still divine in their origins, and they are still deep in our souls. The echoes of our earlier innocence still reverberate, and the light that forsakes the evil one still shines. Our hearts can—and in their purity, do—desire that which is spiritual and holy rather than that which is ‘carnal, sensual, and devilish.’ If that were not so, we would be in a hopeless condition indeed, and the idea of real choice would be jeopardized forever. We praise God our Father that our true heritage is of him and that by yielding and submitting to his eternal influence we can overcome the enmity which separated us from him and turn those gifts from nature to our blessing rather than our cursing” (*Christ and the New Covenant*, 205–7).

Elder Merrill J. Bateman

“The scriptures state that men and women are created in the image of God (see Genesis 1:26–27, Abraham 4:27–28). Both women and men have within them the attributes of divinity, and both are blessed as they fulfill their divine callings. The apostle Peter and King Benjamin indicate that we partake of the divine nature through Christ’s atonement aided by the Holy Ghost (see 2 Peter 1:3–8, Mosiah 3:19). It is interesting to observe the similarity of the fruits of the Spirit to the divine seeds inherited from Heavenly Parents (see Galatians 5:21–22, 2 Peter 1:3–8). Since ‘light cleaveth unto light’ and Spirit to spirit, the Holy Ghost is able to quicken us by a portion of light that causes the divine seeds within to bud and to flower (D&C 88:29, 40). The degree of light and the extent to which the attributes flourish is a function of how well women and men bridle their passions and are obedient to divine principles” (“The Eternal Family,” 112–13).

Elder J. Richard Clarke

“Throughout the ages, evil forces have attacked the family. Why do you suppose Satan is so obsessed with its dissolution? Because it stands for everything he wants and cannot have. He cannot be a husband, a father, or a grandfather. He cannot have posterity now or ever. Satan cannot even keep those he has led away from God. He has no eternal kingdom or inheritance” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 74; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 60).

OUR FADING CIVILITY



*President Gordon B. Hinckley
President of the Church
Brigham Young University
commencement and
inauguration ceremony,
25 Apr. 1996*

Your secular education is designed to give you an improved opportunity in the great marketplace of the world. You, in most cases, will be compensated according to the value society places upon your skills.

But, as you have been told before, there should be, there must be, another side to the coin you carry with you from BYU. President David O. McKay, who for many years served as chairman of the Board of Trustees, once said:

“True education does not consist merely in the acquiring of a few facts of science, history, literature or art, but in the development of character. True education awakens a desire to conserve health by keeping the body clean and undefiled. True education trains in self denial and self mastery. True education regulates the temper, subdues passion and makes obedience to social laws and moral order a guiding principle of life. It develops reason and inculcates faith in the living God as the Eternal Father of all” (*Conference Report*, April 1928, 102). . . .

In your studies many of you have chronicled the march of civilization. It has been a truly remarkable odyssey as through the centuries society has made progress as people have lived together in communities with respect and concern one for another. This is the hallmark of civilization. And yet at times we wonder how much progress we have really made. This century which now draws to a close has witnessed more wars and more death and suffering than any other century in human history. . . .

Civility and mutual respect seem to have disappeared as people kill one another over ethnic differences.

But civility also appears to be fading much closer to home. Civility covers a host of matters in the relationships among human beings. Its presence is described in such terms as “good manners” and “good breeding.” But everywhere about us we see the opposite. . . .

It is appalling. It is alarming. And when all is said and done the cost can be attributed almost entirely to human greed, to uncontrolled passion, to a total disregard for the rights of others. In other words to a lack of civility. As one writer has said, "People might think of a civilized community as one in which there is a refined culture. Not necessarily; first and foremost it is one in which the mass of people subdue their selfish instincts in favor of the common well being" (*Royal Bank Letter*, May–June 1995). He continues: "In recent years the media have raised boorishness to an art form. The hip heroes of movies today deliver gratuitous put downs to ridicule and belittle anyone who gets in their way. Bad manners, apparently, make a saleable commodity. Television situation comedies wallow in vulgarity, stand up comedians base their acts on insults to their audiences, and talk show hosts become rich and famous by snarling at callers and heckling guests" (Ibid).

All of this speaks of anything but refinement. It speaks of anything but courtesy. It speaks of anything but civility. Rather, it speaks of crudeness and rudeness, and an utter insensitivity to the feelings and rights of others.

It is so with much of the language of the day. In schools and in the workplace there is so much of sleazy, evil, filthy language. I hope that every one of you will rise above it. You are now graduates of this great institution. You cannot afford the image of those whose vocabularies are so impoverished that they must reach into the gutter for words with which to express themselves. Along with such uncouth talk is so much of profanity. It too marks a lack of civility. The finger of the Lord wrote on the tablets of stone, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Ex. 20:7).

Sloppy language and sloppy ways go together. I hope that you have learned more than the sciences, the humanities, law, engineering and the arts, while you have been here. I hope that you will carry with you from this hallowed place a certain polish that will mark you as one in love with the better qualities of life, the culture which adds luster to the mundane world of which we are a part, a patina which puts a quiet glow on what otherwise might be base metal.

Civility is what gives savor to our lives. It is the salt that speaks of good taste, good manners, good breeding.

Said the Savior to the multitude: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5:13).

Civility is what gives savor to our lives. It is the salt that speaks of good taste, good manners, good breeding.

It becomes an expression of the Golden Rule: "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12).

DISCIPLINE A VIOLENT TEMPER



*President Gordon B. Hinckley
First Counselor
in the First Presidency*

*In Conference Report,
Oct. 1991, 70–71, 73;
or Ensign, Nov. 1991,
50–52*

Permit me to read from another letter. Said the writer: "My husband is a good man with many outstanding qualities and character traits, but underneath it all there is a strong streak of authoritarianism. . . . His volatile temper flares up often enough to remind me of all the potential ugliness of which he is capable.

"President Hinckley, . . . please remind the brethren that the physical and verbal abuse of women is inexcusable, never acceptable, and a cowardly way of dealing with differences, especially and particularly despicable if the abuser is a priesthood holder."

Now, I believe that most marriages in the Church are happy, that both husbands and wives in those marriages experience a sense of security and love, of mutual dependence, and an equal sharing of burdens. I am confident that the children in those homes, at least in the vast majority of them, are growing up with a sense of peace and security, knowing that they are appreciated and loved by both of their parents, who, they feel, love one another. But I am confident, my brethren, that there is enough of the opposite to justify what I am saying.

Who can calculate the wounds inflicted, their depth and pain, by harsh and mean words spoken in anger?

How pitiful a sight is a man who is strong in many ways but who loses all control of himself when some little thing, usually of no significant consequence, disturbs his equanimity. In every marriage there are, of course, occasional differences. But I find no justification for tempers that explode on the slightest provocation.

Said the writer of Proverbs, “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous” (Proverbs 27:4).

A violent temper is such a terrible, corrosive thing. And the tragedy is that it accomplishes no good; it only feeds evil with resentment and rebellion and pain. To any man or boy within the sound of my voice who has trouble controlling his tongue, may I suggest that you plead with the Lord for the strength to overcome your weakness, that you apologize to those you have offended, and that you marshal within yourselves the power to discipline your tongue.

To the boys who are here, may I suggest that you watch your temper now, in these formative years of your life. As Brother [David B.] Haight has reminded you, this is the season to develop the power and capacity to discipline yourselves. You may think it is the macho thing to flare up in anger and swear and profane the name of the Lord. It is not the macho thing. It is an indication of weakness. Anger is not an expression of strength. It is an indication of one’s inability to control his thoughts, words, his emotions. Of course it is easy to get angry. When the weakness of anger takes over, the strength of reason leaves. Cultivate within yourselves the mighty power of self-discipline. . . .

Beauty of Happy Marriage

How beautiful is the marriage of a young man and a young woman who begin their lives together kneeling at the altar in the house of the Lord, pledging their love and loyalty one to another for time and all eternity. When children come into that home, they are nurtured and cared for, loved and blessed with the feeling that their father loves their mother. In that environment they find peace and strength and security. Watching their father, they develop respect for women. They are taught self-control and self-discipline, which bring the strength to avoid later tragedy.

Who can calculate the wounds inflicted, their depth and pain, by harsh and mean words spoken in anger?

The years pass. The children eventually leave the home, one by one. And the father and the mother are again alone. But they have each other to talk with, to depend on, to nurture, to encourage, and to bless. There comes the autumn of life and a looking back with satisfaction and gladness. Through all of the years there has been loyalty, one to the other. There has been deference and courtesy. Now there is a certain mellowness, a softening, an effect that partakes of a hallowed relationship. They realize that death may come anytime, usually to one first with a separation of a season brief or lengthy. But they know also that because their companionship was sealed under the authority of the eternal priesthood and they have lived worthy of the blessings, there will be a reunion sweet and certain.

Brethren, this is the way our Father in Heaven would have it. This is the Lord’s way. He has so indicated. His prophets have spoken of it.

It takes effort. It takes self-control. It takes unselfishness. It requires the true essence of love, which is an anxious concern for the well-being and happiness of one’s companion. I could wish nothing better for all of you than this, and I pray that this may be your individual blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

PUT OFF THE NATURAL MAN, AND COME OFF CONQUEROR



*Elder Neal A. Maxwell
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Oct. 1990, 15–19;
or Ensign, Nov.
1990, 14–16*

The Dangers of Selfishness

So many times prophets warn about the dangers of selfishness—the inordinate and excessive concern with self. The distance between constant self-pleasing and self-worship is shorter than we think. Stubborn selfishness is actually rebellion against God, because, warned Samuel, “stubbornness is as . . . idolatry” (1 Samuel 15:23).

Selfishness is much more than an ordinary problem because it activates all the cardinal sins! It is the detonator in the breaking of the Ten Commandments.

By focusing on oneself, it is naturally easier to bear false witness if it serves one's purpose. It is easier to ignore one's parents instead of honoring them. It is easier to steal, because what one wants prevails. It is easier to covet, since the selfish conclude that nothing should be denied them.

It is easier to commit sexual sins, because to please oneself is the name of that deadly game in which others are often cruelly used. The Sabbath day is easily neglected, since one day soon becomes just like another. If selfish, it is easier to lie, because the truth is conveniently subordinated.

The selfish individual thus seeks to please not God, but himself. He will even break a covenant in order to fix an appetite.

Selfishness has little time to regard the sufferings of others seriously; hence the love of many waxes cold (see Matthew 24:12; D&C 45:27; Moses 6:27).

The last days will be rampant with the cardinal sins, just "as in the days of Noah." Society in the days of Noah, scriptures advise, "was corrupt before God" and "filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11; Moses 8:28). Corruption and violence—sound familiar? Both of these awful conditions crest because of surging individual selfishness. When thus engulfed, no wonder men's hearts in our day will fail them because of fear (see Luke 21:26; D&C 45:26). Even the faithful can expect a few fibrillations.

Some selfishness exists even in good people. Jane Austen's character Elizabeth mused, "I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle" (*Pride and Prejudice* [New York: Airmont Books, 1962], p. 58). The selfish individual has a passion for the vertical pronoun *I*. Significantly, the vertical pronoun *I* has no knees to bend, while the first letter in the pronoun *we* does.

Selfishness, in its preoccupation with self, withholds from others deserved, needed praise, causing a deprivation instead of giving a commendation.

We see in ourselves other familiar forms of selfishness: accepting or claiming undeserved credit; puffing deserved credit; being glad when others go wrong; resenting the genuine successes of others; preferring public vindication to private reconciliation; and taking "advantage of one because of his words" (2 Nephi 28:8). All things are thus viewed selfishly—

what are their implications for "me," much like the mattress on the highway which delayed traffic. When frustrated motorists finally got around the mattress, none stopped to remove it because now there was nothing in it for him.

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, "Mankind [is] naturally selfish, ambitious, and striving to excel one above another" (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, comp. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [Provo: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980], p. 201).

Saul, swollen with selfishness, was reminded about an earlier time "when thou wast little in thine own sight" (1 Samuel 15:17).

Jesus' Example of Meekness

Selfishness is often expressed in stubbornness of mind. Having a "mind hardened in pride" often afflicts the brightest who could also be the best (Daniel 5:20). "One thing" the brightest often lack: meekness! Instead of having "a willing mind" which seeks to emulate the "mind of Christ," a "mind hardened in pride" is impervious to counsel and often seeks ascendancy (1 Chronicles 28:9; 1 Corinthians 2:16; D&C 64:34). Jesus, who was and is "more intelligent than they all," is also more meek than they all (Abraham 3:19).

Jesus put everything on the altar without fanfare or bargaining. Both before and after His astonishing atonement, He declared, "Glory be to the Father" (D&C 19:19; see also Moses 4:2). Jesus, stunningly brilliant, nevertheless allowed His will to be "swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7; see also John 6:38). Those with pride-hardened minds are simply unable to do this.

Put off the Natural Man

Stubborn selfishness leads otherwise good people to fight over herds, patches of sand, and strippings of milk. All this results from what the Lord calls coveting "the drop," while neglecting "the more weighty matters" (D&C 117:8). Myopic selfishness magnifies a mess of pottage and makes thirty pieces of silver look like a treasure trove. In our intense acquisitiveness, we forget Him who once said, "What is property unto me?" (D&C 117:4).

Such is the scope of putting off the burdensome natural man, who is naturally selfish (see Mosiah 3:19). So much of our fatigue, brothers and sisters, in fact, comes from carrying that needless load.

This heaviness of the natural man prevents us from doing our Christian calisthenics; so we end up too swollen with selfishness to pass through the narrow needle's eye.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh wrote of the need to “shed my Martha-like anxiety about many things, . . . shedding pride, . . . shedding hypocrisy in human relationships. What a rest that will be! The most exhausting thing in life, I have discovered,” she said, “is being insincere. That is why so much of social life is exhausting” (*Gift from the Sea* [New York: Vintage Books, 1978], p. 32).

Unchecked selfishness thus stubbornly blocks the way for developing all of the divine qualities: love, mercy, patience, long-suffering, kindness, graciousness, goodness, and gentleness. Any tender sprouts from these virtues are sheared off by sharp selfishness. Contrariwise, brothers and sisters, I cannot think of a single gospel covenant the keeping of which does not shear off selfishness from us!

But what a battle for some of us! We are all afflicted in different degrees. The question is, How goes the battle? Is our selfishness being put off—even if only gradually? Or is the natural man like “the man who came to dinner”? Divine tutoring is given largely in order to help us shed our selfishness, “for what son [or daughter] is [there] whom the father chasteneth not?” (Hebrews 12:7).

Important Spiritual Perspectives

Restoration scriptures tell us much more about how we can really be forgiven through the atonement of Christ by means of which, finally, “mercy . . . overpowereth justice” (Alma 34:15). We can have real and justified hope for the future—enough hope to develop the faith necessary both to put off the natural man and to strive to become more saintly.

Furthermore, because the centerpiece of the Atonement is already in place, we know that everything else in God's plan will likewise finally succeed. God is surely able to do His own work! (See 2 Nephi 27:20–21.) In His plans for the human family, long ago God made ample provision for all mortal mistakes. His purposes will all triumph and without abrogating man's moral agency. Moreover, all His purposes will come to pass in their time (see D&C 64:32).

However, without these later and other spiritual perspectives, see how differently we behave. Take away an acknowledgment of divine design, and then watch the selfish scurrying to redesign political and economic systems to make life pain-free and pleasure-filled. Misguided governments mean to live, even if they live beyond their means, thereby mortgaging future generations.

Take away regard for the divinity in one's neighbor, and watch the decline in our regard for his property.

Take away basic moral standards, and observe how quickly tolerance changes into permissiveness.

Take away the sacred sense of belonging to a family or community, and observe how quickly citizens cease to care for big cities.

