

LOVE

*If one really loves another,
one would rather die for that
person than to injure him.*

—Elder Spencer W. Kimball

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Related Scriptures

Matthew 6:24

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Romans 8:35, 39

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . .

“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 13:10

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Ephesians 5:2, 25, 33

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. . . .

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

“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

Doctrine and Covenants 42:22–23

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

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

What Is True Love?

President David O. McKay

“‘Well,’ you may ask, ‘how may I know when I am in love?’

“. . . George Q. Morris [who later became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, gave this reply]: ‘My mother once said that if you meet a girl in whose presence you feel a desire to achieve, who inspires you to do your best, and to make the most of yourself, such a young woman is worthy of your love and is awakening love in your heart.’

“I submit that . . . as a true guide. In the presence of the girl you truly love you do not feel to grovel; in her presence you do not attempt to take advantage of her; in her presence you feel that you would like to be everything that a Master Man should become, for she will inspire you to that ideal. And I ask you young women to cherish that same guide” (“As Youth Contemplates an Eternal Partnership,” *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1938, 139).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“If we would truly seek to be more like our Savior and Master, learning to love as He loves should be our highest goal” (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 275).

Elder John A. Widtsoe

“Love is the foundation of marriage, but love itself is a product of law and lives by law. True love is law-abiding, for the highest satisfactions come to a law-abiding life. . . .

“. . . Marriage that lasts only during earth life is a sad one, for the love established between man and woman, as they live together and rear their family, should not die, but live and grow richer with the eternal years. True love hopes and prays for an endless continuation of association with the loved one. To those who are sealed to each other for all existence, love is ever warm, more hopeful, believing, courageous, and fearless. Such people live the richer, more joyful life. To them happiness and the making of it have no end. . . .

“Above physical charm, love is begotten by qualities, often subtle, of mind and spirit. The beautiful face

may hide an empty mind; the sweet voice may utter coarse words; the lovely form may be ill-mannered; the woman of radiant beauty and the man of kingly form may be intolerable bores on nearer acquaintanceship; or, the person who looks attractive may really have no faults, may excel us in knowledge and courtesy, yet he is not of our kind, his ways are not ours. Under either condition, love wilts in its first stage. 'Falling in love' is always from within, rather than from without. That is, physical attractiveness must be reinforced with mental and spiritual harmony if true love is to be born and have long life—from the Latter-day Saint point of view, to last throughout the eternities" (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 297, 299, 302).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

"What is love? Many people think of it as mere physical attraction and they casually speak of 'falling in love' and 'love at first sight.' This may be Hollywood's version and the interpretation of those who write love songs and love fiction. True love is not wrapped in such flimsy material. One might become immediately attracted to another individual, but love is far more than physical attraction. It is deep, inclusive and comprehensive. Physical attraction is only one of the many elements, but there must be faith and confidence and understanding and partnership. There must be common ideals and standards. There must be a great devotion and companionship. Love is cleanliness and progress and sacrifice and selflessness. This kind of love never tires nor wanes, but lives through sickness and sorrow, poverty and privation, accomplishment and disappointment, time and eternity" (*Love versus Lust*, 18).

"If one really loves another, one would rather die for that person than to injure him" (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 279).

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley

"May I quickly suggest four cornerstones upon which to build that house? There are others, but I choose to emphasize these. . . .

"The first of these I call *Respect for One Another*, the kind of respect that regards one's companion as the most precious friend on earth and not as a possession or a chattel to be forced or compelled to suit one's selfish whims.

"Pearl Buck has observed, 'Love cannot be forced. . . . It comes out of heaven, unasked and unsought.' (*The Treasure Chest*, p. 165.)

"This respect comes of recognition that each of us is a son or daughter of God, endowed with something of his divine nature, that each is an individual entitled to expression and cultivation of individual talents and deserving of forbearance, of patience, of understanding, of courtesy, of thoughtful consideration. True love is not so much a matter of romance as it is a matter of anxious concern for the well being of one's companion" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 81–82; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 71).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

See quotation on page 142.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

"The world is filled with too many of us who are inclined to indicate our love with an announcement or declaration.

"True love is a process. True love requires personal action. Love must be continuing to be real. Love takes time. Too often expediency, infatuation, stimulation, persuasion, or lust are mistaken for love. How hollow, how empty if our love is no deeper than the arousal of momentary feeling or the expression in words of what is no more lasting than the time it takes to speak them. . . .

"We must at regular and appropriate intervals speak and reassure others of our love and the long time it takes to prove it by our actions. Real love does take time. The Great Shepherd had the same thoughts in mind when he taught, 'If ye love me, *keep* my commandments' (John 14:15; italics added) and 'If ye love me *feed* my sheep' (John 21:16; italics added). Love demands action if it is to be continuing. Love is a process. Love is not a declaration. Love is not an announcement. Love is not a passing fancy. Love is not an expediency. Love is not a convenience. 'If ye love me, keep my commandments' and 'If ye love me feed my sheep' are God-given proclamations that should remind us we can often best show our love through the processes of *feeding* and *keeping*.

"Love of God takes time. Love of family takes time. Love of country takes time. Love of neighbor takes time. Love of companion takes time. Love in courtship takes time. Love of self takes time" (in

Conference Report, Oct. 1975, 160, 163; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 108, 110).

