

THE FAMILY: A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

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—First Presidency and
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

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*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.

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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. *Sumpatheo* {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 than 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.