Take away regard for the seventh commandment, and behold the current celebration of sex, the secular religion with its own liturgy of lust and supporting music. Its theology focuses on “self.” Its hereafter is “now.” Its chief ritual is “sensation”—though, ironically, it finally desensitizes its obsessed adherents, who become “past feeling” (Ephesians 4:19; Moroni 9:20).

Divine tutoring is given largely in order to help us shed our selfishness.

Thus, in all its various expressions, selfishness is really self-destruction in slow motion!

Each spasm of selfishness narrows the universe that much more by shutting down our awareness of others and by making us more and more alone. Sensations are then desperately sought precisely in order to verify that one really exists. A variation occurs when one is full of self-pity over affectional deprivation. He ends up in transgression.

Surging selfishness presents us with a sobering scene as the natural man acts out his wants. Many assert their needs—but where have we lodged the corresponding obligations? So many have become demanders, but where are all the providers? There are many more people with things to say than there are listeners. There are more neglected and aging parents than there are attentive sons and daughters—though, numerically, clearly it should not be so!

Come off Conqueror

Just as Jesus warned that some evil spirits would *come out* only with “prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21),

the “natural man” does not *come off* without difficulty either.

Of this personal battle, the Lord has urged us to so live that we would “come off conqueror” (D&C 10:5). But we cannot “come off conqueror,” except we first “put off” the selfish, natural man!

The natural man is truly God’s enemy, because the natural man will keep God’s precious children from true and everlasting happiness. Our full happiness requires our becoming the men and women of Christ.

Men and Women of Christ

The meek men and women of Christ are quick to praise, but are also able to restrain themselves. They understand that on occasion the biting of the tongue can be as important as the gift of tongues.

The man and woman of Christ are easily entreated, but the selfish person is not. Christ never brushed aside those in need because He had bigger things to do! Furthermore, the men and women of Christ are constant, being the same in private as in public. We cannot keep two sets of books while heaven has but one.

The men and women of Christ magnify their callings without magnifying themselves. Whereas the natural man says “Worship me” and “Give me thine power,” the men and women of Christ seek to exercise power by long-suffering and unfeigned love (see Moses 1:12; 4:3; D&C 121:41).

Whereas the natural man vents his anger, the men and women of Christ are “not easily provoked” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Whereas the natural man is filled with greed, the men and women of Christ “seeketh not [their] own” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Whereas the natural man seldom denies himself worldly pleasures, the men and women of Christ seek to bridle all their passions (see Alma 38:12).

Whereas the natural man covets praise and riches, the men and women of Christ know such things are but the “drop” (D&C 117:8). Human history’s happiest irony will be that the covenant-keeping, unselfish individuals will finally receive “all that [the] Father hath”! (D&C 84:38).

We Do Not Own Ourselves

One of the last, subtle strongholds of selfishness is the natural feeling that we “own” ourselves. Of course we are free to choose and are personally accountable.

Yes, we have individuality. But those who have chosen to “come unto Christ” soon realize that they do not “own” themselves. Instead, they belong to Him. We are to become consecrated along with our gifts, our appointed days, and our very selves. Hence, there is a stark difference between stubbornly “owning” oneself and submissively belonging to God. Clinging to the old self is not a mark of independence, but of indulgence!

Blessings of Shedding Selfishness

The Prophet Joseph promised that when selfishness is annihilated, we “may comprehend all things, present, past, and future” (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, comp. Dean C. Jessee [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984], p. 485). Even now, however, in gospel glimpses we can see “things as they really are” (Jacob 4:13).

Indeed, the gospel brings glorious illumination as to our possibilities. Scales fall from our eyes with the shedding of selfishness. Then we see our luminous and true identity:

On a clear day, rise and look around you,
And you’ll see who you are.
On a clear day, how it will astound you—
That the glow of your being outshines every star . . .
And on a clear day . . .
You can see forever and ever more.
[Alan Jay Lerner, “On a Clear Day”
(Chappell and Co., 1965)]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Related Scriptures

Further reading on the “natural man”:

Genesis 39:7–12

1 Corinthians 2:14; 10:13

Ephesians 3:16

1 Thessalonians 5:22

James 1:13–15; 4:4

Mosiah 3:19

Alma 13:11–12; 26:21

Helaman 12

Ether 3:2

Moroni 10:32

Doctrine and Covenants 29:43; 45:32; 50:41;
62:1; 67:12; 84:33, 47–58

TRADITIONS OF THE FATHERS

*God teaches us that children
are to honor their parents. . . .
What in us is noble, responsible,
faithful, gracious, considerate?
What is worthy of their respect
and their emulation?*

—Elder Marion D. Hanks

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Elder Marion D. Hanks

“The first definition of ‘tradition’ in a modern dictionary is: ‘The knowledge, doctrines, customs, practices, etc., transmitted from generation to generation. . . .’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1968, 116).

Maintaining Righteous Traditions

Exodus 20:12

“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

1 Nephi 1:1

“I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father.”

1 Nephi 3:19

“And behold, it is wisdom in God that we should obtain these records, that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers.”

1 Nephi 5:21

“And we had obtained the records which the Lord had commanded us, and searched them and found

that they were desirable; yea, even of great worth unto us, insomuch that we could preserve the commandments of the Lord unto our children.”

2 Nephi 25:26

“And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”

Enos 1:1, 3

“Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it. . . .

“Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart.”

Doctrine and Covenants 68:25

“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.”

Doctrine and Covenants 93:40

“But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.”

Examples of False Traditions

1 Peter 1:18

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers.”

Mosiah 10:12

“They were a wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, believing in the tradition of their fathers.”

Mosiah 26:1

“Now it came to pass that there were many of the rising generation that . . . did not believe the tradition of their fathers.”

Alma 9:8

“Behold, O ye wicked and perverse generation, how have ye forgotten the tradition of your fathers; yea, how soon ye have forgotten the commandments of God.”

Alma 60:32

“It is the tradition of their fathers that has caused their hatred.”

Doctrine and Covenants 93:39

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

President Ezra Taft Benson

“The ‘tradition of their fathers’ refers, of course, to the bad examples and teachings of fathers” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 47; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 35).

Overcoming False Traditions**Matthew 10:37**

“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

Mosiah 25:12

“And it came to pass that those who were the children of Amulon and his brethren, . . . were displeased with the conduct of their fathers, and they would no longer be called by the names of their fathers, therefore they took upon themselves the name of Nephi, that they might be called the children of Nephi.”

Alma 3:11

“And it came to pass that whosoever would not believe in the tradition of the Lamanites, but believed those records which were brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and also in the tradition of their fathers, which were correct, who believed

in the commandments of God and kept them, were called the Nephites.”

Alma 37:9

“Yea, I say unto you, were it not for these things that these records do contain, which are on these plates, Ammon and his brethren could not have convinced so many thousands of the Lamanites of the incorrect tradition of their fathers; yea, these records and their words brought them unto repentance.”

Helaman 15:4

“But behold my brethren, the Lamanites hath he hated because their deeds have been evil continually, and this because of the iniquity of the tradition of their fathers. But behold, salvation hath come unto them through the preaching of the Nephites; and for this intent hath the Lord prolonged their days.”

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“To you adults who repeat the pattern of neglect and abuse you endured as little children, believing that you are entrapped in a cycle of behavior from which there is no escape, I say:

“It is contrary to the order of heaven for any soul to be locked into compulsive, immoral behavior with no way out!

“It is consistent with the workings of the adversary to deceive you into believing that you *are*.

“I gratefully acknowledge that transgressions, even those which affect little children, yield to sincere repentance. I testify with all my soul that the doctrine of repentance is true and has a miraculous, liberating effect upon behavior.

“To you *innocent* ones who have not transgressed, but were abused as little children and still carry an undeserved burden of guilt, I say:

“Learn true doctrine—repentance *and* forgiveness; lay that burden of guilt down!

“For we are all children of the same Heavenly Father. May not each of his children, of any age, claim the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and in so doing, through complete repentance, be cleansed and renewed to childlike innocence?” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 21–22; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 18).

THE TRADITION OF THEIR FATHERS



Elder Marion D. Hanks

*Assistant to the
Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles*

*In Conference Report,
Oct. 1968, 115–18*

The Tradition of Their Fathers

It is to the phrase “because of the tradition of their fathers” that I would give special attention in these few moments, and to the injunction to “set in order your own house.”

Previously over this pulpit I have expressed my respect for children who have improved upon the ways of negligent parents, and my compassion for choice parents who have earnestly tried to bring up their children in the way they should go, only to have those children use their agency and individuality to follow other ways. The Lord has taught us that in his sight the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. Each who is accountable must ultimately account for his own decisions.

But multitudes of us still have our children at home, or have grandchildren, or are influential in the homes or with the children of others. Great numbers of young couples are just starting their families, or soon will be. All of us should be brought to solemn thoughtfulness by the sobering word that although children are “innocent before God,” the “wicked one” is able to take away “light and truth” “through disobedience” and “because of the tradition of their fathers.”

The first definition of “tradition” in a modern dictionary is: “The knowledge, doctrines, customs, practices, etc., transmitted from generation to generation. . . .”

Our Traditions

What is the tradition in your individual home and mine? What “knowledge, doctrines, customs, practices,” and so forth are being or will be transmitted from our generation to our children and their children?

God teaches us that children are to honor their parents. What in us, our lives, our character, our behavior, is *worthy* of their honor? What in us is noble, responsible, faithful, gracious, considerate? What is worthy of their respect and their emulation?

Do we teach honesty by being honest? I love to remember the story of the man who, while his little son was with him, stopped at an isolated cornfield on a remote country road, and after looking before and behind him, to the left and to the right, started to climb the fence to appropriate a few ears of the farmer’s corn. Said his son: “Dad, you forgot to look up.”

Integrity in the Home

What happens to the boy whose father boasts of the slick deal he has made in which others were outwitted? Years ago the late Joseph Welch said, on the occasion of his being named Father of the Year:

“If it were in my power to bestow on the youth of the land one single quality, I would not choose, I think, wit or wisdom or even that great boon, education. If I could choose but one, I would choose integrity. If one day my children and grandchildren say to one another, ‘He taught us to value integrity,’ I shall be content.

“How is the quality of integrity passed on to the children in the home? It is passed on by living a *life* of integrity, of sober honesty, of responsible citizenship. How can one surely *fail* to pass this priceless quality on to children in the home? By being a little lawless; by being a fixer; by being a cheat and a chiseler. Not so long ago one of my two boys spoke these sobering words to me. He said, ‘When the two of us were young, there were times when you and Mom would obviously set out to tell us how to live the good life. We could always recognize those moments and we would close our ears and our minds. Your most influential moments were your most inadvertent ones. We were apt to imitate what you really were—not what you said you were or even what you may have believed you were.’

“If your children are to have integrity, they must find it in the home and in you. If they live in an atmosphere of complete integrity, they will accept it as an attitude and never waver thereafter. And having integrity, they will themselves find freedom; and having found it, gladly grant it to all others.”

Ideals and Values

Every parent should ask, What ideals and values is my child learning? What is his image of himself? What is the view of others that he is developing in our home? Is his experience with his parents bringing him a growing consciousness that the “bright light of God” is over everything, and a growing confidence in the presence of his Heavenly Father?

In New Zealand we learned an old Maori proverb: “A bird must have feathers to fly.” Parents have the primary responsibility for feathering our children for flight. A child who lives in an atmosphere of disrespect, criticism, or shame will not be inclined to respect or accept himself; and of shame it has been impellingly written: “Holocausts are caused not only by atomic explosions. Holocausts are caused wherever a person is put to shame.” (Abraham J. Heschel, *The Insecurities of Freedom*.)

Our Treatment of Others

Our treatment of others will certainly condition a child’s attitude toward others. Children who see and sense in parents a genuine concern for others, expressed in acts of kindness and compassion and unselfishness, will themselves be inclined to think well of mankind and to do as the scriptures bid: to “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.” (D&C 81:5.)

Young people so blessed may also be less susceptible to the bewilderment that confronts some in our generation’s paradoxical stress on man’s rights and privileges while at the same time belittling him as a creature of his environment, conditioned by sociological and psychological factors, not possessing the powers and capacities of free agency, of thinking and believing, of choosing and determining, not the unique personality that God has taught us we are. The “conditioned-reflex” version of the behaviorist cannot inspire the mystery and awe and wonder which are the glory of man. To know, instead, that every individual is an eternal person, a potential god or goddess, capable of deep love and graciousness and mercy, more than human, is to prepare us to live with courage and a sense of responsibility, to inspire self-reliance, self-respect, and genuine respect for others.

Tradition of Discipline

What is the tradition of discipline in our homes? Is our child pampered, indulged, permitted in a moment

of crisis to transfer his guilt to others—his parents, peers, family, the age he lives in, society? How will he handle disappointment and failure if he is not taught to face up to his mistakes honestly? We are not talking of imposing senseless punishment. We are talking of realities, of facts to be faced, of fair rules which are understood and enforced, with sanctions consistently imposed when they are broken. “Self-respect,” someone has said, “is the fruit of discipline; the sense of dignity grows with the ability to say NO to one’s self.” (Heschel, *op. cit.*)

Other Traditions to Pass On

What shall we give to the children? Pray for a sense of humor. “Laughter leavens life” and brings a sunny spirit.

Pray also to be able to pass on the will to work, and the urge for excellence; the capacity for moral indignation, and the courage to stand alone; disdain for evil, and love of justice; the ability to love without condition or question. Do you know the story of the eight-year-old girl in an orphanage, unattractive, with annoying mannerisms, disliked by the teachers and administrators? One afternoon it was reported that she had broken a rule that would justify her expulsion from the institution. Against regulations she had been seen depositing a note in a branch of a tree overreaching the fence. The note was retrieved. It read: “To whoever finds this: I love you.”

How in Your Home and Mine Is the Tradition of Patriotism?

On the Saturday evening just before Christmas last year, two clean, handsome young men—boys, really—their battle gear stacked nearby, stood before a large group of their comrades at China Beach near DaNang, South Vietnam, and sang “Silent Night.” They had no accompaniment, and the sweet, clear ring of their voices will always be remembered, and the emotion we all felt. The next morning, before dawn, one of those young men came to my sleeping quarters to say good-bye and shake hands once more as he joined his outfit to head out into the bush on a search-and-destroy mission. It was not the Sabbath activity he would have chosen—he was disappointed not to be able to worship with fellow servicemen in our scheduled meeting—but he went his way to do his job. There is no question as to the tradition transmitted in this boy’s home.

Self-Control in Homes

Fathers, mothers, what tradition are we planting in another generation, in our homes, as to self-control—control of our tongues and tempers and appetites? In 1884 Henry Drummond made a statement on this theme that could be read regularly with profit by each of us:

“We are inclined to look upon bad temper as a very harmless weakness. We speak of it as a mere infirmity of nature, a family failing, a matter of temperament, not a thing to take into very serious account in estimating a man’s character. And yet . . . the Bible again and again returns to condemn it as one of the most destructive elements in human nature.

“The peculiarity of ill-temper is that it is the vice of the virtuous. It is often the one blot on an otherwise noble character. . . . This compatibility of ill-temper with the high moral character is one of the strangest and saddest problems of ethics. The truth is, there are two great classes of sins—sins of the Body and sins of the Disposition. . . . No form of vice, not worldliness, not greed of gold, not drunkenness itself, does more to unChristianize society than evil temper. For embittering life, for breaking up communities, for destroying the most sacred relationships, for devastating homes, for withering up men and women, for taking the bloom off childhood; in short, for sheer gratuitous misery-producing power, this influence stands alone.” (Henry Drummond: *The Greatest Thing in the World*, pp. 43–46.)