“One who loves has and feels responsibility. Paul in 1 Corinthians says love thinketh no evil, is not self-seeking, is long-suffering, and is kind. (See 1 Cor. 13:4–5.) If we look at love between two who are preparing for temple marriage, we see the elements of sacrifice and of serving each other’s best interests, not a shortsighted ‘me’ interest. True love and happiness in courtship and marriage are based upon honesty, self-respect, sacrifice, consideration, courtesy, kindness, and placing ‘we’ ahead of ‘me.’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 30; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 23).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Perfect love is perfectly patient” (*All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, 69).

“Unlike our love, Jesus’ love consists of active restraint as well as pressing encouragement. His perfect love of each and all spares Him the need to accept us as we now are, for He knows perfectly what we have the possibility to become” (*Even As I Am*, 18).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“Love, as defined by the Lord, elevates, protects, respects, and enriches another. It motivates one to make sacrifices for another” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 43; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 35).

Elder Joe J. Christensen

“Be quick to say, ‘I’m sorry.’ As hard as it is to form the words, be swift to say, ‘I apologize, and please forgive me,’ even though you are not the one who is totally at fault. True love is developed by those who are willing to readily admit personal mistakes and offenses” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 86; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 65).

What Are Some of the Counterfeits of True Love?

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

“At the hour of sin, pure love is pushed out of one door while lust sneaks in the other. Affection has then been replaced with desire of the flesh and uncontrolled passion. Accepted has been the doctrine which the devil is so eager to establish, that illicit sex relations are justified” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 279).

“If anyone feels that petting or other deviations are demonstrations of love, let him ask himself: ‘If this beautiful body which I have misused suddenly became deformed, or paralyzed, would my reactions be the same? If this lovely face were scarred by flames, or this body which I have used suddenly became rigid, or this keen mind which I have enjoyed were suddenly to become blank, would I be such an ardent lover? If senility or any of its approaches suddenly fell upon my sweetheart, what would my attitudes be?’ Answers to these questions might test one to see if he really is in love or if it is only physical attraction which encouraged the improper physical contacts. The young man who protects his sweetheart against all *use* or *abuse*, against insult and infamy from himself or others, could be expressing true love.

“But the young man who *uses* his companion as a biological toy to give himself temporary satisfaction—that is *lust*, and is at the other end of the spectrum from love. A young woman conducts herself to be attractive spiritually, mentally and physically but will not by word nor dress nor act stir nor stimulate to physical reactions the companion beside her. That could be true love. That young woman who must touch and stir and fondle and tempt and use knows not love. That is lust and exploitation” (*Love versus Lust*, 18–19).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“The greatest deception foisted upon the human race in our day is that overemphasis of physical gratification as it is related to romantic love. It is merely a repetition of the same delusion that has been impressed on every generation in ages past. When we learn that physical gratification is only incident to, and not the compelling force of love itself, we have made a supreme discovery. If only physical gratification should interest you, you need not be selective at all. This power is possessed by almost everyone. Alone, without attendant love, this relationship becomes nothing—indeed, less and worse than nothing” (*Eternal Love*, 15).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“Satan promotes counterfeit love, which is lust. It is driven by a hunger to appease personal appetite. One who practices this deception cares little for the pain and destruction caused another. While often camouflaged by flattering words, its motivation is

self-gratification. You know how to be clean and live a righteous life. We trust you to do it. The Lord will bless you richly and will help you keep clean and pure” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 43–44; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 35).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

“May I suggest that human intimacy, that sacred, physical union ordained of God for a married couple, deals with a *symbol* that demands special sanctity. Such an act of love between a man and a woman is—or certainly was ordained to be—a symbol of total union: union of their hearts, their hopes, their lives, their love, their family, their future, their everything. It is a symbol that we try to suggest in the temple with a word like *seal*. The Prophet Joseph Smith once said we perhaps ought to render such a sacred bond as ‘welding’—that those united in matrimony and eternal families are ‘welded’ together, inseparable, if you will, to withstand the temptations of the adversary and the afflictions of mortality (see D&C 128:18).

“But such a total, virtually unbreakable union, such an unyielding commitment between a man and a woman, can only come with the proximity and permanence afforded in a marriage covenant, with the union of *all* that they possess—their very hearts and minds, all their days and all their dreams. . . .

“Can you see then the moral schizophrenia that comes from pretending we are one, sharing the *physical* symbols and *physical* intimacy of our union, but then fleeing, retreating, severing all such other aspects—and symbols—of what was meant to be a total obligation, only to unite again furtively some other night or, worse yet, furtively unite (and you can tell how cynically I use that word) with some other partner who is no more bound to us, no more one with us than the last was or than the one that will come next week or next month or next year or anytime before the binding commitments of marriage?” (*Speaking Out on Moral Issues*, 158–59; see also Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 100).

How Does Our Love for God Influence Our Ability to Love Others?

Elder Orson Pratt

“The more righteous a people become the more they are qualified for loving others and rendering them happy. A wicked man can have but little love for his

wife; while a righteous man, being filled with the love of God, is sure to manifest this heavenly attribute in every thought and feeling of his heart, and in every word and deed. Love, joy, and innocence will radiate from his very countenance, and be expressed in every look. This will beget confidence in the wife of his bosom, and she will love him in return; for love begets love; happiness imparts happiness; and these heaven born emotions will continue to increase more and more, until they are perfected and glorified in all the fulness of eternal love itself” (“Celestial Marriage,” *The Seer*, Oct. 1853, 156).

