

THE ETERNAL FAMILY

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-IDAHO



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# THE FAMILY

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## A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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# FAMILIES IN THE CHURCH

## Handbook 2: Administering the Church



### 1.1 God the Father's Plan for His Eternal Family

#### 1.1.1 The Premortal Family of God

The family is ordained of God. It is the most important unit in time and in eternity. Even before we were born on the earth, we were part of a family. Each of us “is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents” with “a divine nature and destiny” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). God is our Heavenly Father, and we lived in His presence as part of His family in the premortal life. There we learned our first lessons and were prepared for mortality (see D&C 138:56).

#### 1.1.2 The Purpose of Mortality

Because of God's love for us, He prepared a plan that included our coming to the earth, where we would receive bodies and be tested so that we could progress and become more like Him. This plan is called “the plan of salvation” (Alma 24:14), “the great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8), and “the plan of redemption” (Alma 12:25; see also verses 26–33).

The purpose of God's plan is to lead us to eternal life. God declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Eternal life is God's greatest gift to His children (see D&C 14:7). It is exaltation in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. Through the plan of salvation, we can receive this blessing of returning to God's presence and receiving a fullness of joy.

#### 1.1.3 The Atonement of Jesus Christ

In order to gain exaltation in the kingdom of God, we must overcome two obstacles of mortality: death and sin. Because we cannot overcome either obstacle by ourselves, Heavenly Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior and Redeemer. The Savior's atoning sacrifice made it possible for all of God's children to overcome physical death, be resurrected, and gain immortality. The Atonement also made it possible for those who repent and follow Him to overcome spiritual death, return to God's presence to dwell with Him, and obtain eternal life (see D&C 45:3–5).

#### 1.1.4 The Role of Families in God's Plan

As part of our Heavenly Father's plan, we were born into families. He established families to bring us happiness, to help us learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and

to prepare us for eternal life.

Parents have the vital responsibility to help their children prepare to return to Heavenly Father. Parents fulfill this responsibility by teaching their children to follow Jesus Christ and live His gospel.

#### 1.1.5 The Role of the Church

The Church provides the organization and means for teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to all of God's children. It provides the priesthood authority to administer the ordinances of salvation and exaltation to all who are worthy and willing to accept them.

### 1.2 Returning to the Father

#### 1.2.1 The Gospel of Jesus Christ

The plan of salvation is the fullness of the gospel. It includes the Creation, the Fall, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and all the laws, ordinances, and doctrines of the gospel. It provides the way for us to experience joy in mortality (see 2 Nephi 2:25) as well as the blessing of eternal life. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can be cleansed and sanctified from sin and prepare to enter again into the presence of our Eternal Father. To receive this blessing, we must follow the principles and ordinances of the gospel (see Articles of Faith 1:3). We must:

1. Exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God.
2. Turn to God through sincere repentance, having a change of heart and confessing and forsaking sins.
3. Receive the saving ordinance of baptism for the remission of sins.
4. Be confirmed a member of the Church and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.
5. Endure to the end by keeping sacred covenants.

These principles have been taught since the days of Adam. As we come to understand and believe these truths and gain a firm testimony of Jesus Christ, we strive to obey His commandments and want to share our blessings with our family and others (see 1 Nephi 8:9–37). With this secure foundation of testimony, other elements of Church activity follow naturally.

Personal spiritual growth takes place as we draw close to God through prayer, scripture study, pondering, and obedience. Nephi taught:

“After ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

“Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:19–20).

Each of us is accountable before God to learn and keep His commandments and to live the gospel. We will be judged according to our actions, the desires of our hearts, and the kind of people we have become. As we become true followers of Jesus Christ, we experience a mighty change of heart and “have no more disposition to do evil” (Mosiah 5:2; see also Alma 5:12–15; Moroni 10:32–33). As we live the gospel of Jesus Christ, we grow line upon line, becoming more like the Savior in loving and serving others.

### 1.2.2 The Role of Church Leaders and Teachers

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders and teachers strive to help others become true followers of Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 18:18–30). To assist individuals and families in this effort, they:

1. Teach and testify of the pure doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Strengthen individuals and families in their efforts to keep their sacred covenants.
3. Provide counsel, support, and opportunities for service.

In addition, certain priesthood leaders have the authority to oversee the performance of the saving priesthood ordinances.

## 1.3 Establishing Eternal Families

Families are central to God’s plan, which provides a way for family relationships to extend beyond the grave. Sacred temple ordinances and covenants, faithfully kept, help us return to the presence of God, united eternally with our families.

### 1.3.1 Husband and Wife

Exaltation in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom can be attained only by those who have faithfully lived the gospel of Jesus Christ and are sealed as eternal companions. The sealing of husband and wife for time and eternity by

the authority of the priesthood—also known as temple marriage—is a sacred privilege and obligation that all should strive to receive. It is the foundation of an eternal family.

The nature of male and female spirits is such that they complete each other. Men and women are intended to progress together toward exaltation.

The Lord has commanded husbands and wives to cleave to each other (see Genesis 2:24; D&C 42:22). In this commandment, the word cleave means to be completely devoted and faithful to someone. Married couples cleave to God and one another by serving and loving each other and by keeping covenants in complete fidelity to one another and to God (see D&C 25:13).

A couple is to become one in establishing their family as the basis of a righteous life. Latter-day Saint husbands and wives leave behind their single life and establish their marriage as the first priority in their lives. They allow no other person or interest to have greater priority in their lives than keeping the covenants they have made with God and each other. Nonetheless, married couples continue to love and support their parents and siblings while focusing on their own families. Similarly, wise parents realize that their family responsibilities continue throughout life in a spirit of love and encouragement.

Being one in marriage requires a full partnership. For example, Adam and Eve worked together, prayed and worshipped together, sacrificed together, taught their children the gospel together, and mourned over wayward children together (see Moses 5:1, 4, 12, 27). They were united with each other and with God.

### 1.3.2 Parents and Children

“The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. . . . God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”). By divine design, both a man and a woman are essential for bringing children into mortality and providing the best setting for the rearing and nurturing of children.

Complete sexual abstinence before marriage and total fidelity within marriage protect the sanctity of this sacred responsibility. Parents and priesthood and auxiliary leaders should do all they can to reinforce this teaching. Concerning the roles of fathers and mothers, Church leaders have taught: “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” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”). When there is no



father in the home, the mother presides over the family.

Parents have a divinely appointed responsibility “to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”; see also Mosiah 4:14–15).

Wise parents teach their children to apply the healing, reconciling, and strengthening power of the Atonement within their family. Just as sin, mortal weaknesses, emotional hurt, and anger are conditions that separate God’s children from Him, these same conditions can separate family members from each other. Each family member has a responsibility to strive for family unity. Children who learn to strive for unity at home will find it easier to do so outside the home.