Traditions for Future Homes

What traditions are we passing on for other homes in future times that are worthy of the memories we ourselves have? On occasion through the years I have enjoyed the blessing of asking large groups of adult leaders to meditate for a moment on their conclusion to an unfinished sentence, and then share their thoughts. The sentence reads: “The thing I remember best about my childhood at home with my parents and family is ____.”

I suspect your answers would be about the same as those that I have heard. Never once has anyone mentioned a high standard of living, or material

possessions. Always they have spoken, as I would speak, of attention from mom or dad; of family associations, traditions, sacrifices, adventures together; of books read aloud, songs sung, work accomplished; of family prayers and family councils; of small presents lovingly and unselfishly prepared; of homey and wholesome and happy memories. My single question to them has always been, and I ask it today, “What are we giving our own children that they will remember with equal joy and appreciation?”

Tradition of Children’s Song

Since our last conference my wife and I were privileged to visit Samoa and other islands in the far seas. One afternoon in the mountain tops of Upolu, in American Samoa, in the village of Sauniatu, we had a remarkable experience pertinent to this moment. The village was deserted except for a few very young children and one or two who had stayed home with them. The rest were working in the fields or at other tasks. As we walked the single lane of Sauniatu, between the rows of *falés*, from the monument toward the new chapel and school, we heard children singing. There were perhaps half a dozen of them, none more than four years old, and they were singing with the sweetness of childhood a song we instantly recognized, and stood entranced, in tears, to hear: “I Am a Child of God.”

In that high mountain fastness, at the end of a long, tortuous road, on an island of the sea, we found tiny dark-skinned children, none of them having seen more of the world than their small village, singing what they had learned through the tradition of their fathers, the greatest truth in existence, save one: I am a child of God.

That other truth? That there is a God who hears the voices of his children.

God bless us so to live and to teach that we may bring about a restoration of the home, the resurrection of parenthood, that the “wicked one” can never take away “light and truth” from our children “because of the tradition of their fathers.” In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

TRUST IN MARRIAGE

There cannot be peace where there is not trust; there cannot be freedom where there is not loyalty.

—Elder Gordon B. Hinckley

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Trust

President Howard W. Hunter

“Be faithful in your marriage covenants in thought, word, and deed. Pornography, flirtations, and unwholesome fantasies erode one’s character and strike at the foundation of a happy marriage. Unity and trust within a marriage are thereby destroyed. One who does not control his thoughts and thus commits adultery in his heart, if he does not repent, shall not have the Spirit but shall deny the faith and shall fear (see D&C 42:23; 63:16)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“The Lord has proclaimed that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and is intended to be an eternal relationship bonded by trust and fidelity. Latter-day Saints, of all people, should marry with this sacred objective in mind” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 58; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 47).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

“A willingness to maintain confidences. Be worthy of trust even in trivial questions and observations. Weighty questions and observations will only follow if we have been trustworthy with the trivial. Treat innermost trusts and concerns with respect. Build on deserved trust. Individuals who are blessed to have a relationship with someone to whom they can confidently talk and trust are fortunate indeed. Who is to say a family trust is not greater than a community trust?” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 81–82; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 54).

Greater Respect, Loyalty, and Unity

Elder Ezra Taft Benson

“Marriage itself must be regarded as a sacred covenant before God. A married couple have an obligation not only to each other, but to God. He has promised blessings to those who honor that covenant.

“Fidelity to one’s marriage vows is absolutely essential for love, trust, and peace. Adultery is unequivocally condemned by the Lord.

“Husbands and wives who love each other will find that love and loyalty are reciprocated. This love will provide a nurturing atmosphere for the emotional growth of children. Family life should be a time of happiness and joy that children can look back on with fond memories and associations” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 85; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 59).

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley

“No nation, no civilization can long endure without strength in the homes of its people. That strength derives from the integrity of those who establish those homes.

“No family can have peace, no home can be free from storms of adversity unless that family and that home are built on foundations of morality, fidelity, and mutual respect. There cannot be peace where there is not trust; there cannot be freedom where there is not loyalty. The warm sunlight of love will not rise out of a swamp of immorality” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 66).

“Was there ever adultery without dishonesty? In the vernacular, the evil is described as ‘cheating.’ And cheating it is, for it robs virtue, it robs loyalty, it robs sacred promises, it robs self-respect, it robs truth. It involves deception. It is personal dishonesty of the worst kind, for it becomes a betrayal of the most sacred of human relationships, and a denial of covenants and promises entered into before God and man. It is the sordid violation of a trust. It is a selfish casting aside of the law of God, and like other forms of dishonesty its fruits are sorrow, bitterness, heartbroken companions, and betrayed children” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 92; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 61).

Elder James E. Faust

“Complete trust in each other is one of the greatest enriching factors in marriage. Nothing devastates the core of mutual trust necessary to maintain a fulfilling relationship like infidelity. There is never a justification for adultery. Despite this destructive experience, occasionally marriages are saved and families preserved. To do so requires the aggrieved party to be capable of giving unreserved love great enough to forgive and forget. It requires the errant party to want desperately to repent and actually forsake evil.

“Our loyalty to our eternal companion should not be merely physical, but mental and spiritual as well. Since there are no harmless flirtations and no place for jealousy after marriage, it is best to avoid the very appearance of evil by shunning any questionable contact with another to whom we are not married” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 13–14; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 10).

Sister Barbara B. Smith

“The scriptural passages in Proverbs 31 are well known for their listing of the admirable qualities of

the virtuous woman, whose ‘price is far above rubies’ (verse 10), but in verse 11 we discover a remarkable description of marriage. It reads: *‘The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.’* This memorable line discloses, first, that the husband has entrusted his heart to his wife, and second, that she safeguards it. They seem to understand an important truth, that every man and woman who covenant to establish a family must create a safe place for their love.

“The longing of the human heart is often for someone who will treat tenderly the devotion one has to give. We hear it in the words of a poem by William Butler Yeats: the man has just laid the wishes of his heart at the feet of his beloved, and then he pleads, ‘Tread softly, because you tread on my dreams.’ (‘He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven,’ *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 3d ed., New York: Oxford University Press, p. 585.) . . .

“Trust is to human relationships what faith is to gospel living. It is the beginning place, the foundation upon which more can be built. Where trust is, love can flourish” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1981, 117; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 84).

UNITY

*There is little we cannot
accomplish if we will go forward
with united hearts to do so.*

—President Gordon B. Hinckley

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Importance of Unity in Marriage

Elder Ezra Taft Benson

“A husband and wife must attain righteous unity and oneness in their goals, desires, and actions” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 85; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 59).

Sister Barbara Winder

“I couldn’t help thinking of the words of Paul as he admonished the Church to serve in unity and purpose, and as he taught that all parts must function for the good of the whole. So it is in a marriage and in a family that we must function together” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 79; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 59).

Achieving Unity through Seeking the Lord and His Righteousness

President Marion G. Romney

“There is but one way that we can be united, and that way is to seek the Lord and his righteousness. (See 3 Nephi 13:33.) Unity comes by following the light from above. It does not come out of the confusions below. While men depend upon their own wisdom and walk in their own way, without the guidance of the Lord they cannot live in unity. Neither can they come to unity by following uninspired men.

“The way to unity is for us to learn the will of the Lord and then to do it. Until this basic principle is understood and observed, there will be no unity and peace on the earth” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1983, 21–22; or *Ensign*, May 1983, 17).

Elder L. Tom Perry

“We see the unity that comes from a faith in God and a desire to build His kingdom. And we see the dissension that results when the hearts of the people turn to selfish wants and desires, to the pleasures of the flesh, to riches and worldly possessions” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 39; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 33).

Elder James E. Faust

“Our unity comes from full agreement with righteous principles and general response to the operation of the Spirit of God” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 53; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 38).

Achieving Unity through Charity

Elder James E. Faust

“It is far more difficult to be of one heart and mind than to be physically one. This unity of heart and mind is manifest in sincere expressions of ‘I appreciate you’ and ‘I am proud of you.’ Such domestic harmony results from forgiving and forgetting, essential elements of a maturing marriage relationship. Someone has said that we should keep our eyes wide open before marriage and half shut afterward (Magdeleine de Scudéry, in John P. Bradley, et al., comp., *The International Dictionary of Thoughts* [Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1969], p. 472). True charity ought to begin in marriage, for it is a relationship that must be rebuilt every day” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 46; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 36).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

“I believe we must constantly nourish the seeds of love, harmony, and unity in our homes and families. Fathers are to preside over their families in kindness, remembering that ‘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’ (D&C 121:41). Husbands and wives are to love each other with a pure love that transcends selfishness” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 8).

Elder William R. Bradford

“Within each of us there is an intense need to feel that we belong. This feeling of unity and togetherness comes through the warmth of a smile, a handshake,

or a hug, through laughter and unspoken demonstrations of love. It comes in the quiet, reverent moments of soft conversation, and in listening. It comes from a still, small voice reminding us that we are brothers and sisters, the children of a Heavenly Father” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 91–92; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 75–76).

Achieving Unity through Loyalty

President J. Reuben Clark Jr.

“An essential part of unity is loyalty. There can be no union where loyalty does not exist. Loyalty is a pretty difficult quality to possess. It requires the ability to put away selfishness, greed, ambition and all of the baser qualities of the human mind. You cannot be loyal unless you are willing to surrender. There is no growth, mental, physical or spiritual, unless there be some curtailment, some sacrifice may I say, on the part of him who would be loyal. His own preferences and desires must be put away, and he must see only the great purpose which lies out ahead” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 180).

Achieving Unity through Effective Communication

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

“May our gracious and kind Heavenly Father help us in our needs and desires for more effective family communication. Communication can help build family unity if we will work at it and sacrifice for it. For this goal, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 82; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 54).

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis

“To have a time when the family meets at the kitchen table may take considerable adjustment and careful planning, but what could be of more importance to the unity of the family, the spiritual growth of the family, the bridges built between members of a family as they talk, listen, and respond, surrounded by love? Our major success is simply trying—over and over” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 110; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 83).

Blessings of Unity

President David O. McKay

“A child has a right to feel that in his home he has a place of refuge, a place of protection from the dangers and evils of the outside world. Family unity and integrity are necessary to supply this need” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1965, 7).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“I sense the great strength that can come of our unity. There is little we cannot accomplish if we will go forward with united hearts to do so” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 59; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 48).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“Marriage allows these different characteristics to come together in oneness—in unity—to bless a husband and wife, their children and grandchildren. For the greatest happiness and productivity in life, both husband and wife are needed. Their efforts interlock and are complementary. Each has individual traits that best fit the role the Lord has defined for happiness as a man or woman. When used as the Lord intends, those capacities allow a married couple to think, act, and rejoice as one—to face challenges together and overcome them as one, to grow in love and understanding, and through temple ordinances to be bound together as one whole, eternally. That is the plan” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 101; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 74).

Elder Henry B. Eyring

“The Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, said of those who would be part of His Church: ‘Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine’ (D&C 38:27). And at the creation of man and woman, unity for them in marriage was not given as hope; it was a command! ‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh’ (Genesis 2:24). Our Heavenly Father wants our hearts to be knit together. That union in love is not simply an ideal. It is a necessity. . . .

“The Savior of the world spoke of that unity and how we will have our natures changed to make it possible. He taught it clearly in the prayer He gave in His last meeting with His Apostles before His death. That supernally beautiful prayer is recorded in the book of John. He was about to face the terrible

sacrifice for all of us that would make eternal life possible. He was about to leave the Apostles whom He had ordained, whom He loved, and with whom He would leave the keys to lead His Church. And so He prayed to His Father, the perfect Son to the perfect Parent. We see in His words the way families will be made one, as will all the children of our Heavenly Father who follow the Savior and His servants:

“As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

“And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us:

that the world may believe that thou hast sent me’ (John 17:18–21).

“In those few words He made clear how the gospel of Jesus Christ can allow hearts to be made one. Those who would believe the truth He taught could accept the ordinances and the covenants offered by His authorized servants. Then, through obedience to those ordinances and covenants, their natures would be changed. The Savior’s Atonement in that way makes it possible for us to be sanctified. We can then live in unity, as we must to have peace in this life and to dwell with the Father and His Son in eternity” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 85–86; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 66).

WOMEN'S DIVINE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

*No more sacred word
exists in secular or holy writ
than that of mother.*

—President Ezra Taft Benson

SELECTED TEACHINGS

See also “Mothers’ Employment Outside the Home” on pages 237–40.

The Divine Work of Women

The Prophet Joseph Smith

“Let this Society teach women how to behave towards their husbands, to treat them with mildness and affection. When a man is borne down with trouble, when he is perplexed with care and difficulty, if he can meet a smile instead of an argument or a murmur—if he can meet with mildness, it will calm down his soul and soothe his feelings; when the mind is going to despair, it needs a solace of affection and kindness” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 228).

President Heber J. Grant

“There seems to be a power which the mother possesses in shaping the life of the child that is far superior, in my judgment, to the power of the father, and this almost without exception. . . . After all it is by love, real genuine love of our fellows, that we accomplish the most. A mother’s love seems to be the most perfect and the most sincere, the strongest of any love we know anything about. I, for one, rejoice in it because of its wonderful example to me” (*Gospel Standards*, 152).

President George Albert Smith

“Woman has filled a wonderful part in the march of progress, but most important of all the duties that have been laid upon the gentler sex, is the duty of bringing into the world and rearing, the children

of our Heavenly Father” (*Sharing the Gospel with Others*, 139).

President David O. McKay

“Motherhood consists of three principal attributes or qualities: namely, (1) the power to bear, (2) the ability to rear, (3) the gift to love. . . .

“This ability and willingness properly to rear children, the gift to love, and eagerness, yes, longing to express it in soul development, make motherhood the noblest office or calling in the world” (*Gospel Ideals*, 453).

President Spencer W. Kimball

“Marriage is a partnership. Each is given a part of the work of life to do. The fact that some women and men disregard their work and their opportunities does not change the program.

“When we speak of marriage as a partnership, let us speak of marriage as a *full* partnership. We do not want our LDS women to be *silent* partners or *limited* partners in that eternal assignment! Please be a *contributing* and *full* partner” (“Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 106).

“The Lord organized the whole program in the beginning with a father who procreates, provides, and loves and directs, and a mother who conceives and bears and nurtures and feeds and trains. The Lord could have organized it otherwise but chose to have a unit with responsibility and purposeful associations where children train and discipline each other and come to love, honor, and appreciate each other. The family is the great plan of life as conceived and organized by our Father in heaven” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 151; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 15).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“It is divinely ordained what a woman should do. . . . The divine work of women involves companionship, homemaking, and motherhood” (“In His Steps,” 64).

“Brethren of the priesthood, I continue to emphasize the importance of mothers staying home to nurture, care for, and train their children in the principles of righteousness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 60; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 49; see also *To the Fathers in Israel*, 3–4).

See *To the Mothers in Zion*, on pages 352–57.

“A mother’s role is also God-ordained. Mothers are to conceive, bear, nourish, love, and train. They are

to be helpmates, and are to counsel with their husbands" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 6; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 6).

"It is divinely ordained what a woman should do, but a man must seek out his work. The divine work of women involves companionship, homemaking, and motherhood. It is well if skills in these three areas can first be learned in the parents' home and then be supplemented at school if the need or desire presents itself" ("In His Steps," 64).

"There are voices in our midst which would attempt to convince you that these home-centered truths are not applicable to our present-day conditions. If you listen and heed, you will be lured away from your principal obligations.

"Beguiling voices in the world cry out for 'alternative life-styles' for women. They maintain that some women are better suited for careers than for marriage and motherhood.