Elder John A. Widtsoe

“True love of man for woman always includes love of God from whom all good things issue” (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 297).

Elder Russell M. Nelson

“Without a strong commitment to the Lord, an individual is more prone to have a low level of commitment to a spouse. Weak commitments to eternal covenants lead to losses of eternal consequence” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 98; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 72).

What Types of Conduct Help Develop True Love in Relationships?

President Joseph Fielding Smith

“If a man and his wife were earnestly and faithfully observing all the ordinances and principles of the gospel, there could not arise any cause for divorce. The joy and happiness pertaining to the marriage relationship would grow sweeter, and husband and wife would become more and more attached to each other as the days go by. Not only would the husband love the wife and the wife the husband, but children born to them would live in an atmosphere of love and harmony. The love of each for the others would not be impaired, and moreover the love of all towards our Eternal Father and his Son Jesus Christ would be more firmly rooted in their souls” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1965, 11).

President Ezra Taft Benson

The Lord “said, ‘Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else’ (D&C 42:22). . . .

“This kind of love can be shown for your wives in so many ways. First and foremost, nothing except God Himself takes priority over your wife in your life—not work, not recreation, not hobbies. . . .

“What does it mean to love someone with all your heart? It means to love with all your emotional feelings and with all your devotion. . . . You cannot demean her, criticize her, find fault with her. . . .

“What does it mean to ‘cleave unto her’? It means to stay close to her, to be loyal and faithful to her, to communicate with her, and to express your love for her.

“Love means being sensitive to her feelings and needs. . . .

“Husbands, recognize your wife’s intelligence and her ability to counsel with you. . . .

“Give her the opportunity to grow intellectually, emotionally, and socially as well as spiritually.

“Remember, brethren, love can be nurtured and nourished by little tokens. Flowers on special occasions are wonderful, but so is your willingness to help with the dishes, change diapers, get up with a crying child in the night, and leave the television or the newspaper to help with the dinner. Those are the quiet ways we say ‘I love you’ with our actions. They bring rich dividends for such little effort” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 61–62; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 50).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

“If two people love the Lord more than their own lives and then love each other more than their own lives, working together in total harmony with the gospel program as their basic structure, they are sure to have this great happiness. When a husband and wife go together frequently to the holy temple, kneel in prayer together in their home with their family, go hand in hand to their religious meetings, keep their lives wholly chaste—mentally and physically—so that their whole thoughts and desires and loves are all centered in the one being, their companion, and both work together for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, then happiness is at its pinnacle” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 5).

“HOW DO I LOVE THEE?”



Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

*Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles*

Brigham Young University
1999–2000 Speeches,
158–62

I wish to speak to you this morning about Christlike love and what I think it can and should mean in your friendships, in your dating, in serious courtship, and, ultimately, in your marriage.

I approach the subject knowing full well that, as a newly engaged young woman said to me just last month, “There is certainly a lot of advice out there!” I don’t want to add needlessly to this rhetoric on romance, but I believe that second only to your membership in the Church, your “membership in a marriage” is the most important association you will have in time and eternity—and to the faithful what doesn’t come in time *will* come in eternity. So perhaps all of you will forgive me for offering, yes, more advice. But I wish it to be scriptural advice, gospel advice. Advice, if you will, that is as basic to life as it is to love—counsel that is equally applicable to men and to women. It has nothing to do with trends or tides of the time or tricks of the trade but has everything to do with the truth.

So may I put your friendships and dates and eventually your marriages in a scriptural context this morning and speak to you of what I will try to communicate as *true* love.

After a long wonderful discourse by Mormon on the subject of charity, the seventh chapter of Moroni tells us that this highest of Christian virtues is more accurately labeled “the pure love of Christ.”

And it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him [and her].

Wherefore, . . . pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons [and daughters] of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; . . . that we may be purified even as he is pure. [Moroni 7:47–48]

True charity, the absolutely pure, perfect love of Christ, has really been known only once in this world—in the form of Christ Himself, the living Son of the living God. It is Christ's love that Mormon goes to some length to describe for us and that Paul the Apostle did as well some years before, writing to the Corinthians in New Testament times. As in everything, Christ is the only one who got it all right, did it all perfectly, loved the way we are all to try to love. But even though we fall short, that divine standard is there for us. It is a goal toward which we are to keep reaching, keep striving—and, certainly, a goal to keep appreciating.

And as we speak of this, may I remind you, as Mormon explicitly taught, that this love, this ability, capacity, and reciprocation we all so want, is a gift. It is “bestowed”—that is Mormon's word. It doesn't come without effort and it doesn't come without patience, but, like salvation itself, in the end it is a gift, given by God to the “true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ.” The solutions to life's problems are always gospel solutions. Not only are *answers* found in Christ, but so is the power, the gift, the bestowal, the miracle of giving and receiving those answers. In this matter of love, no doctrine could be more encouraging to us than that.

I have taken for a title to my remarks Mrs. Browning's wonderful line “How do I love thee?” (Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Sonnets from the Portuguese* [1850], no. 43.) I am not going to “count the ways” this morning, but I am impressed with her choice of adverb—not *when* do I love thee nor *where* do I love thee nor *why* do I love thee nor *why don't* you love me, but, rather, *how*. *How* do I demonstrate it, *how* do I reveal my true love for you? Mrs. Browning was correct. Real love is best shown in the “how,” and it is with the how that Mormon and Paul help us the most.