### 1.3.3 Unmarried Members of the Church

All members, even if they have never married or are without family in the Church, should strive for the ideal of living in an eternal family. This means preparing to become worthy spouses and loving fathers or mothers. In some cases these blessings will not be fulfilled until the next life, but the ultimate goal is the same for all.

Faithful members whose circumstances do not allow them to receive the blessings of eternal marriage and parenthood in this life will receive all promised blessings in the eternities, provided they keep the covenants they have made with God.

## 1.4 The Home and the Church

In the teachings and practices of the restored gospel, the family and the Church help and strengthen each other. To qualify for the blessings of eternal life, families need to learn the doctrines and receive the priesthood ordinances that are available only through the Church. To be a strong and vital organization, the Church needs righteous families.

God has revealed a pattern of spiritual progress for individuals and families through ordinances, teaching, programs, and activities that are home centered and Church supported. Church organizations and programs exist to bless individuals and families and are not ends in themselves. Priesthood and auxiliary leaders and teachers seek to assist parents, not to supersede or replace them.

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders must endeavor to strengthen the sacredness of the home by ensuring that all Church activities support the lives of individuals and families. Church leaders need to be careful not to overwhelm families with too many Church responsibilities. Parents and Church leaders work together to help individuals and families return to our Father in Heaven by following Jesus Christ.

### 1.4.1 Strengthening the Home

Followers of Christ are invited to “gather,” “stand in holy places,” and “be not moved” (D&C 45:32; 87:8; 101:22; see also 2 Chronicles 35:5; Matthew 24:15). These holy places include temples, homes, and chapels. The presence of the Spirit and the behavior of those within these physical structures are what make them “holy places.”

Wherever Church members live, they should establish a home where the Spirit is present. All members of the Church can make efforts to ensure that their place of residence provides a place of sanctuary from the world. Every home in the Church, large or small, can be a “house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God” (D&C 88:119). Church members can invite the Spirit into their homes through simple means such as wholesome entertainment, good music, and inspiring artwork (for example, a painting of the Savior or a temple).

A home with loving and loyal parents is the setting in which the spiritual and physical needs of children are most effectively met. A Christ-centered home offers adults and children a place of defense against sin, refuge from the world, healing from emotional and other pain, and committed, genuine love.

Parents have always been commanded to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4; Enos 1:1) and “in light and truth” (D&C 93:40). The First Presidency proclaimed:

“We call upon parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility.

“We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform” (First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999).

Parents have the primary responsibility for helping their children know Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ (see John 17:3). Latter-day Saint fathers and mothers have been commanded to teach gospel doctrines, ordinances, covenants, and ways of righteous living to their children (see D&C 68:25–28). Children who are so reared and taught are more likely to be prepared at the appropriate age to receive priesthood ordinances and to make and keep covenants with God.

Strengthening families is the focus of inspired Church programs such as home teaching (see D&C 20:47, 51), visiting teaching, and family home evening. As in all things, Jesus set the example of entering homes to minister, teach, and bless (see Matthew 8:14–15; 9:10–13; 26:6; Mark 5:35–43; Luke 10:38–42; 19:1–9).

#### **1.4.2 Family Home Evening**

Latter-day prophets have counseled parents to hold a weekly family home evening to teach their children the gospel, bear testimony of its truthfulness, and strengthen family unity. Stake and ward leaders are to keep Monday evenings free from all Church meetings and activities so family home evenings may be held.

Family home evening may include family prayer, gospel instruction, testimony sharing, hymns and Primary songs, and wholesome recreational activities. (For information on using music in the home, see 14.8.) As part of family home evening, or separately, parents may also call a periodic family council to set goals, resolve problems, coordinate schedules, and give support and strength to family members.

Family home evening is sacred, private family time under the direction of the parents. Priesthood leaders should not give directions as to what families should do during this time.

#### **1.4.3 Strengthening Individuals**

Church leaders should give special attention to individuals who do not presently enjoy the support of a family of strong Church members. These members may include children and youth whose parents are not members of the Church, other individuals in part-member families, and single adults of all ages. They are covenant members of God's eternal family, deeply loved by Him. These individuals should be given opportunities for service in the Church. The Church can provide wholesome sociality and fellowship that these members can find nowhere else.

Every member of the Church is as precious as every other. God's eternal plan provides for all of His faithful children to receive every blessing of eternal life, exalted in families forever.



## Teaching The Doctrine Of The Family

Sister Julie B. Beck  
Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Satellite Broadcast •  
August 4, 2009 • Conference Center Theater



1. It's a great blessing for me to be with you, my wonderful friends in the seminary and institute program. Thank you for the service that you give throughout the Church in the world. As I have traveled in my Church responsibilities, I've met so many of you. You are ecclesiastical leaders and also the leaders and teachers of the rising generation. Thank you for all you do.

2. A few of your number are here in the studio with me today representing the rest of you. These are seminary and institute teachers from the Ogden, Utah, area. We are so grateful to them for coming with their wives and husbands to share this experience together.

3. It is a blessing for us to have the quality of teachers and leaders that you are helping our rising generation. You have a great responsibility, and you have a position of influence in the kingdom. We know that we couldn't teach the rising generation with such effectiveness without you—those who are full time and those who are volunteers. Thank you, thank you, thank you. My heart swells with gratitude for all that you do.

4. I've served on the Board of Education and on the Executive Committee of the Board of Education for almost two and a half years now, and I've seen that every single teacher who is recommended for employment and every leader in Church education passes through a review process that goes all the way to the First Presidency. How blessed we are to have that process.

5. We are very interested in who is teaching the rising generation. A major financial commitment of the Church's education program is to the seminaries and institutes of religion. I've been studying again your Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook for CES Teachers and Leaders (2001) and hope that you are reviewing this also. This is a marvelous resource for you in all that you do. In the front section it says, "Religious education is education for eternity and requires the influence of the Spirit of the Lord" (p. 1). I pray that we will have that influence with us as we review some things today.

6. I've mentioned how carefully the First Presidency worries about every detail of Church education. I know how

much money they spend on the rising generation. I know how many people are employed to take care of the rising generation. Why do they invest so much?

7. As I've met with young single adults around the world, I ask these questions: Why does the First Presidency care so much about the youth of the Church, and why do they invest so much? In their focus groups and their firesides, these are the answers I get, and you should be interested in these answers. You might ask your own students these questions. They say: "Well, we are the future Church leaders." "Education is the key to success." "We need training so we can stay strong." "Our testimonies are strengthened in our classes." "We need to meet other great Latter-day Saint youth." "We are the hope of the future." One said, "We appreciate it." Another one said, "Well, they spend so much money on us because we're worth it."