"These individuals spread their discontent by the propaganda that there are more exciting and self-fulfilling roles for women than homemaking. Some even have been bold to suggest that the Church move away from the 'Mormon woman stereotype' of homemaking and rearing children. They also say it is wise to limit your family so you can have more time for personal goals and self-fulfillment" ("The Honored Place of Woman," *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 105).

President Howard W. Hunter

"Mothers are given a sacred privilege to 'bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of [the] Father continued, that he may be glorified' (D&C 132:63).

"The First Presidency has said: 'Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind' (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75], 6:178). The priesthood cannot work out its destiny, nor can God's purposes be fulfilled, without our helpmates. Mothers perform a labor the priesthood cannot do. For this gift of life, the priesthood should have love unbounded for the mothers of their children. . . .

". . . The Lord has commanded that women and children have claim on their husbands and fathers for their maintenance (see D&C 83; 1 Timothy 5:8). President Ezra Taft Benson has stated that when a husband encourages or insists that his wife work

out of the home for their convenience, 'not only will the family suffer in such instances, . . . but [his] own spiritual growth and progression will be hampered' (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, pp. 60–61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, p. 49)" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 67, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50–51).

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

"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. . . .

"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). . . .

". . . 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" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Elder Ezra Taft Benson

"One apparent impact of the women's movement has been the feelings of discontent it has created among young women who have chosen the role of wife and mother. They are often made to feel that there are more exciting and self-fulfilling roles for women than housework, diaper changing, and children calling for mother. This view loses sight of the eternal perspective that God elected women to the noble role of mother and that exaltation is eternal fatherhood and eternal motherhood ('To the Elect Women of the Kingdom of God,' Nauvoo Illinois Relief Society Dedication, 30 June 1978)" (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 548).

Elder Richard G. Scott

"Beware of the subtle ways Satan employs to take you from the plan of God [2 Nephi 9:13] and true happiness. One of Satan's most effective approaches is to demean the role of wife and mother in the home. This is an attack at the very heart of God's plan to

foster love between husband and wife and to nurture children in an atmosphere of understanding, peace, appreciation, and support. Much of the violence that is rampant in the world today is the harvest of weakened homes. Government and social plans will not effectively correct that, nor can the best efforts of schools and churches fully compensate for the absence of the tender care of a compassionate mother and wife in the home.

“This morning President Hinckley spoke of the importance of a mother in the home. Study his message. As a mother guided by the Lord, you weave a fabric of character in your children from threads of truth through careful instruction and worthy example. You imbue the traits of honesty, faith in God, duty, respect for others, kindness, self-confidence, and the desire to contribute, to learn, and to give in your trusting children’s minds and hearts. No day-care center can do that. It is your sacred right and privilege.

“Of course, as a woman you can do exceptionally well in the workplace, but is that the best use of your divinely appointed talents and feminine traits? As a husband, don’t encourage your wife to go to work to help in your divinely appointed responsibility of providing resources for the family, if you can possibly avoid it. As the prophets have counseled, to the extent possible with the help of the Lord, as parents, work together to keep Mother in the home.²² Your presence there will strengthen the self-confidence of your children and decrease the chance of emotional challenges. Moreover, as you teach truth by word and example, those children will come to understand who they are and what they can obtain as divine children of Father in Heaven” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 102; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 74–75).

Sister Patricia T. Holland

“Eve was given the identity of ‘the mother of all living’ . . . before she ever bore a child. It would appear that her *motherhood preceded her maternity*, just as surely as the perfection of the Garden preceded the struggles of mortality. I believe *mother* is one of those very carefully chosen words, one of those rich words—with meaning after meaning after meaning. We must not, at all costs, let that word divide us. I believe with all of my heart that it is first and foremost a statement about nature, not a head count of our children.

“. . . Some women give birth and raise children but never ‘mother’ them. Others, whom I love with all my heart, ‘mother’ all their lives but have never given birth. And all of us are Eve’s daughters, whether we are married or single, maternal or barren. We are created in the image of the Gods to become gods and goddesses” (“‘One Thing Needful’: Becoming Women of Greater Faith in Christ,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1987, 33).

What Is a Help Meet?

President Howard W. Hunter

“A man who holds the priesthood accepts his wife as a partner in the leadership of the home and family with full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating thereto. Of necessity there must be in the Church and in the home a presiding officer (see D&C 107:21). By divine appointment, the responsibility to preside in the home rests upon the priesthood holder (see Moses 4:22). The Lord intended that the wife be a helpmeet for man (*meet* means equal)—that is, a companion equal and necessary in full partnership. Presiding in righteousness necessitates a shared responsibility between husband and wife; together you act with knowledge and participation in all family matters. For a man to operate independently of or without regard to the feelings and counsel of his wife in governing the family is to exercise unrighteous dominion” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50–51).

THE ROLE OF RIGHTEOUS WOMEN



President Spencer W. Kimball

President of the Church

Read by his wife,
Sister Camilla Kimball

Ensign, Nov. 1979,
102–4

My beloved sisters: I have been looking forward for months to the pleasure of meeting with you dear sisters once again in a worldwide conference of the women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Unfortunately for me, I am in the hospital here in Salt Lake City and will not be present with you in person, but I will be with you in spirit. In fact, I will be watching and listening here in my room at the LDS Hospital.

The counsel given at our meeting last year is still appropriate. Whenever I reflect and ponder upon the glorious truths of the gospel, and that is often, I wonder if we even begin to appreciate the implications of these glorious truths. Let us begin with a few examples.

The scriptures and the prophets have taught us clearly that God, who is perfect in his attribute of justice, “is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34). We know also that God is perfect in his love for each and all of us as his spirit children. When we know these truths, my sisters and associates in this divine cause, it should help us greatly as we all experience much less than perfect love and perfect justice in the world. If, in the short term, we are sometimes dealt with insensitively and thoughtlessly by others, by imperfect men and women, it may still cause us pain, but such pain and disappointment are not the whole of life. The ways of the world will not prevail, for the ways of God will triumph.

We had full equality as his spirit children. We have equality as recipients of God’s perfected love for each of us. The late Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote:

“The place of woman in the Church is to walk beside the man, not in front of him nor behind him. In the Church there is full equality between man and woman. The gospel, which is the only concern of the Church, was devised by the Lord for men and women alike” (*Improvement Era*, Mar. 1942, p. 161).

Within those great assurances, however, our roles and assignments differ. These are eternal differences—with women being given many tremendous responsibilities of motherhood and sisterhood and men being given the tremendous responsibilities of fatherhood and the priesthood—but the man is not without the woman nor the woman without the man in the Lord (see 1 Cor. 11:11). Both a righteous man and a righteous woman are a blessing to all those their lives touch.

Remember, in the world before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood tasks. While we do not now remember the particulars, this does not alter the glorious reality of what we once agreed to. You are accountable for those things which long ago were expected of you just as are those we sustain as prophets and apostles!

Even though the eternal roles of men and women differ, as we indicated to you a year ago, this leaves

much to be done by way of parallel personal development—for both men and women. In this connection, I stress again the deep need each woman has to study the scriptures. We want our homes to be blessed with sister scriptionists—whether you are single or married, young or old, widowed or living in a family.

Regardless of your particular circumstances, as you become more and more familiar with the truths of the scriptures, you will be more and more effective in keeping the second great commandment, to love your neighbor as yourself. Become scholars of the scriptures—not to put others down, but to lift them up! After all, who has any greater need to “treasure up” the truths of the gospel (on which they may call in their moments of need) than do women and mothers who do so much nurturing and teaching?

Seek excellence in all your righteous endeavors, and in all aspects of your lives.

Bear in mind, dear sisters, that the eternal blessings which are yours through membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are far, far greater than any other blessings you could possibly receive. No greater recognition can come to you in this world than to be known as a woman of God. No greater status can be conferred upon you than being a daughter of God who experiences true sisterhood, wifehood, and motherhood, or other tasks which influence lives for good.

True, there are some temporary differences and some constraining circumstances. Some of you have lost your husbands through death, others through divorce. Some of you have not yet had the great privilege of marriage. But, on the scale of eternity, the missing of these blessings “shall be but a small moment” (see D&C 121:7).

Others of the sisters are experiencing the anguish that often goes with aging. Still others of you now know the uncertainty of being young as you ponder your place in the eternal scheme of things. But real as these challenges are, all of you need to drink in deeply the gospel truths about the eternal nature of your individual identity and the uniqueness of your personality. You need, more and more, to feel the perfect love which our Father in Heaven has for you and to sense the value he places upon you as an individual. Ponder upon these great truths, especially in those moments when (in the stillness of such anxiety as you may experience as an individual) you might otherwise wonder and be perplexed.

Remember, too, as we focus on the glories and importance of family life here, that all of us belong to the eternal family of our Father in Heaven.

Be assured, too, that all faithful sisters, who, through no fault of their own, do not have the privilege during their second estate of being sealed to a worthy man, will have that blessing in eternity. On occasions when you ache for that acceptance and affection which belong to family life on earth, please know that our Father in Heaven is aware of your anguish, and that one day he will bless you beyond your capacity to express.

Sometimes to be tested and proved requires that we be temporarily deprived—but righteous women and men will one day receive *all*—think of it, sisters—*all* that our Father has! It is not only worth waiting for; it is worth living for!

Meanwhile, one does not need to be married or a mother in order to keep the first and second great commandments—those of loving God and our fellowmen—on which Jesus said hang all the law and all the prophets.

Some women, because of circumstances beyond their control, must work. We understand that. We understand further that as families are raised, the talents God has given you and blessed you with can often be put to effective use in additional service to mankind. Do not, however, make the mistake of being drawn off into secondary tasks which will cause the neglect of your eternal assignments such as giving birth to and rearing the spirit children of our Father in Heaven. Pray carefully over all your decisions.

We wish you to pursue and to achieve that education, therefore, which will fit you for eternity *as well as* for full service in mortality. In addition to those basic and vital skills which go with homemaking, there are other skills which can be appropriately cultivated and which will increase your effectiveness in the home, in the Church, and in the community.

Again, you must be wise in the choices that you make, but we do not desire the women of the Church to be uninformed or ineffective. You will be better mothers and wives, both in this life and in eternity, if you sharpen the skills you have been given and use the talents with which God has blessed you.

There is no greater and more glorious set of promises given to women than those which come through the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ.

There is no greater and more glorious set of promises given to women than those which come through the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ. Where else can you learn who you really are? Where else can you be given the necessary explanations and assurances about the nature of life? From what other source can you learn about your own uniqueness and identity? From whom else could you learn of our Father in Heaven's glorious plan of happiness?

The gospel answers are the only true answers to the questions which women and men, over the centuries, have raised about themselves, about life, and about the universe. How good God has been to us all in blessing us with these answers and assurances—even though these truths place upon us serious and everlasting obligations.

How special it is for Latter-day Saint women to be given the lofty assignments they have been given by our Father in Heaven, especially those of you who have been privileged to be born in this part of this last dispensation. Let other women pursue heedlessly what they perceive as their selfish interests. You can be a much needed force for love and truth and righteousness on this planet. Let others selfishly pursue false values, but God has given to you the tremendous tasks of *nurturing* families, friends, and neighbors, just as men are to *provide*. But *both* husband and wife are to be parents!

Finally, my dear sisters, may I suggest to you something that has not been said before or at least in quite this way. 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 (in whom there is often such an inner sense of spirituality) 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.

Among the real heroines in the world who will come into the Church are women who are more concerned with being righteous than with being selfish. These real heroines have true humility, which places a higher value on integrity than on visibility.

Remember, it is as wrong to do things just to be seen of women as it is to do things to be seen of men. Great women and men are always more anxious to serve than to have dominion.

Thus it will be that female exemplars of the Church will be a significant force in both the numerical and the spiritual growth of the Church in the last days.

No wonder the adversary strives, even now, to prevent this from happening! Regardless of who is getting the adversary's special attention at any given time, he seeks to make all people "miserable like unto himself" (2 Ne. 2:27). Indeed, he seeks "the misery of all mankind" (2 Ne. 2:18). He is undeviating in his purposes and is clever and relentless in his pursuit of them.

As we approach the general conference with its priesthood session, we will be no less loving or direct with the brethren, for our counsel will be similar.

We love you sisters. We have confidence in you. We rejoice in your devotion. We are greatly heartened by your presence not only tonight but in this portion of this dispensation wherein your talents and spiritual strength are so desperately needed.

May God bless you so that all the previous blessings promised to you will become a reality in this life and in the world to come.

I know that God lives, that Jesus is his Only Begotten Son, the Redeemer of the world, and that this is the Church of Jesus Christ, with him as its head. I leave this testimony with you with my love and my blessings. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

TO THE MOTHERS IN ZION



*President Ezra Taft Benson
President of the Church
Fireside address,
22 Feb. 1987*

There is no theme I would rather speak to than home and family, for they are at the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church, in large part, exists for the salvation and exaltation of the family.

At a recent general priesthood meeting, I spoke directly to the young men of the Aaronic

Priesthood regarding their duties and responsibilities. Shortly thereafter, at a general women's conference, I spoke to the young women of the Church, discussing their opportunities and their sacred callings.

Tonight, at this fireside for parents, seeking the sweet inspiration of heaven, I would like to speak directly to the mothers assembled here and throughout the Church, for you are, or should be, the very heart and soul of the family.

No More Noble Work

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.

This evening I pay tribute to the mothers in Zion and pray with all my heart that what I have to say to you will be understood by the Spirit and will lift and bless your lives in your sacred callings as mothers.

President David O. McKay declared: "Motherhood is the greatest potential influence either for good or ill in human life. The mother's image is the first that stamps itself on the unwritten page of the young child's mind. It is her caress that first awakens a sense of security; her kiss, the first realization of affection; her sympathy and tenderness, the first assurance that there is love in the world."

President McKay continues: "Motherhood consists of three principal attributes or qualities: namely, (1) the power to bear, (2) the ability to rear, (3) the gift to love. . . .

"This ability and willingness properly to rear children, the gift to love, and eagerness, yes, longing to express it in soul development, make motherhood the noblest office or calling in the world. She who can paint a masterpiece or write a book that will influence millions deserves the admiration and the plaudits of mankind; but she who rears successfully a family of healthy, beautiful sons and daughters, whose influence will be felt through generations to come, . . . deserves the highest honor that man can give, and the choicest blessings of God" (*Gospel Ideals*, 452-54).

With all my heart I endorse the words of President McKay.

A Mother's Role Is God-Ordained

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.

But 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.

In section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord states that the opportunity and responsibility of wives is "to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfil the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified" (D&C 132:63).

Husbands and Wives Are Co-Creators

With this divine injunction, husbands and wives, as co-creators, should eagerly and prayerfully invite children into their homes. Then, as each child joins their family circle, they can gratefully exclaim, as did Hannah, "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord: as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:27–28).

Isn't that beautiful? A mother praying to bear a child and then giving him to the Lord.

I have always loved the words of Solomon: "Children are an heritage of the Lord: and . . . happy is the man [and woman] that hath [their] quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:3–5).

I know the special blessings of a large and happy family, for my dear parents had a quiver full of children. Being the oldest of eleven children, I saw the principles of unselfishness, mutual consideration, loyalty to each other, and a host of other virtues developed in a large and wonderful family with my noble mother as the queen of that home.

Young mothers and fathers, with all my heart I counsel you not to postpone having your children, being co-creators with our Father in Heaven.

Do not use the reasoning of the world, such as, "We'll wait until we can better afford having children, until we are more secure, until John has completed his education, until he has a better-paying job, until we have a larger home, until we've obtained a few of the material conveniences," and on and on.

This is the reasoning of the world, and is not pleasing in the sight of God. Mothers who enjoy good health,

have your children and have them early. And, husbands, always be considerate of your wives in the bearing of children.