The first element of divine love—pure love—taught by these two prophets is its kindness, its selfless quality, its lack of ego and vanity and consuming self-centeredness. “Charity suffereth long, and is kind, [charity] envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own” (Moroni 7:45). I have heard President Hinckley teach publicly and privately what I suppose all leaders have said—that most problems in love and marriage ultimately start with selfishness. In outlining ideal love in which Christ, the most unselfish man

who ever lived, is the great example, it is not surprising that this scriptural commentary starts here.

There are many qualities you will want to look for in a friend or a serious date—to say nothing of a spouse and eternal companion—but surely among the very first and most basic of those qualities will be those of care and sensitivity toward others, a minimum of self-centeredness that allows compassion and courtesy to be evident. “That best portion of a good man's life [is] his . . . kindness,” said Mr. William Wordsworth (*Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* [1798], lines 33–35). There are lots of limitations in all of us that we hope our sweethearts will overlook. I suppose no one is as handsome or as beautiful as he or she wishes, or as brilliant in school or as witty in speech or as wealthy as we would like, but in a world of varied talents and fortunes that we can't always command, I think that makes even more attractive the qualities we *can* command—such qualities as thoughtfulness, patience, a kind word, and true delight in the accomplishment of another. These cost us *nothing*, and they can mean *everything* to the one who receives them.

The solutions to life's problems are always gospel solutions.

I like Mormon and Paul's language that says one who truly loves is not “puffed up.” Puffed up! Isn't that a great image? Haven't you ever been with someone who was so conceited,

so full of themselves that they seemed like the Pillsbury Doughboy? Fred Allen said once that he saw such a fellow walking down Lovers' Lane holding his own hand. True love blooms when we care more about another person than we care about ourselves. That is Christ's great atoning example for us, and it ought to be more evident in the kindness we show, the respect we give, and the selflessness and courtesy we employ in our personal relationships.

Love is a fragile thing, and some elements in life can try to break it. Much damage can be done if we are not in tender hands, caring hands. To give ourselves totally to another person, as we do in marriage, is the most trusting step we take in any human relationship. It is a real act of faith—faith all of us must be willing to exercise. If we do it right, we end up sharing everything—all our hopes, all our fears, all our dreams, all our weaknesses, and all our joys—with another person.

No serious courtship or engagement or marriage is worth the name if we do not fully invest *all* that we have in it and in so doing trust ourselves totally to the one we love. You cannot succeed in love if you keep one foot out on the bank for safety's sake. The very nature of the endeavor requires that you hold on to each other as tightly as you can and jump in the pool together. In that spirit, and in the spirit of Mormon's plea for pure love, I want to impress upon you the vulnerability and delicacy of your partner's future as it is placed in your hands for safekeeping—male and female, it works both ways.

Sister Holland and I have been married for nearly 37 years, just a half-dozen or so years short of *twice* as long as we have lived without each other. I may not know everything about her, but I know 37 years' worth, and she knows that much of me. I know her likes and dislikes, and she knows mine. I know her tastes and interests, hopes and dreams, and she knows mine. As our love has grown and our relationship has matured, we have been increasingly free with each other about all of that.

The result is that I know much more clearly now how to help her, and, if I let myself, I know exactly what will hurt her. In the honesty of our love—love that can't truly be Christlike without such total devotion—surely God will hold me accountable for any pain I cause her by intentionally exploiting or hurting her when she has been so trusting of me, having long since thrown away any self-protection in order that we could be, as the scripture says, "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). To impair or impede her in *any way* for my gain or vanity or emotional mastery over her should disqualify me on the spot to be her husband. Indeed, it should consign my miserable soul to eternal incarceration in that large and spacious building Lehi says is the prison of those who live by "vain imaginations" and the "pride of the world" (1 Nephi 11:36, 12:18). No wonder that building is at the opposite end of the field from the tree of life representing the love of God! In all that Christ was, He was not *ever* envious or inflated, never consumed with His own needs. He did not once, *not ever*, seek His own advantage at the expense of someone else. He delighted in the happiness of others, the happiness He could bring them. He was forever kind.

In a dating and courtship relationship, I would not have you spend five minutes with someone who belittles you, who is constantly critical of you, who is cruel at your expense and may even call it humor.

Life is tough enough without having the person who is supposed to love you leading the assault on your self-esteem, your sense of dignity, your confidence, and your joy. In this person's care you deserve to feel physically safe and emotionally secure.

Members of the First Presidency have taught that "any form of physical or mental abuse to any woman is not worthy of any priesthood holder" and that no "man who holds the priesthood of God [should] abuse his wife in any way, [or] demean or injure or take undue advantage of [any] woman"—and that includes friends, dates, sweethearts, and fiancées, to say nothing of wives (James E. Faust, "The Highest Place of Honor," *Ensign*, May 1988, 37, and Gordon B. Hinckley, "Reach Out in Love and Kindness," *Ensign*, November 1982, 77).

If you are just going for pizza or to play a set of tennis, go with anyone who will provide good, clean fun. But if you are serious, or planning to be serious, please find someone who brings out the best in you and is not envious of your success. Find someone who suffers when you suffer and who finds his or her happiness in your own.