8. I was very interested in those answers. You have to know that after pushing hard and receiving response after response, I have rarely heard, "So I will someday be a better father, or a better mother, or a better family leader." Family is rarely on their minds. Their responses are generally about self, and of course we know this is the time of life they're in. They're living in a very self-interested time of life, but they aren't thinking about family.

### **The Objective**

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

10. We're here to help with the Lord's purpose, as it says, to help them achieve "eternal life." In Moses 1:39 we learn,

“For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” We know that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ our immortality has been taken care of, but to receive eternal life we have some responsibilities. There are certain things that we have to do.

11. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. said, “Your chief interest, your essential and all but sole duty, is to teach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as that has been revealed in these latter days” (“The Charted Course of the Church in Education” [address to seminary and institute of religion leaders, Aug. 8, 1938], 6, [www.ldsces.org](http://www.ldsces.org); see also Teaching the Gospel, 4). So, what is that gospel, and what is essential to achieve eternal life?

12. We know that we cannot achieve eternal life without the ordinances and covenants of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. We find other teachings about living the commandments, serving, and giving away all we have to the Lord, but all of those things are based on the covenants we make. Without those covenants, we cannot achieve eternal life. That’s why we share the gospel and prepare missionaries—because Heavenly Father says, “All my children need to be taught and given an opportunity to make the covenants that will save them.” That’s why we build temples—because Heavenly Father says, “All my children need an opportunity to make these covenants.” So, we do vicarious work for those who have died. Heavenly Father wants every one of His children to have an opportunity. That’s why we teach the gospel to our youth—so they will understand and make and keep the covenants that they need to receive eternal life.

13. My purpose today is to talk to you about why the Board of Education wanted an emphasis on family in your objectives. Why would we want you to talk about family or understand family when you’re teaching a generation of unmarried people? We will review the theology of the family, threats to the family, and what we hope the rising generation—your students—will understand and do because of what you will teach them about the family.

## The Theology of the Family

14. Let’s talk, first of all, about the theology of the family and why seminary and institute teachers need to understand and teach this. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have a theology of the family. It’s based on the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement. I don’t know how well your students understand that. They may be able to recite the facts about the Creation, but do they know that this is a theology of the family? The Creation of the earth was the creation of an earth where a family could live. It was a creation of a man and a woman who were the two essential halves of a family. It was not about a creation of a man and a woman who happened to have a family. It was intentional all along that Adam and Eve form an eternal family. It was

part of the plan that these two be sealed and form an eternal family unit. That was the plan of happiness.

15. The Fall provided a way for the family to grow. Through the leadership of Eve and Adam, they chose to have a mortal experience. The Fall made it possible for Adam and Eve to have a family, to have sons and daughters. They needed to grow in numbers and grow in experience. The Fall provided that for the family.

16. The Atonement allows for the family to be sealed together eternally. It allows for families to have eternal growth and perfection. The plan of happiness and the plan of salvation was a plan created for families. I don’t think very many of the rising generation understand that the main pillars of our theology are centered in the family.

17. When we speak of qualifying for the blessings of eternal life, we mean qualifying for the blessings of eternal families. This was Christ’s doctrine, and this is some of what was restored that had been lost—understanding and clarity about family. Without these blessings, the earth is wasted. When did we learn that? Let’s turn in our scriptures to Doctrine and Covenants 2. Section 2 in the Doctrine and Covenants is the only part that we have in the Doctrine and Covenants that Joseph Smith recorded from his visits with the angel Moroni. This is what section 2 says:

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

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

20. “If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming” (vv. 1–3).

21. How early did the Prophet Joseph Smith understand that this was going to be a theology about the family? He understood it when he was 17 and he began to be taught. What are the promises made to the fathers? Who were the fathers? The fathers were Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah—those ancient prophets who understood the doctrine of eternal families. The promises of the children made to the fathers was that their hearts would turn to their fathers. Their hearts would be turned to the blessings of eternal life that they could have. This is talking about temple blessings—temple ordinances and covenants without which “the whole earth [is] utterly wasted.”

22. So, if we teach about what is in every section of the Doctrine and Covenants, if we teach so that our students know all the rivers in the Book of Mormon, if they can name all the prophets of the Old Testament, if they can describe to you the pioneer trek and the history of the Latter-day Saints

in the restored times but they don't understand the promises made to the fathers and their part in it, it is "utterly wasted." I would submit that all of our teaching is utterly wasted if they don't understand the context that all of this is taught within.

23. The proclamation on the family was written to reinforce that. It reinforces the family being central to the Creator's plan. Without the family, there is no plan; there is no reason for it. I'm not certain that everyone of the rising generation understands that with clarity.

## Threats to the Family

24. Let's review some of the threats to the family. We have to know what we're fighting against. If our young people don't understand what they're fighting against, then they can't prepare for the battle, and neither can you. We see evidence all around us that the family is not important. It's becoming less important in all societies. We know that because marriage rates are declining, the age of marriage is rising, divorce rates are rising, and more than a fourth of all births are out of wedlock. We see lower birth rates, and they're dropping every year worldwide. Abortion is rising and becoming increasingly legal around the world. We see unequal relationships with men and women, and we see a lot of cultures that still practice abuse of some kind within family relationships. Many times a career is gaining importance over the family.

25. We know, from our studies here at Church headquarters concerning the rising generation, that our youth are increasingly less confident in the institution of families. They are less confident in their ability to form a successful eternal family. Because they are less confident in families, they're placing more and more value on education and less and less importance on forming an eternal family.

26. We know, from visiting with them and conducting studies, that they show a lack of faith in their ability to be successful in families. They don't see forming families as a faith-based work. For them, it's a selection process much like shopping. They don't see it as something that the Lord will bless them and help them to accomplish. They also distrust their own moral strength and the moral strength of their peers. Because temptations are so fierce, they aren't sure they can be successful in keeping covenants. They also have insufficient and underdeveloped social skills, which are an impediment to them in forming eternal families.

27. They all have cell phones. I haven't been to a country in the world in the last three years where every young person doesn't have a cell phone. They all have a cell phone, and they all have an e-mail address. They're getting increasingly adept at talking to somebody 50 miles away and less and less able to carry on conversations with people in the same room. That makes it difficult for them to socialize with each other.

28. We also have the problem that we read about in Ephesians 6:12: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

29. This is the world our young people are growing up in. They are in this world where there is "spiritual wickedness in high places." Public policies are being made every day that are anti family, and the definition of family is changing legally around the world. Concerning spiritual wickedness, we could call attention to pornography, which is rampant. The use of pornography among our youth is growing. The new target audience for those who create pornography is young women. There are media messages everywhere that are anti family, and our young people are very connected with media—Internet, television, the things they receive on their phones, all electronic devices are delivering anti family messages to them every day. Increasingly, our youth are seeing no reason to form a family or get married in spite of all the teaching you give them. They are being desensitized about the need to form eternal families.