Do not curtail the number of your children for personal or selfish reasons. Material possessions, social convenience, and so-called professional advantages are nothing compared to a righteous posterity. In the eternal perspective, children—not possessions, not position, not prestige—are our greatest jewels.

Brigham Young emphasized: "There are multitudes of pure and holy spirits waiting to take tabernacles, now what is our duty?—To prepare tabernacles for them; to take a course that will not tend to drive those spirits into the families of the wicked, where they will be trained in wickedness, debauchery, and every species of crime. It is the duty of every righteous man and woman to prepare tabernacles for all the spirits they can" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954], p. 197).

Yes, 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.

Special Promises of God

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.

Through pure faith, pleading prayers, fasting, and special priesthood 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, and to these wonderful couples we salute you for the sacrifices and love you have given to those children you have chosen to be your own.

Rearing Children the Lord's Way

Now, my dear mothers, knowing of your divine role to bear and rear children and bring them back to

The deepest joys and blessings in life are associated with family, parenthood, and sacrifice.

Him, how will you accomplish this in the Lord's way? I say the "Lord's way," because it is different from the world's way.

The Lord clearly defined the roles of mothers and fathers in providing for and rearing a righteous posterity. In the beginning, Adam—not Eve—was instructed to earn the bread by the sweat of his brow. Contrary to conventional wisdom, a mother's calling is in the home, not in the marketplace.

Again, in the Doctrine and Covenants, we read: "Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken" (D&C 83:2). This is the divine right of a wife and mother. She cares for and nourishes her children at home. Her husband earns the living for the family, which makes this nourishing possible. With that claim on their husbands for their financial support, the counsel of the Church has always been for mothers to spend their full time in the home in rearing and caring for their children.

We realize also that some of our choice sisters are widowed and divorced and that others find themselves in unusual circumstances where, out of necessity, they are required to work for a period of time. But these instances are the exception, not the rule.

In a home where there is an able-bodied husband, he is expected to be the breadwinner. Sometimes we hear of husbands who, because of economic conditions, have lost their jobs and expect their wives to go out of the home and work even though the husband is still capable of providing for his family. In these cases, we urge the husband to do all in his power to allow his wife to remain in the home caring for the children while he continues to provide for his family the best he can, even though the job he is able to secure may not be ideal and family budgeting will have to be tighter.

Counsel of President Kimball

Our beloved prophet Spencer W. Kimball had much to say about the role of mothers in the home and their callings and responsibilities. I am impressed tonight to share with you some of his inspired pronouncements. I fear that much of his counsel has gone unheeded, and families have suffered because of it. But I stand this evening as a second witness to the

truthfulness of what President Spencer W. Kimball said. He spoke as a true prophet of God.

President Kimball declared: "Women are to take care of the family—the Lord has so stated—to be an assistant to the husband, to work with him, but not to earn the living, except in unusual circumstances. Men ought to be men indeed and earn the living under normal circumstances" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, . . . p. 318).

President Kimball continues: "Too many mothers work away from home to furnish sweaters and music lessons and trips and fun for their children. Too many women spend their time in socializing, in politicking, in public services when they should be home to teach and train and receive and love their children into security" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 319).

Remember the counsel of President Kimball to John and Mary: "Mary, you are to become a career woman in the greatest career on earth—that of homemaker, wife, and mother. It was never intended by the Lord that married women should compete with men in employment. They have a far greater and more important service to render" (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975], p. 128).

Again President Kimball speaks: "The husband is expected to support his family and only in an emergency should a wife secure outside employment. Her place is in the home, to build the home into a heaven of delight.

"Numerous divorces can be traced directly to the day when the wife left the home and went out into the world into employment. Two incomes raise the standard of living beyond its norm. Two spouses working prevent the complete and proper home life, break into the family prayers, create an independence which is not cooperative, causes distortion, limits the family, and frustrates the children already born" (fireside address, San Antonio, Texas, 3 Dec. 1977).

Finally, President Kimball counsels: "I beg of you, you who could and should be bearing and rearing a family: wives, come home from the typewriter, the laundry, the nursing, come home from the factory, the café. No career approaches in importance that of wife, homemaker, mother—cooking meals, washing dishes, making beds for one's precious husband and children. Come home,

No career approaches in importance that of wife, homemaker, mother.

wives, to your husbands. Make home a heaven for them. Come home, wives, to your children, born and unborn. Wrap the motherly cloak about you and, unembarrassed, help in a major role to create the bodies for the immortal souls who anxiously await.

“When you have fully complemented your husband in home life and borne the children, growing up full of faith, integrity, responsibility, and goodness, then you have achieved your accomplishment supreme, without peer, and you will be the envy [of all] through time and eternity” (fireside address, San Antonio, Texas).

President Kimball spoke the truth. His words are prophetic.

Ten Ways to Spend Time with Children

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.

With love in my heart for the mothers in Zion, I would now like to suggest ten specific ways our mothers may spend effective time with their children.

Be at the Crossroads. First, take time to always be at the crossroads when your children are either coming or going—when they leave and return from school, when they leave and return from dates, when they bring friends home. Be there at the crossroads whether your children are six or sixteen. In Proverbs we read, “A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Proverbs 29:15). Among the greatest concerns in our society are the millions of latchkey children who come home daily to empty houses, unsupervised by working parents.

Be a Real Friend. 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 unrushed one-on-one time with each child. Be a real friend to your children.

Read to Your Children. Third, mothers, take time to read to your children. Starting from the cradle, read to your sons and daughters. Remember what the poet said:

*You may have tangible wealth untold;
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.
Richer than I you can never be—*

I had a mother who read to me.

(Strickland Gillilan, “The Reading Mother.”)

You will plant a love for good literature and a real love for the scriptures if you will read to your children regularly.

Pray with Your Children. 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. Paraphrasing the words of James, “The . . . fervent prayer of a righteous [mother] availeth much” (James 5:16). Have your children participate in family and personal prayers, and rejoice in their sweet utterances to their Father in Heaven.

Have Weekly Home Evenings. Fifth, take time to have a meaningful weekly home evening. With your husband presiding, participate in a spiritual and an uplifting home evening each week. Have your children actively involved. Teach them correct principles. Make this one of your great family traditions. Remember the marvelous promise made by President Joseph F. Smith when home evenings were first introduced to the Church: “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 influence and temptations which beset them” (James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75], 4:339). This wonderful promise is still in effect today.

Be Together at Mealtimes. 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 mothers and fathers and children work at it.

Read Scriptures Daily. Seventh, take time daily to read the scriptures together as a family. Individual scripture reading is important, but family scripture reading is vital. 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.

Do Things as a Family. Eighth, take time to do things together 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 stay together and will bless children's lives forever.

Teach Your Children. Ninth, mothers, take time to teach your children. Catch the teaching moments. This can be done anytime during the day—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. Mothers, you are your children's best teacher. Don't shift this precious responsibility to day-care centers or baby-sitters. A mother's love and prayerful concern for the children are her 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.

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.

Teach them a love for work and the value of a good education.

Teach them the importance of the right kind of entertainment, including appropriate movies and videos and music and books and magazines. Discuss the evils of pornography and drugs, and teach them the value of living the clean life.

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. This is the Lord's way of teaching. The Church cannot teach like you can. The school cannot. The day-care center cannot. But you can, and the Lord will sustain you. Your children will remember your teachings forever, and when they are old, they will not depart from them. They will call you blessed—their truly angel mother.

Mothers, this kind of heavenly, motherly teaching takes time—lots of time. It cannot be done effectively

part-time. It must be done all the time in order to save and exalt your children. This is your divine calling.

Truly Love Your Children. Tenth and finally, mothers, take the time to truly love your children. A mother's unqualified love approaches Christlike love.

Here is a beautiful tribute by a son to his mother: "I don't remember much about her views of voting nor her social prestige; and what her ideas on child training, diet, and eugenics were, I cannot recall. The main thing that sifts back to me now through the thick undergrowth of years is that she loved me. She liked to lie on the grass with me and tell stories, or to run and hide with us children. She was always hugging me. And I liked it. She had a sunny face. To me it was like God, and all the beatitudes saints tell of Him. And Sing! Of all the sensations pleasurable to my life nothing can compare with the rapture of crawling up into her lap and going to sleep while she swung to and fro in her rocking chair and sang. Thinking of this, I wonder if the woman of today, with all her tremendous notions and plans, realizes what an almighty factor she is in shaping of her child for weal or woe. I wonder if she realizes how much sheer love and attention count for in a child's life."

Mothers, your teenage children also need that same kind of love and attention. It seems easier for many mothers and fathers to express and show 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.

Blessings of the Lord upon Parents

In closing, I would be remiss this evening if I did not express my love and eternal gratitude for my sweetheart and companion and the mother of our six children. Her devotion to motherhood has blessed me and our family beyond words of expression. She has been a marvelous mother, completely and happily devoting her life and her mission to her family. How grateful I am for Flora!

May I also express my gratitude to you fathers and husbands assembled this evening. We look to you

to give righteous leadership in your home and families and, with your companions and the mothers of your children, to lead your families back to our Eternal Father.

Now 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. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

WOMEN OF THE CHURCH



President Gordon B. Hinckley
President of the Church
In Conference Report,
Oct. 1996, 90–95;
or Ensign, Nov.
1996, 67–70

Women Are Essential to God's Plan

Half, possibly more than half, of the adult members of the Church are women. It is to them that I wish particularly to speak this morning. I do so with the hope that the men will also hear.

First let me say to you sisters that you do not hold a second place in our Father's plan for the eternal happiness and well-being of His children. You are an absolutely essential part of that plan.

Without you the plan could not function. Without you the entire program would be frustrated. As I have said before from this pulpit, when the process of creation occurred, Jehovah, the Creator, under instruction from His Father, first divided the light from the darkness and then separated the land from the waters. There followed the creation of plant life, followed by the creation of animal life. Then came the creation of man, and culminating that act of divinity came the crowning act, the creation of woman.

Each of you is a daughter of God, endowed with a divine birthright. You need no defense of that position.

Great Strength in Women of the Church

As I go about from place to place, I am interviewed by representatives of the media. Invariably they ask

about the place of women in the Church. They do so in an almost accusatory tone, as if we denigrate and demean women. I invariably reply that I know of no other organization in all the world which affords women so many opportunities for development, for sociality, for the accomplishment of great good, for holding positions of leadership and responsibility.

I wish all of these reporters could have been in the Tabernacle a week ago Saturday when the general Relief Society meeting was held. It was an inspiration to look into the faces of that vast gathering of the daughters of God, women of faith and ability, women who know what life is about and have something of a sense of the divinity of their creation. I wish they could have heard that great chorus of young women from Brigham Young University, who touched our hearts with the beauty of their singing. I wish they could have heard the stirring messages of the Relief Society general presidency, each of whom spoke on a phase of the subject faith, hope, and charity.

What able people these women are. They express themselves with power and conviction and great persuasiveness. President Faust concluded that service with a wonderful talk.

If those reporters who are prone to raise this question could have sat in that vast congregation, they would have known, even without further inquiry, that there is strength and great capacity in the women of this Church. There is leadership and direction, a certain spirit of independence, and yet great satisfaction in being a part of this, the Lord's kingdom, and of working hand in hand with the priesthood to move it forward.

The Real Builders of the Nation

Many of you are here today who were in that meeting. Today you are seated with your husbands, men whom you love and honor and respect, and who in turn love and honor and respect you. You know how fortunate you are to be married to a good man who is your companion in life and who will be your companion throughout eternity. Together, as you have served in many capacities and reared your families and provided for them, you have faced a variety of storms and come through them all with your heads held high. Most of you are mothers, and very many of you are grandmothers and even great-grandmothers. You have walked the sometimes painful, sometimes joyous path of

parenthood. You have walked hand in hand with God in the great process of bringing children into the world that they might experience this estate along the road of immortality and eternal life. It has not been easy rearing a family. Most of you have had to sacrifice and skimp and labor night and day. As I think of you and your circumstances, I think of the words of Anne Campbell, who wrote as she looked upon her children:

*You are the trip I did not take;
You are the pearls I cannot buy;
You are my blue Italian lake;
You are my piece of foreign sky.*

["To My Child," quoted in Charles L. Wallis, ed., *The Treasure Chest* (1965), 54]

You sisters are the real builders of the nation wherever you live, for you have created homes of strength and peace and security. These become the very sinew of any nation.

Rebuke to Abusers

Unfortunately a few of you may be married to men who are abusive. Some of them put on a fine face before the world during the day and come home in the evening, set aside their self-discipline, and on the slightest provocation fly into outbursts of anger.

No man who engages in such evil and unbecoming behavior is worthy of the priesthood of God. No man who so conducts himself is worthy of the privileges of the house of the Lord. I regret that there are some men undeserving of the love of their wives and children. There are children who fear their fathers, and wives who fear their husbands. If there be any such men within the hearing of my voice, as a servant of the Lord I rebuke you and call you to repentance. Discipline yourselves. Master your temper. Most of the things that make you angry are of very small consequence. And what a terrible price you are paying for your anger. Ask the Lord to forgive you. Ask your wife to forgive you. Apologize to your children.

Advice to Single Women

There are many women among us who are single. Generally this is not of their own choice. Some have never had the opportunity to marry one with whom they would wish to spend eternity.

To you single women who wish to be married, I repeat what I recently said in a meeting for singles in this Tabernacle:

"Do not give up hope. And do not give up trying. But do give up being obsessed with it. The chances are that if you forget about it and become anxiously engaged in other activities, the prospects will brighten immeasurably. . . .

"I believe that for most of us the best medicine for loneliness is work, service in behalf of others. I do not minimize your problems, but I do not hesitate to say that there are many others whose problems are more serious than are yours. Reach out to serve them, to help them, to encourage them. There are so many boys and girls who fail in school for want of a little personal attention and encouragement. There are so many elderly people who live in misery and loneliness and fear for whom a simple conversation would bring a measure of hope and happiness" (Salt Lake Valley single adult fireside, 22 Sept. 1996).

Assist Women Who Have Lost Husbands

Included among the women of the Church are those who have lost their husbands through abandonment, divorce, and death. Great is our obligation to you. As the scriptures declare, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

I received a letter from one who counts herself fortunate, and indeed fortunate she is. She writes:

"Although I have been raising our four boys as a single parent, . . . I am not alone. I have a wonderful 'ward family' that has rallied around us. . . .

"My Relief Society president has been there for me through my greatest hardships, encouraging my spiritual growth, personal prayer, and temple attendance.

"Our bishop has been generous in providing needed food and clothing and has helped send two of the boys to camp. He has had interviews with all of us and given each of us blessings and needed encouragement. He has helped me to budget and do what I can to help my family.

"Our home teachers have come regularly and even gave the boys blessings as they started the new school year.

"Our stake president and his counselors have checked in on us on a regular basis by taking time to visit with us at church, on the phone, or in our home.

"This Church is true, and my boys and I are living proof that God loves us and that a 'ward family' can make all the difference.

"Our priesthood leaders have been instrumental in keeping the boys active in church and in the Scouting program. [One] is an Eagle Scout and is receiving his fourth palm this week. [Another] is an Eagle with three palms. And [a third] has just turned in his Eagle papers this week. The youngest is a Webelos and loves Cub Scouts.

"We are always met with loving hearts and warm handshakes. The Christlike attitude of the stake and our ward has helped us through trials we never imagined possible.

"Life has been hard, . . . but we put on the whole armor of God as we kneel in family prayer . . . , asking for help and guidance and sharing thanks for the blessings we have received. I pray daily for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost to guide me as I raise these boys to be missionaries and encourage them to be true to the gospel and the priesthood they hold.

"I am proud to say I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I know this Church is true. I sustain my Church leaders. We are doing well, and I thank everyone for their love and prayers and acceptance."