The second segment of this scriptural sermon on love in Moroni 7:45 says that true charity—real love—"is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity." Think of how many arguments could be avoided, how many hurt feelings could be spared, how many cold shoulders and silent treatments could be ended, and, in a worst-case scenario, how many breakups and divorces could be avoided if we were not so easily provoked, if we thought no evil of one another, and if we not only did not rejoice in iniquity but didn't rejoice even in little mistakes.

Temper tantrums are not cute even in children; they are despicable in adults, especially adults who are supposed to love each other. We are too easily provoked; we are too inclined to think that our partner meant to hurt us—meant to do us evil, so to speak; and in defensive or jealous response we too often rejoice when we see *them* make a mistake and find *them* in a fault. Let's show some discipline on this one. Act a little more maturely. Bite your tongue if you have to. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32). At least one difference between a tolerable marriage and a great one may be that willingness in the latter to allow some things to pass without comment, without response.

I mentioned Shakespeare earlier. In a talk on love and romance you might well expect a reference to Romeo and Juliet. But let me refer to a much less virtuous story. With Romeo and Juliet the outcome was a result of innocence gone awry, a kind of sad, heartbreaking mistake between two families that should have known better. But in the tale of Othello and Desdemona the sorrow and destruction is calculated—it is maliciously driven from the beginning. Of all the villains in Shakespeare’s writing, and perhaps in all of literature, there is no one I loathe so much as I loathe Iago. Even his name sounds evil to me, or at least it has become so. And what *is* his evil, and Othello’s tragic, near-inexcusable susceptibility to it? It is the violation of Moroni 7 and 1 Corinthians 13. Among other things, they sought for evil where none existed, they embraced imaginary iniquity. The villains here rejoiced not “in the truth.” Of the innocent Desdemona, Iago said, “I turn her virtue into pitch; / And out of her own goodness make the net / That shall enmesh them all” (William Shakespeare, *Othello*, act 2, scene 3, lines 366–68). Sowing doubt and devilish innuendo, playing on jealousy and deceit and finally murderous rage, Iago provokes Othello into taking Desdemona’s life—virtue turned into pitch, goodness twisted into a fatal net.

Now, thank heavens, here in Happy Valley this morning we are not talking of infidelity, real or imagined, or of murder; but in the spirit of a university education, let’s learn the lessons being taught. Think the best of each other, especially of those you say you love. Assume the good and doubt the bad. Encourage in yourself what Abraham Lincoln called “the better angels of our nature” (First Inaugural Address, 4 March 1861). Othello could have been saved even in the last moment when he kissed Desdemona and her purity was so evident. “That [kiss] dost almost persuade / Justice to break her sword!” he said (act 5, scene 2, lines 16–17). Well, he would have been spared her death and then his own suicide if he had broken what he considered justice’s sword right then and there rather than, figuratively speaking, using it on her. This tragically sad Elizabethan tale could have had a beautiful, happy ending if just one man, who then influenced another, had thought no evil, had rejoiced not in iniquity, but had rejoiced in the truth.

Thirdly and lastly, the prophets tell us that true love “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all

things, endureth all things” (1 Corinthians 13:7). Once again that is ultimately a description of Christ’s love—He is the great example of one who bore and believed and hoped and endured. We are invited to do the same in our courtship and in our marriage to the best of our ability. Bear up and be strong. Be hopeful and believing. Some things in life we have little or no control over. These have to be endured. Some disappointments have to be lived with in love and in marriage. These are not things anyone wants in life, but sometimes they come. And when they come, we have to bear them; we have to believe; we have to hope for an end to such sorrows and difficulty; we have to endure until things come right in the end.

One of the great purposes of true love is to help each other in these times. No one ought to have to face such trials alone. We can endure almost anything if we have someone at our side who truly loves us, who is easing the burden and lightening the load. In this regard, a friend from our BYU faculty, Professor Brent Barlow, told me some years ago about Plimsoll marks.

As a youth in England, Samuel Plimsoll was fascinated with watching ships load and unload their cargoes. He soon observed that, regardless of the cargo space available, each ship had its maximum capacity. If a ship exceeded its limit, it would likely sink at sea. In 1868 Plimsoll entered Parliament and passed a merchant shipping act that, among other things, called for making calculations of how much a ship could carry. As a result, lines were drawn on the hull of each ship in England. As the cargo was loaded, the freighter would sink lower and lower into the water. When the water level on the side of the ship reached the Plimsoll mark, the ship was considered loaded to capacity, regardless of how much space remained. As a result, British deaths at sea were greatly reduced.

Like ships, people have differing capacities at different times and even different days in their lives. In our relationships we need to establish our own Plimsoll marks and help identify them in the lives of those we love. Together we need to monitor the load levels and be helpful in shedding or at least readjusting some cargo if we see our sweetheart is sinking. Then, when the ship of love is stabilized, we can evaluate long-term what has to continue, what can be put off until another time, and what can be put off permanently. Friends, sweethearts, and spouses need to be able to monitor each other’s stress and

recognize the different tides and seasons of life. We owe it to each other to declare some limits and then help jettison some things if emotional health and the strength of loving relationships are at risk. Remember, pure love “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,” and helps loved ones do the same.