30. Let's read about how this is happening. Let's turn to Alma 30. This is Korihor. Let's put the family lens on this to see how this stacks up with what you're hearing today about family messages. Korihor, who in verse 12 was described as an anti-Christ, said in verses 13–14:

31. "O ye that are bound down under a foolish and a vain hope, why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things? Why do ye look for a Christ? For no man can know of anything which is to come.

32. "Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers."

33. This is what our rising generation is starting to think about families. Continuing in Alma:

34. "How do ye know of their surety? Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not see; therefore ye cannot know that there shall be a Christ.

35. "Ye look forward and say that ye see a remissions of your sins. But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so.

36. "And many more such things did he say unto them, telling them that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature" (vv. 15–17).

37. Have you heard that in the world's messages? "You are the one who will get yourself ahead. It's because of your skills

and your intelligence that you will be successful.” That’s the media message young people are getting every day.

38. Another message: “Therefore every man prospered according to his genius” (v. 17). Get your education. Be the best. There are TV shows they are watching that are competitive shows—they are seeing American Idol, So You Think You Can Dance, lots of competition shows. The more of a genius you are, the more famous you will be. These types of shows are popular among our youth.

39. “And that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime” (v. 17). That’s what they’re hearing every day. “Live the life that’s going to make you happy.” That’s the media message that they are getting.

40. I’m finding verse 18 interesting: “Thus he did preach unto them, leading away the hearts of many, causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness, yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms.”

41. A lot of the anti family messages that you are hearing are targeting young women. Satan knows that he will never have a body; he will never have a family. He will target those young women who create the bodies for the future generations and who should teach the families. They don’t even know what they’re being taught in the messages. It’s just seeping in, almost through their pores. Because Satan can’t have it, he’s luring away many women, and also men, and they’re losing confidence in their ability to form eternal families.

42. Korihor was an anti-Christ. Anti-Christ is anti family. Any doctrine or principle our youth hear from the world that is anti family is also anti-Christ. It’s that clear. They need to know that if it’s anti family, it’s anti-Christ. An anti-Christ is anti family.

43. We are in danger of getting a generation like we see described in Mosiah 26, where many of the rising generation don’t believe in the traditions of their fathers, and they become a separate people as to their faith and remain so ever after. Despite all the money, all the effort you put in, they could be led away if they don’t understand their part in the plan.

## Teaching the Rising Generation

44. Let’s go to the question “What is it we hope this rising generation will understand and do because of what you will teach them?” Teach so they don’t misunderstand that every doctrine, every principle, everything you’re teaching leads them to the fullness of the gospel. And the fullness of the gospel is found in the temples—in temple ordinances and covenants and their eternal role. That is the full gospel.

45. In the Church, a primary concern is to teach the saving principles of the gospel, and the saving principles are those that are the family principles, the principles that will teach them to form a family, to teach that family, and to prepare that family for ordinances and covenants. Then teach it to the next generation, and the next. Your students have that responsibility.

46. Let’s be very clear on key elements of doctrine. I hope every one of your classrooms has a copy of the proclamation on the family in it and that all of your students have a copy of the proclamation with them. Then, when you are teaching them, you can tie back teachings to key statements and phrases that are in the proclamation on the family. The proclamation is not a standalone lesson. If you’re teaching in the Old Testament, the proclamation should be a partner piece that they are circling and underlining and finding where the Old Testament families understood these principles. If you’re teaching in the Doctrine and Covenants, you can tie it back to the proclamation. This also applies to the Book of Mormon. If they have the proclamation with them in their scriptures, they will be learning and tying it together as you work.

47. President Hinckley said in 1995, when he read the proclamation on the family in a general Relief Society meeting and revealed it to the Church, that the proclamation was “a declaration and reaffirmation of standards, doctrines, and practices” that this Church has always had (“Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World,” Ensign, Nov. 1995, 100). This is not new doctrine from 1995. It was a reaffirmation of understanding that was there since Joseph Smith understood it at age 17.

48. One of those doctrines is the understanding of parents, sons, and daughters. President Spencer W. Kimball said this: “From the beginning, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints has emphasized family life. We have always understood that the foundations of the family, as an eternal unit, were laid even before this earth was created! Society without basic family life is without foundation and will disintegrate into nothingness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 3; or Ensign, Nov. 1980, 4).

49. Elder Robert D. Hales said this about marriage:

50. “The family is not an accident of mortality. It existed as an organizational unit in the heavens before the world was formed; historically, it started on earth with Adam and Eve, as recorded in Genesis. Adam and Eve were married and sealed for time and all eternity by the Lord, and as a result their family will exist eternally” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” in Dawn Hall Anderson, ed., *Clothed with Charity* [1997], 134). That’s very clear, isn’t it?

51. President Ezra Taft Benson said this:

52. “This order is ... described in modern revelation as an order of family government where a man and woman enter into a covenant with God—just as did Adam and Eve—to be sealed for eternity, to have posterity, and to do the will and work of God throughout their mortality. ...

53. “... This order of priesthood has been on the earth since the beginning, and it is the only means by which we can one day see the face of God and live. (See D&C 84:22.)” (“What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 9).

54. Elder David A. Bednar taught us in his wonderful message “Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan.” (I recommend this to you for your study; it is from the Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: Supporting the Family held February 11, 2006. There are other foundational messages there—one from President Thomas S. Monson, one from Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, and another one from Elder L. Tom Perry.)

55. Elder Bednar talked specifically about two important reasons why we have the family, why we have marriage. “Reason 1: The natures of male and female spirits complete and perfect each other, and therefore men and women are intended to progress together toward exaltation” (p. 3). Do your students understand that with clarity? “Reason 2: By divine design, both a man and a woman are needed to bring children into mortality and to provide the best setting for the rearing and nurturing of children” (p. 4). Wonderful principles taught there.

56. Students also need to understand that the command to “multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28) remains in force. It’s okay for them to bear children. Bearing children is a faith-based work. President Kimball said, “It is an act of extreme selfishness for a married couple to refuse to have children when they are able to do so” (in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1979, 6; or *Ensign*, May 1979, 6).

57. The media messages that are coming at your youth are antichildren. Motherhood and fatherhood are eternal roles and responsibilities. I don’t know if they understand that. Each carries the responsibility for either the male or the female half of the plan. They are preparing in this life for those eternal roles. They’re not just preparing their testimonies—they are preparing for eternal responsibilities.

58. What we’re really preparing them for is the blessings of Abraham. We can review that in Abraham 1 of the Pearl of Great Price. Let’s read this and ask ourselves some questions. (When I’m talking to young adults, I say, “How do we know Abraham was a young adult male?” It says that Abraham “saw that it was needful for [him] to obtain another place of residence” [v. 1]. So they can think of themselves: “It is needful for me to obtain another place of residence. I don’t need to live with my father forever.”)