What a great letter that is! How much it says about the way this Church functions and should function throughout the world. I hope that every woman who finds herself in the kind of circumstances in which this woman lives is similarly blessed with an understanding and helpful bishop, with a Relief Society president who knows how to assist her, with home teachers who know where their duty lies and how to fulfill it, and with a host of ward members who are helpful without being intrusive.

I have never met the woman whose letter I have read. Notwithstanding the cheerful attitude she conveys, I am sure there has been much of struggle and loneliness and, at times, fear. I notice that she works to provide for her needs and the needs of her boys, who are in their teens. I assume her income is inadequate, because she indicates that the bishop has helped them with food and clothing.

Advice on Employment Outside the Home

Some years ago President Benson delivered a message to the women of the Church. He encouraged them

to leave their employment and give their individual time to their children. I sustain the position which he took.

Nevertheless, I recognize, as he recognized, that there are some women (it has become very many, in fact) who have to work to provide for the needs of their families. To you I say, do the very best you can. I hope that if you are employed full-time you are doing it to ensure that basic needs are met and not simply to indulge a taste for an elaborate home, fancy cars, and other luxuries. The greatest job that any mother will ever do will be in nurturing, teaching, lifting, encouraging, and rearing her children in righteousness and truth. None other can adequately take her place.

It is well-nigh impossible to be a full-time homemaker and a full-time employee. I know how some of you struggle with decisions concerning this matter. I repeat, do the very best you can. You know your circumstances, and I know that you are deeply concerned for the welfare of your children. Each of you has a bishop who will counsel with you and assist you. If you feel you need to speak with an understanding woman, do not hesitate to get in touch with your Relief Society president.

To the mothers of this Church, every mother who is here today, I want to say that as the years pass, you will become increasingly grateful for that which you did in molding the lives of your children in the direction of righteousness and goodness, integrity and faith. That is most likely to happen if you can spend adequate time with them.

Advice to Single Parents

For you who are single parents, I say that many hands stand ready to help you. The Lord is not unmindful of you. Neither is His Church.

May He bless you, my beloved sisters who find yourselves in the situation of single parenthood. May you have health, strength, vitality to carry the heavy burden that is yours. May you have loving friends and associates to bear you up in your times of trial. You know the power of prayer as perhaps few others do. Many of you spend much time on your knees speaking with your Father in Heaven, with tears running down your cheeks. Please know that we also pray for you.

With all that you have to do, you are also asked to serve in the Church. Your bishop will not ask you

to do anything that is beyond your capacity. And as you so serve, a new dimension will be added to your life. You will find new and stimulating associations. You will find friendship and sociality. You will grow in knowledge and understanding and wisdom and in your capacity to do. You will become a better mother because of the service you give in the work of the Lord.

To Older Women

Now in conclusion I wish to say a word to you older women, many of whom are widows. You are a great treasure. You have passed through the storms of life. You have weathered the challenges now facing your younger sisters. You are mature in wisdom, in understanding, in compassion, in love and service.

There is a certain beauty that shines through your countenances. It is the beauty that comes of peace. There may still be struggle, but there is mature wisdom to meet it. There are health problems, but there is a certain composure concerning them. The bad memories of the past have largely been forgotten, while the good memories return and bring sweet and satisfying enrichment to life.

You have learned to love the scriptures, and you read them. Your prayers for the most part are prayers of thanksgiving. Your greetings are words of kindness. Your friendship is a sturdy staff on which others may lean.

What a resource are the women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You love this Church; you accept its doctrine; you honor your place in its organization; you bring luster and strength and beauty to its congregations. How thankful we are to you. How much you are loved, respected, and honored.

I salute my own beloved companion. It will soon be 60 years ago that we walked from the Salt Lake Temple as husband and wife, with love for one another. That love has strengthened through all of these years. We have faced many problems during our years of marriage. Somehow, with the blessing of the Lord, we have survived them all.

It is becoming physically harder to stand tall and straight as we did in our younger years. No matter—we still have one another and we still stand together, even though we lean a little. And when the time for separation comes, there will be much of sorrow, but there will also be the comfort that will come from the assurance that she is mine and I am hers for the eternity that lies ahead.

Appreciation for Sisters

And so, my beloved sisters, please know how much we appreciate you. You bring a measure of wholeness to us. You have great strength. With dignity and tremendous ability, you carry forward the remarkable programs of the Relief Society, the Young Women, and the Primary. You teach Sunday School. We walk at your side as your companions and your brethren with respect and love, with honor and great admiration. It was the Lord who designated that men in His Church should hold the priesthood. It was He who has given you your capabilities to round out this great and marvelous organization, which is the Church and kingdom of God. I bear testimony before the entire world of your worth, of your grace and goodness, of your remarkable abilities and tremendous contributions, and I invoke the blessings of heaven upon you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

THE JOY OF LIVING THE GREAT PLAN OF HAPPINESS



Elder Richard G. Scott

*Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

*In Conference Report,
Oct. 1996, 100–104;
or Ensign, Nov. 1996,
73–75*

God's Great Plan of Happiness

The scriptures record, “And I, God, created man . . . ; male and female created I them.”¹ This was done spiritually in your premortal existence when you lived in the presence of your Father in Heaven. Your gender existed before you came to earth. You elected to have this earth experience as part of His plan for you. The prophets call it “the plan of mercy,”² the “eternal plan of deliverance,”³ “the plan of salvation,”⁴ and, yes, “the great plan of happiness.”⁵ You were taught this plan before you came to earth and there rejoiced in the privilege of participating in it.

Obedience to the plan is a requisite for full happiness in this life and a continuation of eternal joy beyond the veil. Essential to His plan of happiness is agency—the right of personal choice. Also fundamental is the holy privilege of procreation to be exercised

within the commitment of legal marriage. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. The family is ordained of God.⁶ As husband and wife, you have the responsibility to bear children and to nurture and train them spiritually, emotionally, and physically.⁷

Satan also has a plan. It is a cunning, evil, subtle plan of destruction.⁸ It is his objective to take captive the children of Father in Heaven and with every possible means frustrate the great plan of happiness.

Importance of Marriage in God's Plan

Our Heavenly Father endowed His sons and daughters with unique traits especially fitted for their individual responsibilities as they fulfill His plan. To follow His plan requires that you do those things He expects of you as a son or daughter, husband or wife. Those roles are different but entirely compatible. In the Lord's plan, it takes two—a man and a woman—to form a whole. Indeed, a husband and wife are not two identical halves, but a wondrous, divinely determined combination of complementary capacities and characteristics.

Marriage allows these different characteristics to come together in oneness—in unity—to bless a husband and wife, their children and grandchildren. For the greatest happiness and productivity in life, both husband and wife are needed. Their efforts interlock and are complementary. Each has individual traits that best fit the role the Lord has defined for happiness as a man or woman. When used as the Lord intends, those capacities allow a married couple to think, act, and rejoice as one—to face challenges together and overcome them as one, to grow in love and understanding, and through temple ordinances to be bound together as one whole, eternally. That is the plan.

Learn from the Lives of Adam and Eve

You can learn how to be more effective parents by studying the lives of Adam and Eve. Adam was Michael who helped create the earth—a glorious, superb individual. Eve was his equal—a full, powerfully contributing partner. After they had partaken of the fruit, the Lord spoke with them. Their comments reveal some different characteristics of a man and woman. To Adam He said, "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that

thou shouldst not eat?"⁹ Now, Adam's response was characteristic of a man who wants to be perceived as being as close to right as possible. Adam responded, "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."¹⁰ And the Lord said unto Eve, "What is this thing which thou hast done?"¹¹ Eve's response was characteristic of a woman. Her answer was very simple and straightforward: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."¹²

Later, "Adam blessed God . . . and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of *my* transgression *my* eyes are opened, and in this life *I* shall have joy, and again in the flesh *I* shall see God."¹³ Adam was thinking about his responsibilities. He was trying to align his performance with the desires of the Lord. Eve said, "Were it not for *our* transgression *we* never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of *our* redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto *all* the obedient."¹⁴ Eve's response was characteristic of a woman. She embraced all, wanted to make sure that everyone was considered. One response was not more correct than the other. The two perspectives resulted from the traits inherent in men and women. The Lord intends that we use those differences to fulfill His plan for happiness, personal growth, and development. By counseling together they arrived at a broader, more correct understanding of truth.

They worked together.¹⁵ They obeyed the commandment to have children.¹⁶ They knew the plan of happiness and followed it, even though at times it resulted in hardship and difficulty for them.

They were commanded, "Thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore."¹⁷ And they did. Further, they taught their children the plan of happiness.¹⁸ They worked together to overcome challenges,¹⁹ and they "ceased not to call upon God."²⁰

Because Adam and Eve were obedient, the Holy Ghost led them. As husband and wife, you can receive direction in your lives by qualifying for the gift of the Holy Ghost through obedience to the teachings of the Savior.

***In the Lord's plan,
it takes two—a
man and a
woman—to form
a whole.***

Roles of Wife and Mother

Beware of the subtle ways Satan employs to take you from the plan of God²¹ and true happiness. One of Satan's most effective approaches is to demean the role of wife and mother in the home. This is an attack at the very heart of God's plan to foster love between husband and wife and to nurture children in an atmosphere of understanding, peace, appreciation, and support. Much of the violence that is rampant in the world today is the harvest of weakened homes. Government and social plans will not effectively correct that, nor can the best efforts of schools and churches fully compensate for the absence of the tender care of a compassionate mother and wife in the home.

This morning President Hinckley spoke of the importance of a mother in the home. Study his message. As a mother guided by the Lord, you weave a fabric of character in your children from threads of truth through careful instruction and worthy example. You imbue the traits of honesty, faith in God, duty, respect for others, kindness, self-confidence, and the desire to contribute, to learn, and to give in your trusting children's minds and hearts. No day-care center can do that. It is your sacred right and privilege.

Of course, as a woman you can do exceptionally well in the workplace, but is that the best use of your divinely appointed talents and feminine traits? As a husband, don't encourage your wife to go to work to help in your divinely appointed responsibility of providing resources for the family, if you can possibly avoid it. As the prophets have counseled, to the extent possible with the help of the Lord, as parents, work together to keep Mother in the home.²² Your presence there will strengthen the self-confidence of your children and decrease the chance of emotional challenges. Moreover, as you teach truth by word and example, those children will come to understand who they are and what they can obtain as divine children of Father in Heaven.

Blessings to Be Given in the Lord's Time

I know I have been speaking of the ideal, and you may be disturbed because your life may not now fit that mold. I promise you that through your obedience and continuing faith in Jesus Christ and your understanding of the whole plan of happiness, even if important parts of it aren't fulfilled in your life now, they will be yours in the Lord's due time. I also

promise you that you can have significant growth and happiness now in your present circumstances. As a daughter or son of God, live whatever portion of the plan you can to the best of your ability.

Your desire to be a wife and mother may not have its total fulfillment here, but it will in His time as you live in faith and obedience to merit it.²³ Don't be lured away from the plan of our God²⁴ to the ways of the world, where motherhood is belittled, femininity is decried, and the divinely established role of wife and mother is mocked. Let the world go its way. You follow the plan of the Lord for the greatest measure of true, eternal achievement and the fullest happiness. The lack of promised blessings for which you qualify will be fully rectified in this life or in the next.²⁵

Gratitude for What Women Are and Do

I often interview strong priesthood leaders. When these men speak of their wives, it is with deep tenderness and obvious appreciation. Often, tears flow. Their comments include, "She is more spiritual, purer, and more committed than I," "She motivates me to be a better person," "She is the strength of my life," and "I couldn't do it without her." As a woman, please don't judge how worthwhile, needed, and loved you are by our inept ability to express our true feelings. Your divinely conferred trait of giving of self without counting the cost leads you to underestimate your own worth.

I humbly thank our Father in Heaven for His daughters, you who were willing to come to earth to live under such uncertain circumstances. Most men could not handle the uncertainties you are asked to live with. Social customs require that you wait to be asked for marriage. You are expected to go with your husband wherever his employment or call takes him. Your environment and neighborhood are determined by his ability to provide, meager or not. You place your life in the Lord's hands each time you bear a child. Men make no such sacrifice. The blessing of nurturing children and caring for a husband often is intermingled with many routine tasks. But you do all of these things willingly because you are a woman. Generally you have no idea of how truly wonderful and capable you are, how very much appreciated and loved, or how desperately needed, for most men don't tell you as completely and as often as needed.

How to Attain Happiness

How can you receive the greatest happiness and blessings from this earth experience?

- Learn the doctrinal foundation of the great plan of happiness by studying the scriptures, pondering their content, and praying to understand them. Carefully study and use the proclamation of the First Presidency and the Twelve on the family.²⁶ It was inspired of the Lord.
- Listen to the voice of current and past prophets. Their declarations are inspired. You may verify that counsel in your own mind and heart by praying about it as it applies to your special circumstances. Ask the Lord to confirm your choices, and accept accountability for them.
- Obey the inner feelings that come as promptings from the Holy Ghost. Those feelings are engendered by your righteous thoughts and acts and your determination to seek the will of the Lord and to live it.
- When needed, seek counsel and guidance from parents and your priesthood leaders.

A choice mother wrote: "How did the pioneer women . . . respond to the challenges of their day? They *listened* to their prophet's voice and *followed* him because they *knew* he spoke the will of the Lord. They met the challenges and reaped great blessings because of their faith and obedience. Their first priorities were not security, nice homes, or an easy life. . . . No sacrifice was too great for them to make for their precious husbands and children."²⁷

I obviously don't know what it feels like to be a woman, but I do know what it is to love one with all of my heart and soul. I constantly express to the Lord overflowing gratitude for the unending blessings that flow to our children and so abundantly to me from the life of one of His precious daughters. I want the happiness we have found together to be yours. The more closely you personally adhere to His plan for you on earth, the greater will be your happiness, fulfillment, and progress; the more qualified you will be to receive the rewards He has promised for obedience. I so testify, for the Savior lives and He loves you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Moses 2:27. See also Moses 2:28; 3:5; James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 4:303; James E. Talmage, *Millennial Star*, 24 Aug. 1922, 539.
2. Alma 42:15.
3. 2 Nephi 11:5.
4. Moses 6:62.
5. Alma 42:8.
6. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. See "Proclamation," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
8. See 2 Nephi 9:8–9; Alma 12:4–5; Helaman 2:8; 3 Nephi 1:16; Doctrine and Covenants 10:12, 23.
9. Moses 4:17.
10. Moses 4:18.
11. Moses 4:19.
12. Moses 4:19.
13. Moses 5:10; italics added.
14. Moses 5:11; italics added.
15. See Moses 5:1.
16. See Moses 5:2.
17. Moses 5:8.
18. See Moses 5:12.
19. See Moses 5:13.
20. Moses 5:16.
21. 2 Nephi 9:13.
22. See Spencer W. Kimball, San Antonio fireside, 3 Dec. 1977, 32.
23. See Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 94; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 71.
24. See 2 Nephi 9:13.
25. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:76.
26. See "Proclamation," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
27. Jeanene W. Scott, BYU Women's Conference, 6 Apr. 1989, 1.

WE ARE WOMEN OF GOD



Sister Sheri L. Dew

*Second Counselor
in the Relief Society
General Presidency*

*Ensign, Nov. 1999,
97–99*

Recently a professional assignment required me to travel out of the country. But I felt such a foreboding about the trip that prior to leaving I sought a priesthood blessing. I was warned that the adversary would attempt to thwart my mission and that physical and spiritual danger lay ahead. I was also counseled that this was not to be a sight-seeing or a shopping trip and that if I would focus on my assignments and seek the direction of the Spirit, I would return safely home.