Let me close. In Mormon’s and Paul’s final witnesses, they declare that “charity [pure love] never faileth” (Moroni 7:46, 1 Corinthians 13:8). It is there through thick and thin. It endures through sunshine and shadow, through darkest sorrow and on into the light. It *never* fails. So Christ loved us, and that is how He hoped we would love each other. In a final injunction to all his disciples for all time, He said, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; *as I have loved you*” (John 13:34; emphasis added). Of course such Christlike staying power in romance and marriage requires more than any of us really have. It requires something more, an endowment from heaven. Remember Mormon’s promise: that such love—the love we each yearn for and cling to—is “bestowed” upon “true followers of Christ.” You want capability, safety, and security in dating and romance, in married life and eternity? Be a true disciple of Jesus. Be a genuine, committed, word-and-deed Latter-day Saint. Believe that your faith has *everything* to do with your romance, because it does. You separate dating from discipleship at your peril. Or, to phrase that more positively, Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, is the only lamp by which you can successfully see the path of love and happiness for you *and* for your sweetheart. How *should* I love thee? As He does, for that way “never faileth.” I so testify and express my love for you and for Him, in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

A UNION OF LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING



Elder Marlin K. Jensen

*Of the Quorum
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Of the many opportunities for service that come with my calling, in my estimation none exceeds the

privilege of performing a sealing ceremony in one of the Lord’s temples. Whenever I am in a beautifully appointed sealing room, facing a wholesome and anxious young couple about to make the most sacred of vows with God and with each other, I have the feeling that nothing I might say could do justice to the significance of that occasion in their lives.

At such times I frequently remember my own wedding day nearly twenty-six years ago and the strong feelings of love I had for my wife. I remember also our high expectations for the future. Kathy and I had an ideal in mind that was not necessarily peculiar to us: we were about to begin a companionship together that would be unparalleled in the romantic history of Western civilization!

Nevertheless, despite our best intentions and efforts, our ideal began to collide with reality shortly after our brief, inexpensive honeymoon. I cannot speak for Kathy, but I soon began to feel a small sense of disillusionment, a feeling that there was something more to marriage than I seemed capable of producing.

One small example from those early days of our marriage will illustrate the challenges we faced. We were living in Salt Lake City, where I was attending law school and Kathy was teaching first grade. Under the stress of being new to the city, our respective schools, and each other, our relationship became a bit testy. One night at about dinnertime, we had a quarrel that convinced me that I need not hope for nourishment at home. So I left our modest apartment and walked to the nearest fast-food restaurant, a block away. As I entered the north door of the establishment, I looked to my right—and much to my surprise, I saw Kathy entering through the south door! We exchanged angry glances and advanced to opposing cash registers to place our orders. We continued to ignore each other as we sat alone on opposite ends of the restaurant, sullenly eating our evening meals. We then left as we had entered and took our separate routes home. It wasn’t until later that we reconciled and laughed together about how infantile we had been.

I realize now that such little tiffs are not uncommon in the early stages of most marriages. However, I believe they are representative of the many obstacles that can frequently interfere with the tremendous potential for fulfillment and happiness that exists in an eternal marriage, potential that too often goes unrealized.

As the Restoration unfolded, the Prophet Joseph Smith did not teach the doctrine of eternal marriage until several years after the organization of the Church. When he began to do so, it was selectively. Elder Parley P. Pratt, who had been married civilly thirteen years earlier, first heard about the concept of eternal marriage from the Prophet in Philadelphia in 1839. His reaction, as recorded in his autobiography, may be difficult to understand for those of us who have grown up with the anticipation of marrying in a temple for time and all eternity. This concept was completely new to Elder Pratt, however, and he was overwhelmed by it:

“I received from [Joseph] the first idea of eternal family organization, and the eternal union of the sexes in those inexpressibly endearing relationships which none but the highly intellectual, the refined and pure in heart, know how to prize, and which are at the very foundation of everything worthy to be called happiness.

“Till then I had learned to esteem kindred affections and sympathies as appertaining solely to this transitory state, as something from which the heart must be entirely weaned, in order to be fitted for its heavenly state.

“It was Joseph Smith who taught me how to prize the endearing relationships of father and mother, husband and wife; of brother and sister, son and daughter.

“It was from him that I learned that the wife of my bosom might be secured to me for time and all eternity; and that the refined sympathies and affections which endeared us to each other emanated from the fountain of divine eternal love. It was from him that I learned that we might cultivate these affections, and grow and increase in the same to all eternity; while the result of our endless union would be an offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, or the sands of the sea shore. . . .

“I had loved before, but I knew not why. But now I loved—with a pureness—an intensity of elevated, exalted feeling, which would lift my soul from the transitory things of this grovelling sphere and expand it as the ocean. I felt that God was my heavenly Father indeed; that Jesus was my brother, and that the wife of my bosom was an immortal, eternal companion; a kind ministering angel, given to me as a comfort, and a crown of glory for ever and ever. In short, I could now love with the spirit and with the

understanding also” (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, pp. 297–98).

In all of Latter-day Saint literature, I know of no more beautiful or powerful statement than this concerning the potential for fulfillment and happiness we have as we begin marriage together in the Lord’s way. The opportunity for such a companionship will eventually come to all who live worthy of it. Think of the implications of being able to love “with the spirit and with the understanding also.” Consider the power of the idea that of all people on earth, we Latter-day Saints know the most about genuine romantic love and have the greatest opportunity to achieve truly happy and enduring marriages. Will it not be a memorable day when as a people we are best known not just for our large families but for our truly exceptional marriages?