59. In verse 2, Abraham said: “Finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers.” We often call Abraham the father, so who were Abraham’s fathers? Adam, Noah, Seth, and the ancient prophets; those were the fathers he knew about, and he knew about the plan and their responsibilities. What were the blessings? He wanted “the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers” (Abraham 1:2).

60. Where do we learn about these things in our day, and where do we receive these blessings? He wanted the blessings of the temple that were available to him so he could become “a rightful heir,” “a father of many nations.” That blessing only comes to those who have a temple sealing and marriage. You cannot be a father of many nations without a wife that you are sealed to. He could not hold the right belonging to the fathers without a wife who had the rights belonging to the mothers.

61. Abraham wanted and sought the temple blessings that we learn about in section 2 of the Doctrine and Covenants, that same priesthood. So, who were the mothers? Do your young women know who the mothers were? Do they know that their ancestral mothers were Eve and Sarah and Rebekah and those other important women? The scriptures call Eve “our glorious Mother Eve” (D&C 138:39). And why was she glorious? Because she understood her responsibility in the formation of an eternal family.

62. I love the story of Abraham and Sarah and of Isaac and Rebekah that is found in Genesis. If Abraham wanted these blessings, his wife was pretty important. Abraham and Sarah had one son—the golden son, Isaac. If Abraham wanted these blessings—to be the “father of many nations”—how important was Isaac’s wife? Isaac’s wife was pivotal in Abraham being able to receive his blessings. She was so important that he sent his servant on a mission to find the right girl—a girl who would keep her covenants, a girl who understood what it meant to form an eternal family and have those same blessings. (It’s a great study to just see what Rebekah’s qualities were. You can start in Genesis 24:15 and read through sometime with your students and learn what some of her qualities were. Ask: What do we learn about Rebekah? What was she like? What was her character that made her the kind of person to qualify to be the wife of the one golden child who was then going to pass on these blessings?)

63. In verse 60 we come to the point where Rebekah was blessed by her brothers. It says, “Be thou the mother of

thousands of millions.” Where do you get those kinds of blessings? You get those in the temple. And Rebekah was blessed and wanted these blessings. So Rebekah left all her family and her former life. She wanted those blessings so much that she said, “I don’t need to wait. I will go now” (see Genesis 24:61). And she and Isaac formed an eternal family. They had two boys. One of their boys chose to marry out of the covenant.

64. We learn from Rebekah that she was weary of her life because of the daughters of Heth. Those were the women who were not in the covenant. This is in Genesis 27:46 where she said to Isaac, “I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?” Now, Rebekah gave up everything—she left her family and her homeland to go form an eternal family because she wanted these blessings. And of her two sons, she had one left; and of the daughters of the land, there was not one who could form an eternal marriage with her son. She needed to see that her righteous son got the blessings. Rebekah used her influence to see that the priesthood blessings and keys passed to the righteous son. It’s a perfect example of the man who has the keys and the woman who has the influence working together to ensure their blessings.

65. Now we had Isaac and Rebekah, who knew about the promises to “be . . . the mother of thousands of millions” or the “father of many nations.” How important was the wife of Jacob? Very important. Because of Rebekah’s influence and Isaac’s priesthood keys, we have the twelve tribes of Israel, who now people the earth. That story of Isaac and Rebekah is pivotal. Everything depended on a man and a woman who understood their place in the plan and their responsibilities to form an eternal family, to bear children, and to teach them.

66. So, what I submit to you as one of your responsibilities—besides teaching those doctrines so your students don’t misunderstand—is send Isaac and Rebekah forth from every classroom. We need every one of your students to understand his or her role in this great partnership—that they are each an Isaac or a Rebekah. Then they will know with clarity what they have to do.

### **Live the Hope of Eternal Life**

67. Next, I would have you live in your homes, in your families, in your marriages so your students have the hope of eternal life from watching you. Your objective is to live the kind of a home life that your students want to have—have that kind of a family. They won’t get that message from many other places. Live it and teach it with so much clarity that what you teach will cut through all the noise they are hearing and pierce their hearts and touch them. You don’t need to compete in volume; you don’t need to compete in

the number of words; you just need to be very clear in your examples. You are the ideal for them.

68. Live in your home so that you’re brilliant in the basics, so that you’re intentional about your roles and responsibilities in the family. You think in terms of precision, not perfection. (Perfection is difficult to obtain in this life, but live your family life with precision.) If you have your goals and you’re precise in how you go about them in your homes, your students will learn from you. They learn that you pray, you study the scriptures together, you have family home evening together, you make a priority of mealtimes and teach your family during those times. You are constantly teaching your families the same things that you’re teaching your students. You speak respectfully of your marriage partners. Then from your example the rising generation will gain great hope and will understand—not just from the words you teach, but from the way you feel and emanate the spirit of family.

### **Review**

69. The seminary and institute objective is to prepare our youth for the blessings of eternal life. You are preparing your students for the temple; you are preparing them for eternal families, without which the earth is “utterly wasted.” There are many threats that are coming at the rising generation—threats to them forming an eternal family—and they are being hit with those and losing confidence in their ability to form eternal families. In a lot of ways they’re similar to Abraham, living in a land where there’s idolatry and wickedness, and they need to mentally take themselves out of that into the land where the Lord can bless them to receive the covenants.

70. Your role in this is to teach them so they don’t misunderstand, to be very clear on key points of doctrine, which you find in the proclamation on the family. This is prominent in your teaching, prominent in your classrooms, prominent in what they’re learning. You are preparing them for the blessings of Abraham in everything you are teaching. You are preparing them for the temple. You are seeking to send forth from every classroom an Isaac and a Rebekah. You’re living so they have confidence in you, and through your example they know they can form eternal families.

71. Oftentimes with young adults I’ll tell the story about the day my husband and I were married. We had three dollars. Even worldwide, that’s not very much money nowadays. It was a faith-based work when we got married. We didn’t get married because of money, or because our education was complete, or because we even had a place to live. We lived with Grandpa and took care of him for the first season of our marriage. We went to school and worked hard, but we entered that relationship as a faith-based work. We knew that we had made a covenant with the Lord and that He would bless us. It didn’t take money; it took faith. Those are



messages they need to have and get confidence in because of you.

72. This generation will be called upon to defend the doctrine of the family as never before in the history of the world. If they don't know it, they can't defend it. They need to understand temples and priesthood. If you don't know that they are meant to be fathers and mothers, then they won't know that they are meant to be fathers and mothers. Your effort will be wasted.