Well, the warning was sobering. But as I proceeded, pleading for direction and protection each step of the way, I realized that my experience wasn't all that unique. Might not our Father have said to you and to me as we left His presence: "The adversary will attempt to thwart your mission, and you will face spiritual and physical danger. But if you will focus on your assignments, if you will heed my voice, and if you will refuse to reduce mortality to a sight-seeing or a shopping trip, you will return safely home"?

The adversary is delighted when we act like sightseers, meaning those who are hearers rather than doers of the word (see James 1:22), or shoppers, meaning those preoccupied with the vain things of this world that suffocate our spirits. Satan baits us with perishable pleasures and preoccupations—our bank accounts, our wardrobes, even our waistlines—for he knows that where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also (see Matt. 6:21). Unfortunately, it is easy to let the blinding glare of the adversary's enticements distract us from the light of Christ. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

Prophets have admonished us to forsake the world and turn our hearts to Jesus Christ, who promised

us, "In this world your joy is *not* full, but in *me* your joy is full" (D&C 101:36; emphasis added). Said President Spencer W. Kimball, "If we insist on spending all our time and resources building up . . . a worldly kingdom, that is exactly what we will inherit" ("The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign*, June 1976, 6). How often are we so focused on pursuing the so-called good life that we lose sight of eternal life? It is the fatal spiritual equivalent of selling our birthright for a mess of pottage.

The Lord revealed the remedy for such spiritual disaster when He counseled Emma Smith to "lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better" (D&C 25:10). And Christ provided the pattern, declaring prior to Gethsemane, "I have

overcome the world" (John 16:33; emphasis added). The only way that we may overcome the world is by coming unto Christ. And coming unto Christ means walking away from the world. It means placing Christ and Christ only at the center of our lives so that the vanities and philosophies of men lose their addictive appeal. Satan is the god of Babylon, or this world. Christ is the God of Israel, and His Atonement gives us power to overcome the world. "If you expect

glory, intelligence and endless lives," said President Joseph F. Smith, "*let the world go*" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 243; emphasis added).

As sisters in Zion we can be obstacles to the adversary's conspiracy against families and virtue. No wonder he tempts us to settle for earthly pleasures rather than to seek for eternal glory. A 45-year-old mother of six told me recently that when she stopped poring over magazines that plagued her with images of how her home and wardrobe should look, she began to feel more at peace. She said, "I may be chubby, gray, and wrinkled, but I am a chubby, gray, wrinkled daughter of God, who knows me and loves me."

Relief Society can help us turn away from the world, for its express purpose is to help sisters and their families come unto Christ. In that spirit, I join Sister Smoot and Sister Jensen in declaring who we are and in rejoicing in the announced refinements in Relief Society's focus. We no longer have the luxury of spending our energy on anything that

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does not lead us and our families to Christ. That is the litmus test for Relief Society, as well as for our lives. In the days ahead, a casual commitment to Christ will not carry us through.

As a young girl I saw commitment in my grandmother, who helped Grandpa homestead our farm on the Kansas prairie. Somehow they outlasted the Dust Bowl, the Depression, and the tornadoes that terrorize the Great Plains. I've often wondered how Grandma put up with years of meager income and hard work and how she went on when her oldest son died in a tragic accident. Grandma's life wasn't easy. But do you know what I remember most about her? Her total joy in the gospel. She was never happier than when she was working on family history or teaching with her scriptures in hand. Grandma *had* laid aside the things of this world to seek for the things of a better.

To the world, my grandma was ordinary. But to me, she represents the unsung heroines of *this* century who lived up to their premortal promises and left a foundation of faith upon which we may build. Grandma wasn't perfect, but she was a woman of God. Now it is for you and for me to carry forward the banner into the next century. *We are not women of the world.*

We are women of God. And women of God will be among the greatest heroines of the 21st century. As President Joseph F. Smith proclaimed, it is not for us "to be led by the women of the world; it is for [us] to lead . . . the women of the world, in everything that is praise-worthy" (*Teachings*, 184).

This is not to diminish the lives of countless good women throughout the world. *But we are unique.* We are unique because of our covenants, our spiritual privileges, and the responsibilities attached to both. We are endowed with power and gifted with the Holy Ghost. We have a *living* prophet to guide us, ordinances that bind us to the Lord and to each other, and the power of the priesthood in our midst. We understand where we stand in the great plan of happiness. And we know that God is our Father and that His Son is our unfailing Advocate.

With these privileges comes great responsibility, for "unto whom much is given much is required" (D&C 82:3), and at times the demands of discipleship are heavy. But shouldn't we expect the journey

towards eternal glory to stretch us? We sometimes rationalize our preoccupation with this world and our casual attempts to grow spiritually by trying to console each other with the notion that living the gospel really shouldn't require all that much of us. The Lord's standard of behavior will always be more demanding than the world's, but then the Lord's rewards are infinitely more glorious—including true joy, peace, and salvation.

How then do we, as women of God, fill the full measure of our creation? The Lord rewards "them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). We seek Him not only by studying and searching, by pleading and praying and watching always lest we enter into temptation, but by giving up worldly indulgences that straddle the line between God and mammon. Otherwise we risk being called but not chosen because our "hearts are set so much upon the things of this world" (D&C 121:35).

Consider the principle taught in the sequence of this scriptural injunction: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*, with all thy might, mind, and strength" (D&C 59:5; emphasis added). What the Lord requires first is our hearts. Imagine how our choices would be affected if we loved the Savior above all else.

How we would spend our time and money, or dress on a hot summer day, or respond to the call to visit teach and take care of one another, or react to media that offend the Spirit.

It is by letting the world go and coming unto Christ that we increasingly live as women of God. We were born for eternal glory. Just as faithful men were foreordained to hold the priesthood, we were foreordained to be women of God. We *are* women of faith, virtue, vision, and charity who rejoice in motherhood and in womanhood and in the family. We are not panicked about perfection, but we *are* working to become more pure. And we know that in the strength of the Lord we can do all righteous things because we have immersed ourselves in His gospel (see Alma 26:12). *I repeat, we cannot be women of the world, for we are latter-day women of God.* As President Kimball taught, "No greater recognition can come to [us] in this world than to be known as [women] of God" ("The Role of Righteous Women," *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 102).

The Lord's standard of behavior will always be more demanding than the world's, but then the Lord's rewards are infinitely more glorious.

This summer I had an unforgettable experience in the Holy Land. As I sat on the Mount of Beatitudes overlooking the Sea of Galilee, I saw in the distance a city built on a hill. The visual image of a city that cannot be hid was stunning, and as I pondered the symbolism I had an overwhelming impression that we as women of God are like that city, that if we will leave behind the things of the world and come unto Christ so that the Spirit radiates through our lives and from our eyes, our uniqueness will be a light unto the world. As sisters of Relief Society, we belong to the most significant community of women on this side of the veil. We *are* a spectacular city on a hill. And the less we look and act like the women of the world, the more they will look to us as a wellspring of hope, peace, virtue, and joy.

Twenty years ago at this very meeting President Kimball made a statement we have quoted ever since: "Much of the major growth that is coming to the Church in the last days . . . will happen to the degree that the women of the Church reflect righteousness and articulateness in their lives and to the degree that [they] are seen as *distinct* and *different*—in happy ways—from the women of the world" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 103–4; emphasis added). We can no longer be content to just quote President Kimball. We are the sisters who must and will make his prophecy a reality. But we can do it. I know we can. President Gordon B. Hinckley said recently that "the eternal salvation of the world . . . rests upon the shoulders of this Church. . . . No other people in the history of the world have received . . . [a] more compelling mandate . . . , and we'd better be getting at it" ("Church Is Really Doing Well," *Church News*, 3 July 1999, 3).

Women of God, that includes us. Tonight I invite each of us to identify at least one thing we can do to come out of the world and come closer to Christ. And then next month, another. And then another. Sisters, this is a call to arms, it's a call to action, a call to arise. A call to arm ourselves with power and with righteousness. A call to rely on the arm of the Lord rather than the arm of flesh. A call to "arise and shine forth, that [our] light may be a standard for the nations" (D&C 115:5). A call to *live* as women of God so that we and our families may return safely home.

We have such cause to rejoice, for the gospel of Jesus Christ *is* the voice of gladness! It is because the Savior overcame the world that we may overcome. It is because He rose on the third day that we may arise as

women of God. May we lay aside the things of this world and seek for the things of a better. May we commit this very hour to come out of the world and to never look back. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

"ONE THING NEEDFUL": BECOMING WOMEN OF GREATER FAITH IN CHRIST



Sister Patricia T. Holland

*Former Young Women
General Presidency*

*Ensign,
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Just after my release from the Young Women general presidency in April 1986, I had the opportunity to spend a week in Israel. It had been a very difficult and demanding two years for me. Being a good mother with ample time to succeed at that task has always been my first priority, so I had tried to be a full-time mother to a grade-schooler, a high-schooler, and a son preparing for his mission. I had also tried to be a full-time wife to a staggeringly busy university president. And I had to be as much of a full-time counselor in that general presidency as one living fifty miles from the office could be. But in an important period of forming principles and starting programs, I worried that I wasn't doing enough—and I tried to run a little faster.

Toward the end of my two-year term, my health was going downhill. I was losing weight steadily, and I wasn't sleeping well. My husband and children were trying to bandage me together even as I was trying to do the same for them. We were exhausted. And yet, I kept wondering what I might have done to manage it all better. The Brethren, always compassionate, were watching, and extended a loving release. As grateful as my family was for the conclusion of my term of service, I nevertheless felt a loss of association—and, I confess, some loss of identity—with those women that I had come to love so much. Who was I, and where was I in this welter of demands? Should life be as hard as all this? How successful had I been in my several and competing assignments? Or had I muffed them all? The days after my release were about as difficult as the weeks before it. I didn't have any reserve to call

on. My tank was on empty, and I wasn't sure there was a filling station anywhere in sight.

It was just a few weeks later that my husband had the assignment in Jerusalem to which I have referred, and the Brethren traveling on the assignment requested that I accompany him. "Come on," he said. "You can recuperate in the Savior's land of living water and bread of life." As weary as I was, I packed my bags, believing—or, at the very least, hoping—that the time there would be a healing respite.

On a pristinely clear and beautifully bright day, I sat overlooking the Sea of Galilee and reread the tenth chapter of Luke. But instead of the words on the page, I thought I saw with my mind and heard with my heart these words: "[Pat, Pat, Pat], thou art careful and troubled about many things." Then the power of pure and personal revelation seized me as I read, "But one thing [only one thing] is [truly] needful." (Vs. 40–41.)

The May sun in Israel is so bright you feel as if you are sitting on top of the world. I had just visited the spot in Bethoron where the sun stood still for Joshua (see Josh. 10:12), and indeed, on that day, it seemed so for me as well. As I sat pondering my problems I felt that same sun's healing rays like warm liquid pouring into my heart—relaxing, calming, and comforting my troubled soul.

Our loving Father in Heaven seemed to be whispering to me, "You don't have to worry over so many things. The one thing that is needful—the *only* thing that is truly needful—is to keep your eyes toward the sun—my Son." Suddenly I had true peace. I knew that my life had always been in his hands—from the very beginning! The sea lying peacefully before my eyes had been tempest-tossed and dangerous—many, many times. All I needed to do was to renew my faith, and get a firm grasp on his hand—and *together* we could walk on the water.

I would like to pose a question for each of us to ponder. How do we as women make that quantum leap from being troubled and worried to being women of even greater faith? One frame of mind surely seems to negate the other. Faith and fear cannot long coexist. Consider some of the things that trouble us.

I have served as a Relief Society president in four different wards. Two of these wards were for single women, and two were wards with many young mothers. As I sat in counsel with my single sisters,

my heart often ached as they described to me their feelings of loneliness and disappointment. They felt that their lives had no meaning or purpose in a church that rightly puts so much emphasis on marriage and family life. Most painful of all was the occasional suggestion that their singleness was their own fault—or worse yet, a selfish desire. They were anxiously seeking for peace and purpose—something of real value to which they could dedicate their lives.

Yet it seemed to me that the young mothers had easily as many concerns. They described to me the struggles of trying to raise children in an increasingly difficult world, of never having enough time or means or freedom to feel like a person of value because they were always stretched to the ragged edge of survival. And there were so few tangible evidences that what they were doing was really going to be successful. There was no one to give them a raise in pay; and beyond their husbands (who may or may not remember to do it), no one to compliment them on a job well done. And they were always tired! The one thing I remember so vividly with these young mothers was that they were *always* so tired.

Then there were those women who, through no fault of their own, found themselves the sole provider for their homes financially, spiritually, emotionally, and in every other way. I could not even comprehend the challenges they faced. Obviously, in some ways, theirs was the most demanding circumstance of all. The perspective I have gained over these many years of listening to the worries of women is that no one woman or group of women—single, married, divorced, widowed, homemakers, or professionals—have cornered the market on concerns. There seem to be plenty of challenges to go around. But, I hasten to add, there are marvelous blessings as well.

Every one of us has privileges and blessings, and every one of us has fears and trials. It seems bold to say, but common sense suggests that never before in the history of the world have women, including LDS women, been faced with greater complexity in their concerns.

I am very appreciative of the added awareness that the women's movement has given to a gospel principle we have had since Mother Eve and before—that of agency, the right to choose.

But one of the most unfortunate side effects we have faced in this matter of agency is that, because of the increasing diversity of life-styles for women

of today, we seem even more uncertain and less secure with each other. We are not getting closer, but further away from that sense of community and sisterhood that has sustained us and given us strength for generations. There seems to be an increase in our competitiveness and a decrease in our generosity with one another.

Those who have the time and energy to can their fruit and vegetables develop a skill that will serve them well in time of need—and in our uncertain economy, that could be almost any time. But they shouldn't look down their noses at those who buy their peaches or who don't like zucchini in any of the thirty-five ways there are to disguise it, or who have simply made a conscious choice to use their time and energy in some other purposeful way.

And where am I in all of this? For three-fourths of my life I felt threatened to the core because I hated to sew. Now, I *can* sew; if it is absolutely necessary, I *will* sew—but I hate it. Can you imagine my burden over the last twenty-five or thirty years, “faking it” in Relief Society sessions and trying to smile when six little girls walk into church all pinafores and laced and ribboned and petticoated—in identical, hand-sewn dresses, all trooping ahead of their mother, who has a similar outfit? I don't necessarily consider my attitude virtuous, lovely, of good report or praiseworthy, but I'm honest in my antipathy toward sewing.

I have grown up a little since those days in at least two ways: I now genuinely admire a mother who can do that for her children, and I have ceased feeling guilty that sewing is not particularly rewarding to me. The point is, we simply cannot call ourselves Christian and continue to judge one another—or ourselves—so harshly. No mason jar of Bing cherries is worth a confrontation that robs us of our compassion and our sisterhood.

Obviously the Lord has created us with different personalities, as well as differing degrees of energy, interest, health, talent, and opportunity. So long as we are committed to righteousness and living a life of faithful devotion, we should celebrate these divine differences, knowing they are a gift from God. We must not feel so frightened, so threatened and insecure; we must not need to find exact replicas of ourselves in order to feel validated as women of worth. There are many things over which we can be divided, but *one* thing is needful for our unity—the empathy and compassion of the living Son of God.

I was married in 1963, the very year Betty Friedan published her society-shaking book, *The Feminine Mystique*, so as an adult woman I can only look back with childhood memories of the gentler 1940s and 50s. But it must have been much more comfortable to have a life-style already prepared for you, and neighbors on either side whose lives gave you role models for your own. However, it must have been even that much more painful for those who, through no fault of their own, were single then, or had to work, or struggled with a broken family. Now, in our increasingly complex world, that earlier model is fragmented, and we seem to be even less sure of who we are and where we are going.