What are the eternal gospel principles that permit us to court one another and eventually establish marriages that are happy, fulfilling, and enduring? I will discuss a few truths that I feel are most vital. All of them are closely related to the Savior, his teachings, and the central role he plays in the gospel plan. In fact, if we want to make ourselves into worthy eternal companions, we can first concentrate on becoming unwavering disciples of the Master.

Developing Our Capacity to Love

The teachings of Christ suggest that we should begin our search for an eternal companion with greater concern about our ability to give love than about our need to receive it. Of the Savior, John wrote: “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Indeed, it may be our own capacity to give love that makes us most lovable. The greater our own personal substance is and the deeper our own mental, emotional, and spiritual reserves are, the greater will be our capacity to nurture and love others, especially our companion. President Marion G. Romney of the First Presidency posed a question that puts our ability to genuinely care about others in perspective: “How can we give if there is nothing there? Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves. Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the emotionally starved. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned. And most important of all, spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 93).

Very little love can come from one who is not at peace with himself or herself and God. As Enos learned, no one can be concerned about the welfare of someone else and give love to another until he or she has taken care of his or her own soul. Thus, our preparation for an eternal marriage must include repenting, learning, acquiring faith, and developing the security that comes with a vision of our potential as children of a Heavenly Father. Only when we love God above all others, as the Savior taught (see Matt. 22:34–40), will we be capable of offering pure, Christlike love to our companions for all eternity.

Virtue Loveth Virtue

A very natural and wonderful consequence of becoming a person capable of great love is described in this passage: “For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light” (D&C 88:40).

If we pursue the goal of an eternal marriage with purity and with both our hearts and our minds, I believe in most cases we will eventually be rewarded with a companion who is at least our spiritual equal and who will cleave unto intelligence and light as we do, who will receive wisdom as we receive it, who will embrace truth as we embrace it, and who will love virtue as we love it. To spend the eternities with a companion who shares the most important fundamental values with us and who will discuss them, live them, and join in teaching them to children is among the most soul-satisfying experiences of true romantic love. To know that there will be someone who walks a parallel path of goodness and growth with us and yearns for the same eternal values and happiness is of great comfort.

I witnessed a powerful example of this principle recently as I sealed a young couple in the Salt Lake Temple. After I had performed the sealing ceremony and the couple had exchanged rings and embraces, I asked them to share their feelings about each other and the Lord. The new bride spoke first. Her brief remarks expressed both gratitude and emotion as she told how from her very youngest years she had desired to keep herself virtuous and had hoped to find a companion who shared her values and righteous aspirations. She confirmed the goodness

Very little love can come from one who is not at peace with himself or herself and God.

of her new husband by witnessing that he was all she had hoped for and more.

Then the young husband spoke. He, too, was tearful as he shared how at age fourteen he had begun to pray to the Lord that the wife of his future, whoever she might be, would be protected and would keep herself virtuous while preparing for an eternal marriage. He also told how he had committed himself again and again over the years to that same path. Then he expressed his great joy at having met this wife of his prayers, and he mentioned his high hopes for a truly exceptional marriage.

This is the kind of relationship that our Heavenly Father wishes for all of his children. None of his faithful children will miss out on the opportunity for eternal marriage with one who is equally prepared for eternal life. Virtue loveth virtue! Truth embraceth truth!

Bridling Passions

The seeds of fulfilling romantic love are planted during courtship. During this time we should be mindful and appreciative of the truth and level of understanding reflected in Alma’s timeless counsel to his son, Shiblon: “See that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love” (Alma 38:12).

Those of you who have grown up around horses, saddles, and bridles will perceive that Alma was not suggesting to Shiblon that he eradicate his passions but rather that he control or channel them for the very worthwhile purpose of being filled with love. During courtship, this control means deferring physical relations until they can properly blossom in marriage. But restraint and moderation are needed even in marriage, for the gospel teaches that “unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions” (D&C 88:38).

Married Latter-day Saints must remember that not everything the world condones and encourages in the expressing of romantic love has a place in an eternal marriage. In the words of Elder Boyd K. Packer, “the greatest deception foisted upon the human race in our day is . . . overemphasis of physical gratification as it is related to romantic love. It is merely a repetition of the same delusion that has been impressed on every generation in ages past.

When we learn that physical gratification is only incident to, and not the compelling force of love itself, we have made a supreme discovery" (*Eternal Love*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1973, p. 15).

As a righteous couple grow and mature in their love, they will come to know that the fine blending of the spiritual and physical dimensions of their relationship forms a solid foundation for their eternal union.

Marriage Is a Priority

Because the restored gospel reveals that eternal life with our Heavenly Father will be lived in family units, we would be wise to place a high priority in this life on preparing for and developing rewarding marriage relationships and roles as effective fathers and mothers. If we have been regarding too lightly the inspired counsel of the prophets on marriage, we may want to reorient our thinking. All the prophets in recent years have made powerful statements affirming that all who have the opportunity should work to attain eternal marriage and develop an eternal family unit.