73. President Kimball said this in 1980, so this is almost 30 years ago, and I find it prophetic and very applicable to us:

74. "Many of the social restraints which in the past have helped to reinforce and to shore up the family are dissolving and disappearing. The time will come when only those who believe deeply and actively in the family will be able to preserve their families in the midst of the gathering evil around us.

75. "... There are those who would define the family in such a nontraditional way that they would define it out of existence. ...

76. "We of all people, brothers and sisters, should not be taken in by the specious arguments that the family unit is somehow tied to a particular phase of development a moral society is going through. We are free to resist those moves which downplay the significance of the family and which play up the significance of selfish individualism. We know the family to be eternal. We know that when things go wrong in the family, things go wrong in every other institution in society" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 3–4; or Ensign, Nov. 1980, 4).

77. My brothers and sisters, my wonderful friends and partners in this work, "we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ" and His full doctrine (2 Nephi 25:26), His doctrine which is based on the theology of the family. We are "not ashamed of the gospel of [Jesus] Christ" (Romans 1:16) or His doctrine. We are willing to defend it and teach it with clarity. And we know that as we do so we will have heavenly help. Our covenants make it possible for us to live with Heavenly Father eternally. That is our great blessing.

78. I leave with you my testimony that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true, that it was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. We have the fullness of the gospel this day. I bear you my testimony that we are sons and daughters of heavenly parents, who sent us forth to have this earthly experience to prepare us for the blessing of eternal families. I bear you my testimony of our Savior Jesus Christ, that through His Atonement we can become perfect and equal to our responsibilities in our earthly families, and that through His Atonement we have the promise of eternal life

in families. I bear you my testimony of the power of the Holy Ghost to be with us and guide us in all of our teaching. And if we call upon that power, that power will pierce the hearts and souls and minds of this generation, which are hungry to learn the truth. They will recognize it because they did receive their first lessons in the world of spirits. It will ring true to them. We are led today by a living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. I also thank each of you for your dedicated service, your lives of faith and consecration, and your living examples of the truthfulness of this gospel. I pray the Lord's blessings to be with you in all that you do, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

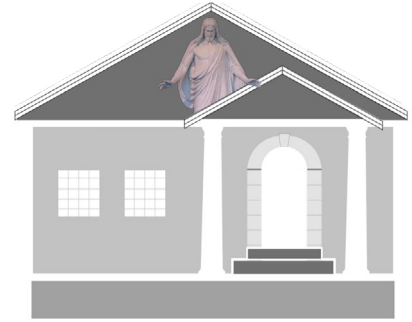
Teaching the Doctrine of the Family  
(QR Code)





## How We Lost The Plot

Elder Bruce C. Hafen  
Covenant Hearts (Salt Lake City 2005)



1. I have watched the universal marriage plot unravel over the last thirty years, as our society has experienced what some observers now call the “collapse of marriage.” Writer Maggie Gallagher believes this pattern is “destroying American society” by creating fatherless homes and increasing single-parent families and births outside wedlock. These conditions all damage children’s health, their psychological development, their social behavior, and their personal happiness. The ripple effects from so much personal harm then devastate the entire society. And yet, she notes, “we have refused to act, taking . . . bizarre comfort in the [new] belief that . . . marriage is ultimately a private matter, and therefore we can do nothing as a society to prevent its collapse.”<sup>1</sup>

2. How did it come to this, that most people now see marriage—once widely perceived as the core structure of society—as “ultimately a private matter” that, being private, may now be beyond society’s ability to repair? Looking back, we can now see that changes in United States divorce laws and attitudes about marriage in the 1960s and 70s were really part of a much larger historical change that moved many Americans to care more about their self-interest than about the interest of their families and communities.

3. Some of those changes will be explored a bit further in Part III, but consider here a few headlines about five trends that have contributed to the confusion that almost unconsciously perplexes us today about modern marriage attitudes—individual rights, no-fault divorce, same-gender marriage, the interest of others in our marriages, and optimism and pessimism as defining attitudes.

### Individual Rights and the “Liberation” Movements

4. The individual rights causes that date back to the 1960s began with a compelling need to eliminate racial discrimination, which had become a shameful blot on the nation’s conscience. This original civil rights movement was followed by an important women’s rights movement that eliminated much unfair gender-based discrimination. But before long, some extremist critics went far beyond these much-needed movements, using “rights” language to challenge many laws and customs that had long supported traditional family relationships.

5. For example, a noted advocate of individual rights said in 1978 that he feared any kind of “domination” by one person over another. So he argued that American law should liberate “the child—and the adult—from the shackles of . . . family” commitments. In that way, “individual rights” attitudes began to challenge one spouse’s right to keep a marriage together and parents’ right to raise children as they thought best, claiming that traditional family ties interfered with the individual’s right to be “free” from the demands or needs of other people, even in the family.<sup>2</sup> To these advocates, the right to be free was simply more important than the right to be together, because being expected to stay together seemed to them like bondage.

6. One illustration of how individual rights ideas influenced traditional family law was the famous 1973 abortion case, *Roe v. Wade*.<sup>3</sup> There the Supreme Court removed the historic right of state legislatures to say when a woman could choose an elective abortion. *Roe* gave that choice to individual women, rejecting long-held beliefs in our culture about the rights of the unborn child and society’s right to define when life begins.

7. Building on such individualistic theories, some advocates of extremist radical feminism have more recently attacked the very concept of marriage, insisting that traditional ideas confine mothers and other women to stereotypes of subordination and oppression.

8. Some court and legislative decisions also began to give individual rights priority over traditionally structured families. These included cases granting parental rights to unwed fathers, or giving child custody and adoption rights to people who lived in unmarried cohabitation or homosexual relationships. These decisions helped develop the legal theories that would one day support the more extreme idea of gay marriage.

9. Until the 1970s and 80s, American courts would never have awarded child custody to parents living in such “alternative lifestyles,” unless the circumstances allowed no reasonable option. Nearly all of our judges and legislators had long believed that such custody awards were contrary to children’s interests—verified by “several decades of social science evidence which strongly indicates that children do

best when raised by a mother and a father.”<sup>4</sup> That’s why children born out of wedlock were considered “illegitimate,” and social agencies tried to place them in two-parent homes. But as a more permissive cultural climate accelerated the momentum of ever-expanding personal rights, more and more judges allowed claims of adult personal liberty to trump children’s interests.

10. When the liberation movements first started, I wondered if a children’s rights movement would follow the civil rights and women’s movements. Children had long enjoyed such “rights” as being entitled to a public education, parental protection, and protection against abuse. But soon the “kiddie libbers” began to urge children’s liberation from any kind of “discrimination” based only on their age—even if that discrimination was designed for children’s own (or society’s) protection, like age limits for driving a car, drinking alcohol, or voting.