Surely there has not been another time in history when women have questioned their self-worth as harshly and critically as in the second half of the twentieth century. Many women are searching, almost frantically, as never before, for a sense of personal purpose and meaning; and many LDS women are searching, too, for eternal insight and meaning in their femaleness.

If I were Satan and wanted to destroy a society, I think I would stage a full-blown blitz on women. I would keep them so distraught and distracted that they would never find the calming strength and serenity for which their sex has always been known.

Satan has effectively done that, catching us in the crunch of trying to be superhuman instead of striving to reach our unique, God-given potential within such diversity. He tauntingly teases us that if we don't have it all—fame, fortune, families, and fun, and have it all the time—we have been short-changed and are second-class citizens in the race of life. As a sex we are struggling, our families are struggling, and our society is struggling. Drugs, teenage pregnancies, divorce, family violence, and suicide are some of the ever-increasing side effects of our collective life in the express lane.

Too many of us are struggling and suffering, too many are running faster than they have strength, expecting *too* much of themselves. As a result, we are experiencing new and undiagnosed stress-related illnesses. The Epstein-Barr virus, for one, has come into our popular medical jargon as the malady of the 1980s. “[The victims] are plagued by low-grade fevers, aching joints, and sometimes a sore throat—but they don't have the flu. They're overwhelmingly exhausted, weak, and debilitated—but they don't have AIDS. They're often confused and forgetful—

but it isn't Alzheimer's. Many patients feel suicidal, but it isn't clinical depression. . . . Female victims outnumber males about 3 to 1, and a great many are intelligent high achievers with stressful lives." (*Newsweek*, Oct. 27, 1986, p. 105.)

We *must* have the courage to be imperfect while striving for perfection. We *must* not allow our own guilt, the feminist books, the talk-show hosts, or the whole media culture to sell us a bill of goods—or rather a bill of *no* goods. We can become so sidetracked in our compulsive search for identity and self-esteem that we really believe it *can* be found in having perfect figures or academic degrees or professional status or even absolute motherly success. Yet, in so searching externally, we can be torn from our true internal, eternal selves. We often worry so much about pleasing and performing for others that we lose our uniqueness—that full and relaxed acceptance of one's self as a person of worth and individuality. We become so frightened and insecure that we cannot be generous toward the diversity and individuality, and yes, problems, of our neighbors. Too many women with these anxieties watch helplessly as their lives unravel from the very core that centers and sustains them. Too many are like a ship at sea without sail or rudder, "tossed to and fro," as the Apostle Paul said (see Eph. 4:14), until more and more of us are genuinely, rail-grabbingly seasick.

Where is the sureness that allows us to sail our ship, whatever winds may blow, with the master seaman's triumphant cry, "Steady as she goes"? Where is the inner stillness we so cherish and for which our sex traditionally has been known?

I believe we can find our steady footing and stilling of the soul by turning away from physical preoccupations, superwoman accomplishments, and endless popularity contests, and returning instead to the wholeness of our soul, that unity in our very being that balances the demanding and inevitable diversity of life.

One woman, not of our faith, whose writings I love, is Anne Morrow Lindbergh. She comments on the female despair and general torment of our times:

"The Feminists did not look . . . far [enough] ahead; they laid down no rules of conduct. For them it was enough to demand the privileges. . . . And [so] woman today is still searching. We are aware of our hunger and needs, but still ignorant of what will

satisfy them. With our garnered free time, we are more apt to drain our creative springs than to refill them. With our pitchers [in hand] we attempt . . . to water a field, [instead of] a garden. We throw ourselves indiscriminately into the committees and causes. Not knowing how to feed the spirit, we try to muffle its demands in distractions. Instead of stilling the center, the axis of the wheel, we add more centrifugal activities to our lives—which tend to throw us [yet more] off balance.

"Mechanically we have gained, in the last generation, but spiritually we have . . . lost."

Regardless of the time period, she adds, "[for women] the problem is [still] how to feed the soul." (*Gift from the Sea*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1975, pp. 51–52.)

I have pondered long and hard about the feeding of our inner self amidst too many troublesome things. It is no coincidence that we speak of feeding the spirit, just as we would speak of feeding the body. We need constant nourishment for both. The root word *hale* (as in "hale and hearty") is the common root to words like *whole*, *health*, *heal*, and *holy*. President Benson recently said, "There is no question that the health of the body affects the spirit, or the Lord would never have revealed the Word of Wisdom. God has never given any *temporal* commandments—and that which affects our stature affects our soul." We need so much for body, mind, and spirit to unite in one healthy, stable soul.

Surely God is well balanced, so perhaps we are just that much closer to Him when *we* are. In any case, I like the link between *hale*, *whole*, *health*, *heal*, and *holy*. Our unity of soul within diversity of circumstance—our "stilling of the center"—is worth any effort.

Often we fail to consider the glorious possibility within our own souls. We need to remember that divine promise, "The Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21.) Perhaps we forget that the kingdom of God is within us because too much attention is given to this outer shell, this human body of ours, and the frail, too-flimsy world in which it moves.

Permit me to share with you an analogy that I created from something I read years ago. It helped me then—and helps me still—in my examination of inner strength and spiritual growth.

The analogy is of a soul—a human soul, with all of its splendor—being placed in a beautifully carved but very tightly locked box. Reigning in majesty

and illuminating our soul in this innermost box is our Lord and our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the living Son of the living God. This box is then placed—and locked—inside another, larger one, and so on until five beautifully carved but very securely locked boxes await the woman who is skillful and wise enough to open them. In order for her to have free communication with the Lord, she must find the key to and unlock the contents of these boxes. Success will then reveal to her the beauty and divinity of her own soul and her gifts and her grace as a daughter of God.

For me, *prayer* is the key to the first box. We kneel to ask help for our tasks and then arise to find that the first lock is now open. But this ought not to seem just a convenient and contrived miracle, for if we are to search for real light and eternal certainties, we have to pray as the ancients prayed. We are women now, not children, and we are expected to pray with maturity. The words most often used to describe urgent, prayerful labor are *wrestle*, *plead*, *cry*, and *hunger*. In some sense, prayer may be the hardest work we ever will engage in, and perhaps it should be. It is pivotal protection against becoming so involved with worldly possessions and honors and status that we no longer desire to undertake the search for our soul.

For those who, like Enos, pray in faith and gain entrance to a new dimension of their potential divinity, they are led to box number two. Here our prayers alone do not seem to be sufficient. We must turn to the scriptures for God's long-recorded teachings about our souls. We must learn. Surely every woman in this church is under divine obligation to learn and grow and develop. We are God's diverse array of unburnished talents, and we must not bury these gifts or hide our light. If the glory of God is intelligence, then learning, especially learning from the scriptures, stretches us toward him.

He uses many metaphors for divine influence, such as "living water" and "the bread of life." I have discovered that if my own progress stalls, it stalls from malnutrition born of not eating and drinking daily from his holy writ. There have been challenges in my life that would have completely destroyed me had I not had the scriptures both on my bedstand and in my purse so that I could partake of them day and night at a moment's notice. Meeting God in

scripture has been like a divine intravenous feeding for me—a celestial IV that my son once described as an *angelical* cord. So box two is opened through *learning from the scriptures*. I have discovered that by studying them I can have, again and again, an exhilarating encounter with God.

However, at the beginning of such success in emancipating the soul, Lucifer becomes more anxious, especially as we approach box number three. He knows that we are about to learn one very important and fundamental principle—that to truly find ourselves we must lose ourselves—so he begins to block our increased efforts to love God, our neighbor, and ourselves. Through the last decade, Satan has enticed all humanity to engage almost all of their energies in the pursuit of romantic love or thing-love or excessive self-love. In so doing, we forget that appropriate self-love and self-esteem are the promised reward for putting others first. "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." (Luke 17:33.) Box three opens only to the key of *charity*.

With charity, real growth and genuine insight begin. But the lid to box four seems nearly impossible to penetrate. Unfortunately, the faint-hearted and fearful often turn back here. The going seems too difficult, the lock too secure. This is a time for self-evaluation. To see ourselves as we really are often brings pain, but it is only through true humility, repentance, and renewal that we will come to know God. "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart," he said. (Matt. 11:29.) We must be patient with ourselves as we overcome weaknesses, and we must remember to rejoice over all that is good in us. This will strengthen our inner selves and leave us less dependent on outward acclaim. When our souls pay less attention to public praise, they then also care very little about public disapproval. Competition

We must be patient with ourselves as we overcome weaknesses, and we must remember to rejoice over all that is good in us.

and jealousy and envy now begin to have no meaning. Just imagine the powerful spirit that would exist in our female society if we finally arrived at the point where, like our Savior, our real desire was to be counted as the *least* among our sisters. The rewards here are of such profound strength and quiet triumph of faith that we are carried into an even brighter sphere. So the fourth box, unlike the others, is broken open, just as a

contrite heart is broken. *We are reborn*—like a flower growing and blooming out of the broken crust of the earth.

To share with you my feelings of opening the fifth box, I must compare the beauty of our souls with the holiness of our temples. There, in a setting not of this world, where fashions and position and professions go unrecognized, we have our chance to find peace and serenity and stillness that will anchor our soul forever, for there we may find God. For those of us who, like the brother of Jared, have the courage and faith to break through the veil into that sacred center of existence (see Ether 3:6–19), we will find the brightness of the final box brighter than the noonday sun. There we find wholeness—holiness. That is what it says over the entrance to the fifth box: *Holiness to the Lord*. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?” (1 Cor. 3:16.) I testify that you are holy—that divinity is abiding within you waiting to be uncovered—to be unleashed and magnified and demonstrated.

I have heard it said by some that the reason women in the Church struggle to know themselves is because they don't have a divine female role model. But we do. We believe we have a mother in heaven. May I quote from President Spencer W. Kimball in a general conference address:

“When we sing that doctrinal hymn . . . ‘O My Father,’ we get a sense of the ultimate in maternal modesty, of the restrained, queenly elegance of our Heavenly Mother, and knowing how profoundly our mortal mothers have shaped us here, do we suppose her influence on us as individuals to be less?” (*Ensign*, May 1978, p. 6.)

I have never questioned why our mother in heaven seems veiled to us, for I believe the Lord has his reasons for revealing as little as he has on that subject. Furthermore, I believe we know much more about our eternal nature than we think we do; and it is our sacred obligation to express our knowledge, to teach it to our young sisters and daughters, and in so doing to strengthen their faith and help them through the counterfeit confusions of these difficult latter days. Let me point out some examples.

The Lord has not placed us in this lone and dreary world without a blueprint for living. In Doctrine and Covenants 52, we read the Lord's words: “I will give unto you a pattern in *all things, that ye may not be deceived.*” (V. 14; italics added.) He certainly

includes us women in that promise. He has given us patterns in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price; and he has given us patterns in the temple ceremony. As we study these patterns, we must continually ask, “Why does the Lord choose to say these particular words and present it in just this way?” We know he uses metaphors and symbols and parables and allegories to teach us of his eternal ways. We have all recognized the relationship between Abraham and Isaac that so parallels God's anguish over the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ. But, as women, do we stretch ourselves and also ask about Sarah's travail in this experience as well? We need to search in this manner, and we need always to look for deeper meaning. We should look for parallels and symbols. We should look for themes and motifs such as those we would find in a Bach or a Mozart composition, and we should look for repeated patterns.

One obvious pattern is that both the Bible and the Book of Mormon begin with a family theme, including family conflict. I have always believed this symbolized something eternal about *family* far more than just the story of those particular parents or those particular children. Surely all of us—married or single, with children and without—see something of Adam and Eve and something of Cain and Abel every day of our lives. With or without marriage, or with or without children, we all have some of the feelings of Lehi, Sariah, Laman, Nephi, Ruth, Naomi, Esther, the sons of Helaman, and the daughters of Ishmael.

Those are types and shadows for us, prefigurations of our own mortal joys and sorrows, just as Joseph and Mary are, in a sense, types and shadows of parental devotion as they nurtured the Son of God. These all seem to me to be symbols of higher principles and truths, symbols carefully chosen to show us the way, whether we are married or single, young or old, with family or without.

And, obviously, the temple is highly symbolic. May I share an experience I had there a few months ago concerning the careful choice of words and symbols? I have chosen my words carefully so that nothing will be improperly shared outside the temple. My quotations are taken from published scripture.

Maybe it was coincidence (someone has said, “Coincidence is a small miracle in which God chooses to remain anonymous”), but in any case, as I waited in the temple chapel, I sat next to an

elderly man who unexpectedly but sweetly turned to me and said, "If you want a clear picture of the Creation, read Abraham 4." As I started to turn to Abraham, I just happened to brush past Moses 3:5: "For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth." Another message of prefiguration—a spiritual pattern giving meaning to mortal creations. I then read Abraham 4 carefully and took the opportunity of going to an initiatory session. I left there with greater revelatory light on something I had always known in my heart to be so—that men *and* women are joint heirs of the blessings of the priesthood, and even though men bear the greater burden of administering it, women are not without their priesthood-related responsibilities.

Then, as I attended the endowment session, I asked myself if I were the Lord and could give my children on earth only a simplified but powerfully symbolic example of their roles and missions, how much would I give and where would I start? I listened to every word. I watched for patterns and prototypes.

I quote to you from Abraham 4:27: "So 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*." (Italics added.) They formed male and they formed female—in the *image of the Gods*, in *their own image*.

Then, in a poignant exchange with God, Adam states that he will call the woman Eve. And why does he call her Eve? "Because she [is] the mother of all living." (Gen. 3:20; Moses 4:26.)

As I tenderly acknowledge the very real pain that many single women, or married women who have not borne children, feel about any discussion of motherhood, could we consider this one possibility about our eternal female identity—our unity in our diversity? Eve was given the identity of "the mother of all living"—years, decades, perhaps centuries before she ever bore a child. It would appear that her *motherhood preceded her maternity*, just as surely as the perfection of the Garden preceded the struggles of mortality. I believe *mother* is one of those very carefully chosen words, one of those rich words—

with meaning after meaning after meaning. We must not, at all costs, let that word divide us. I believe with all my heart that it is first and foremost a statement about our nature, not a head count of our children.

I have only three children and have wept that I could not have more. And I know that some of you without any have wept, too. And sometimes too many have simply been angry over the very subject itself. For the sake of our eternal motherhood, I plead that this not be so. Some women give birth and raise children but never "mother" them. Others, whom I love with all my heart, "mother" all their lives but have never given birth. And all of us are Eve's daughters, whether we are married or single, maternal or barren. We are created in the image of the Gods to become gods and goddesses. And we can provide something of that divine pattern, that maternal prototype, for each other and for those who come after us. Whatever our circumstance, we can reach out, touch, hold, lift, and nurture—but we cannot do it in isolation. We need a community of sisters stilling the soul and binding the wounds of fragmentation.

I know that God loves us individually and collectively *as women*, and that he has a mission for every one of us. As I learned on my Galilean hillside, I testify that if our desires are righteous, God overrules for our good and that heavenly parents will tenderly attend to our needs. In our diversity and individuality, my prayer is that we will be united—united in seeking *our* specific, foreordained mission, united in asking *not*, "What can the kingdom do for me?" but "What can I do for the kingdom? How can I fulfill the measure of *my* creation? In my circumstances and with my challenges

and my faith, where is my *full* realization of the godly image in which I was created?"

With faith in God, his prophets, his church, and ourselves—with faith in our own divine creation—may we be peaceful and let go of our cares and troubles over so many things. May we believe—nothing doubting—in the light that shines, even in a dark place.

***I know that
God loves us
individually and
collectively
as women, and
that he has a
mission for every
one of us.***

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