Nevertheless, Satan will seek to have us do otherwise, and enticing voices will speak to us of worldly achievements and acquisitions that may lead us on dangerous detours from which we can return only with great effort. Small, seemingly insignificant choices along the way will have large consequences that will determine our eventual destiny.

My wife and I made an important choice early in our marriage when I was struggling as a first-year law student and she was overwhelmed by her first teaching position. We rarely met in all our individual comings and goings, and our relationship with each other was suffering noticeably.

Even Sundays were burdensome as we tried to fulfill our Church callings and catch up on studies and school preparation. Finally, we sat down one evening and decided that if our marriage was a very important part of our lives, we had better start acting like it. We agreed to completely honor the Sabbath by refraining from all work, including our studies, and to devote ourselves to building a stronger marriage. We experienced an immediate surge in our feelings toward each other and noticeable improvement in other areas, including my grades and Kathy's teaching. Twenty-six years later, we are still faced with many similar choices and issues. I hope and pray that we are resolving them in favor of the things that matter most.

Perfection Is Gradual

The Savior attained perfection by the following process: "He received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness" (D&C 93:13).

A recognition that the Savior's perfection came gradually is comforting to two imperfect beings who are trying to make their marriage perfect. In my own case, I recently ventured to ask my wife a very risky question: "How am I doing?"

I was encouraged by her reply: "Well, I think you are nicer than you used to be."

I believe that those of you who are walking around with a checklist of desirable fully perfected attributes in a prospective companion may come off empty-handed. Most of those attributes will be only in embryo when you are courting and will take most of a lifetime to perfect.

Commitment

Another gospel principle that significantly contributes to development of an eternal marriage is absolute commitment to our companions, as described by this scripture: "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22).

Obviously, this also means that "Thou shalt love thy husband with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto him and none else." None of us knows when we marry what life will bring in terms of health challenges, financial setbacks, or even transgressions. Giving ourselves to one another in an eternal marriage is an unconditional giving of the whole person for the whole journey.

Recently, I visited with a widower as he stood bravely at the side of his wife's casket, surrounded by several handsome and stalwart sons. This man and his wife had been married for fifty-three years, during the last six of which she had been seriously ill with a terminal kidney disease. He had provided the 24-hour care she required until his own health was in jeopardy. I expressed my admiration for him and the great love and care he had given his wife. I felt compelled to ask, "How did you do it?"

It was easy, he replied, when he remembered that fifty-three years earlier, he had knelt at an altar in the temple and made a covenant with the Lord and with his bride. "I wanted to keep it," he said.

In an eternal marriage, the thought of ending what began with a covenant between God and each other simply has little place. When challenges come and our individual weaknesses are revealed, the remedy is to repent, improve, and apologize, not to separate or divorce. When we make covenants with the Lord and our eternal companion, we should do everything in our power to honor the terms.

Loving Kindness

A final gospel truth that will contribute to our understanding of and hence the quality of our marriages relates to the degree in which we involve the Savior in our relationships as husbands and wives. As designed by our Heavenly Father, marriage consists of our first entering into a covenant relationship with Christ and then with each other. He and his teachings must be the focal point of our togetherness. As we become more like him and grow closer to him, we will naturally become more loving and grow closer to each other.

I have personally felt the mellowing influence of Christ's example and teachings in my own marriage. I can vividly recall how easy it was to be accusing and judgmental and to find fault in the early years of my marriage. When I came home in the evenings having set the whole world in order, I would often wonder why Kathy in overseeing our young children was struggling with her few square feet in the kitchen. Then one day a wise teacher shared with me Nephi's touching description of the Savior:

"And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men" (1 Ne. 19:9).

I suppose "loving kindness" is a synonym for charity, or the pure love of Christ. I know that it is an absolutely essential ingredient in an eternal marriage and that romantic love cannot be separated from it or flourish without it. Loving kindness is a common thread in all the exceptional marriages with which

I am acquainted, and it is the remedy for almost all marital problems.

I have only begun to scratch the surface of my topic; I have only hinted at discussing sacrifice, forgiveness, agency, and children, all of which are vital elements in a successful eternal marriage. I could never hope to do justice to doctrines and truths which, if followed, will enable us as husbands and wives to "pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to [our] exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon [our] heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever" (D&C 132:19).

If we will strive to love with understanding, the Spirit will teach us "all things what [we] should do" (2 Ne. 32:5) to achieve an eternal marriage pleasing to the Lord. Under the influence of the Spirit, our sympathy and love for our eternal companions will deepen, and we will come to know a happiness and contentment in marriage that the world will never know.

No matter what our backgrounds or the quality of marriage our grandparents or parents enjoyed, we can in time and with the Lord's help achieve the ideal. If our heritage includes a spiritually strong family with healthy marriages and close relationships, we will be able to build and even improve on the foundation that has been laid. If our heritage is not as strong, we can resolve that our children will receive a richer legacy.

Above all, I hope that we will vow never to be satisfied with a mediocre marriage. Not long ago a friend told me that one of his young children had asked, "Do you think Grandpa ever kisses Grandma?" I certainly hope my wife and I are sufficiently in love and demonstrative about it that our grandchildren will not have to wonder. We can never afford to let our relationships become merely mutual toleration or accommodation.

Eternal marriage is godlike marriage. The term *eternal* describes the quality of marriage as much as its duration.