11. For example, I recall explaining in 1972 to our politically alert seven-year-old son that he was too young to vote in the upcoming national election between Nixon and McGovern. He was quite indignant, pointing out, “Hey, I know a lot more about the issues than Grandma and Grandpa do!” He did feel discriminated against—though he has since changed his view about when young people should be old enough to vote.

12. Since those days, American laws about “liberating children” have changed only somewhat, but many adults still came to favor “leaving children alone,” often to the point of abandoning children to their “rights” to make their own lifestyle choices—everything from writing obscenities in the school newspaper to being sexually active. In 1989 the United Nations adopted a new Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the United States Senate still has not ratified, although most other nations have now accepted it. According to a UN document, this charter was designed “to protect children from the power of parents” and other adults in children’s decision-making about their own lives.<sup>5</sup>

13. In a summary of how individualistic attitudes have changed American family law, professor Janet Dolgin says our society has now moved from an “outdated” world in which attitudes about women and children were “founded in a hierarchical ideology” to “an egalitarian ideology that presumes the autonomy of the individual in a world of contract.”<sup>6</sup> Our laws thus increasingly recognizes a “right to be let alone,” even in a family. We will see more about this “world of contract” when we compare legalistic “contractual” attitudes toward marriage with more spiritually based “covenant” attitudes (see chapter 7).

14. Professor Dolgin realizes that her new vision of family life leaves spouses and children “without a sense of ultimate responsibility within, and toward, any social group.”<sup>7</sup> She also senses that the new spirit of individual freedom is

unable to “anchor people in a social order that encourages responsible connection.”<sup>8</sup> But in the world she describes, the priority of personal liberty remains, eroding our interdependence within families and leaving people unsure whether the natural bonds between spouses, parents, and children are valuable ties that bind or are sheer bondage.

## No-Fault Divorce

15. I graduated from law school just before California passed the nation’s first no-fault divorce law in 1968. That law tried to ease the pain of divorce, partly by creating new legal standards and partly by making divorce seem more acceptable. Then, like a fire raging out of control, this movement swept the country until it became easier to end a marriage in America than in any other nation—and the United States still has the world’s highest divorce rate.<sup>9</sup> The wind that fanned that social prairie fire was individual rights theory.

16. Prior to 1968, someone who wanted a divorce had to prove in court that his or her spouse had engaged in real misconduct, such as abandoning the family, adultery, or aggravated mental cruelty. It wasn’t enough just to show that both spouses wanted to end the marriage, because marriage was not understood as simply a private agreement between two people. Rather, people saw marriage as a social institution that played the crucial role of rearing children and teaching all family members to obey unenforceable but vital moral and social obligations. When a truly “broken home” fell apart, society picked up the pieces and covered the costs. Theoretically, only a judge, who represented society’s and children’s interests, could determine if a troubled marriage met the standards for divorce.

17. These traditional divorce laws created strong incentives for couples to stay together and work out their problems; however, the old laws did have limits. Some people felt hopelessly stuck in miserable marriages, which aroused public sympathy, especially when no young children were involved. Women caught in messy divorces were often disadvantaged by economic inequalities that left them dependent on their former husbands for financial support. Many divorcing couples fabricated claims of abandonment and adultery to satisfy strict legal standards. The search for “fault” also increased the bitterness in already bitter disputes.

18. Some family law scholars thought this untidy situation wasn’t so bad, because the old divorce laws were written strictly enough to keep the conservatives happy and enforced flexibly enough to keep the liberals happy. Nonetheless, California’s 1968 no-fault law tried to remedy the problems by removing any requirement to prove misconduct on the part of either spouse. It also added a new, no-fault basis for divorce—irretrievable breakdown of the marriage, regardless of who or what caused it.

19. In theory, family court judges still represented society's interests in deciding whether a marriage was, in fact, shattered beyond repair. The new law never intended to let spouses end their relationship simply as a matter of personal choice. And it certainly never intended that one party alone could just announce a marital breakdown and walk away. In practice, however, no-fault judges soon found themselves simply unable or unwilling to impose their judgment about "marriage breakdown" against the will of the partners—or, eventually, even one partner—who had decided he or she wanted to get out of the marriage.

20. No-fault reform ultimately took on a life of its own. Blending in with the anti-authority mood of the 1960s, the movement gradually altered how society viewed the very nature of marriage. No-fault divorce was the first family law that no longer "looked at marriage . . . as an institution" that held parents and children together. Rather, the reformers came to view marriage as "an essentially private relationship between adults terminable at the will of either"<sup>10</sup> and with no one feeling much responsibility for the way a "termination" would affect other people, especially children.

21. This interpretation led to a fundamental change in attitude, sending married people the signal that, because their marriage was not society's business, no one had a right to expect the marriage partners to keep striving when their marriage ran into turbulence. It wasn't long, then, until judges' doubts about society's right to enforce wedding vows gave some couples the false impression that those promises held no great social or moral value.

### Same-Gender Marriage

22. In July 2003, the United States Supreme Court overturned a Texas law that made it a crime for unmarried homosexual people to have sexual relations.<sup>11</sup> Five months later the Massachusetts Supreme Court, in a 4–3 vote, cited that precedent in concluding that the state could not constitutionally deny gay and lesbian couples the right to marry.<sup>12</sup> As recently as fifteen years earlier, no American court or legislature—in fact, no country in the world—had ever been willing to take same-gender marriage so seriously.

23. With visible support from the Church in the early 1990s, the citizens of Hawaii, Alaska, and California all adopted public initiatives that explicitly opposed same-gender marriages. Eleven other states joined this list in November 2004. The legislatures of more than thirty other states have enacted similar legislation. Still, a few European countries and the state of Vermont have recently authorized same-gender "domestic partnerships" that confer many legal benefits of marriage. By 2005 only Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain allowed gay "marriage," but a similar proposal was pending in Canada.

24. The current American tensions over same-gender

marriage may not be resolved without amending the United States Constitution. On July 7, 2004, the First Presidency issued a statement that "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints favors a constitutional amendment preserving marriage as the lawful union of a man and a woman."

25. The dramatic 2003 cases were but the latest steps in an evolution in judicial reasoning that had long been gaining momentum. As described further in chapter 24 (of Elder Hafen's book), the radical "personal autonomy" theory behind the gay marriage case logically extends the same individualistic legal concept that created no-fault divorce in the 1960s. When the law upholds the individual's right to end a marriage, regardless of social consequences (as happened with no-fault divorce), that principle can also seem to uphold the individual's right to start a marriage, regardless of social consequences (as with same-gender marriage). That is how today's national debate on gay marriage is conceptually linked to no-fault divorce.

26. These ideas have clear implications for traditional marriage. When one believes that starting or ending a marriage is just a personal choice, one is less likely to think of one's own marriage as a serious social or moral obligation. Without even realizing why they assume and expect what they do, some people therefore feel less committed to making their marriages work and more willing to walk away when they're not getting what they want.

27. Same-gender marriage also alters society's judgment about preserving the best home environment for raising children. Once a couple of the same gender is entitled to a legal marriage, a family court would have more difficulty denying them the right to raise children. Until now, we collectively believed that, whenever possible, children should be raised by both a father and mother. As recently as 2004, for example, a twelve-judge federal appeals court upheld the constitutionality of a 1977 Florida law that forbids homosexual parents from adopting a child. The law was based on the state legislature's finding that children are better off in homes that have a mother and father.<sup>13</sup>

28. This pattern made allowance for such obvious exceptions as the death of a parent or a divorce. But until recent years, our experienced-based beliefs about the best interests of children would never have allowed a single person to adopt a child, much less simply make a trip to a sperm bank. Swept along by the currents of individual liberation, however, many judges are now simply unwilling to make judgments about the best moral and developmental home atmosphere for children.

### The Interests of Others in Our Marriage

29. The changes in recent decades have portrayed marriage as an individual adult choice, rather than as a crucial knot in the very fabric that holds society together. We have

increasingly lost sight of how much every marriage, and every divorce, affects other people—especially children.

30. American writer Wendell Berry once described why relatives and friends come so gladly to wedding receptions. These happy gatherings have the feel of a community event—because that’s what they are: “Marriage [is] not just a bond between two people but a bond between those two people and their forebears, their children, and their neighbors.” Therefore, Berry continues: “Lovers must not . . . live for themselves alone. . . . They say their vows to the community as much as to one another, and the community gathers around them to hear and to wish them well, on their behalf and on its own. It gathers around them because it understands how necessary, how joyful, and how fearful this joining is. These lovers . . . are giving themselves away, and they are joined by this as no law or contract could ever join them. Lovers, then, ‘die’ into their union with one another as a soul ‘dies’ into its union with God. . . . If the community cannot protect this giving, it can protect nothing. . . . It is the fundamental connection without which nothing holds, and trust is its necessity.”<sup>14</sup>

31. Picture the community silently saying to the new couple, “We need your marriage to succeed - for our sake!” And picture the new couple silently saying to the community, “We need your support to help us succeed - for our sake!”

32. Most people in the past understood Berry’s insight enough to know that shattered families would damage children and parents and thus destabilize society. That’s why G. K. Chesterton once remarked that we should “regard a system that produces many divorces as we do a system that drives men to drown or shoot themselves.”<sup>15</sup>

33. The need to protect children from this kind of harm was traditionally the basis for the idea that marriage is a social institution, not just a private partnership—because “marriage brings into being an organization to serve interests beyond those of [the husband and wife]” such as those of “the children of that marriage, the extended family,” and society at large. “Marriage is the principal institution for raising children. . . . If it is undermined, children will suffer and are suffering. In the end, society and the state will be afflicted and are being afflicted.”<sup>16</sup>

34. When divorce and illegitimacy rates began climbing in the 1970s, scholars argued about whether these trends would harm children. In more recent years, a flood of evidence has demonstrated the psychic and social harm of severe family disruption (see chapter 21). Primarily because of these findings, in 2000 a diverse group of leaders and scholars created a new, grass-roots “marriage movement.”<sup>17</sup> President Bush’s 2003 initiative to strengthen marriage drew directly from this movement. Partly through their efforts, partly because of an increased age at first marriage,<sup>18</sup> and partly because many of today’s “children of divorce” want

a different life for their children from the life their parents gave them, today’s divorce rate has declined slightly from its historic high a decade ago.<sup>19</sup> Even so, the current United States divorce rate would have been dismissed as impossible had it been predicted during the mid-1960s when Marie and I were married.

35. As the children of the divorce culture now look at their own marriage prospects, the family trauma many of them personally endured has shaken their confidence in traditional family assumptions. This “relationship revolution” has changed “the whole language and concept of marriage. Where 1950s couples spoke of sacrifice, loyalty, unconditional love and hard work in marriage, those values have [now] become unfashionable.” Today’s unmarried live-in couples are “here for a good time, not for a long time.” Yet, as psychologist Hugh McKay put it, this anti-marriage revolution destroys the motivation to “hang on and work it out.” If marriage seems “too easy, and easy to get out of, maybe you never break through to a rock solid commitment.”<sup>20</sup>

### Optimism and Pessimism as Defining Attitudes

36. Ironically, many of today’s undercommitted American couples still dream of “a big wedding,” symbolizing their longing for the certainty of permanent ties. Some families risk bankruptcy just to throw a massive wedding party, and many of these weddings are second and third marriages. Said one news story, “here comes the bride—again and again.”<sup>21</sup>

37. This reference to big weddings and a longing for permanence introduces an odd paradox about today’s confusion: Just when their families have never seemed less lovable, many people today hunger for eternal family love. The public resonates to movies and books that develop the theme that love can outlast death.

38. For example, in the 1999 movie *What Dreams May Come*, a character played by Robin Williams dies in an accident and then joyously finds his family in a dazzlingly colorful “heaven” but only after going through a very ugly “hell” to save his wife.

39. The concluding scene of the popular musical *Les Misérables* reinforces a similar hope. In a moving depiction of life and love after death, Fantine returns in a white dress from beyond the veil to welcome the dying Jean Val Jean to her heavenly presence.

40. Mitch Albom’s best-selling book *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* explores how death lets us find explanations for life’s mysteries from the people whose lives most deeply touched us in mortality including, above all, our families.

41. Others have also documented this modern hunger for a heaven where people live forever with those they love. For instance, two scholars writing a history about the idea

of heaven in Western society found that most Americans today believe not only in a life after death but that family life should continue beyond the grave. This popular belief persists, they said, even though churches other than the LDS Church offer little insight about the subject.<sup>22</sup>

42. For Latter-day Saints, of course, the dream of an eternal family is a natural as breathing. A few years ago our six-year-old granddaughter was with her family as they drove by an LDS temple one evening. The temple grounds were beautifully lit, symbolically and actually chasing away the dark night. As the car stopped, she looked at the shining temple and said, “When I get bigger, and bigger, and bigger, and BIGGER . . . I’m going to get married in the temple.” Her dream makes us all want to stretch to be big enough for blessings so large.

43. At first it could seem contradictory that people today would yearn to take their family ties to heaven when so many of their own families are in disarray. In his book *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah reported that many Americans have shifted their view of marriage from that of a relatively permanent social institution to a temporary source of personal fulfillment. So when marriage commitments intrude on people’s preferences and convenience, they tend to walk away. Yet, ironically and significantly, Bellah also found that most of the people he interviewed still cling, perhaps in a hopelessly dreamy sense, to the nostalgic notion of marriage based upon loving and permanent commitments as “the dominant American ideal.”<sup>23</sup>

44. Perhaps this modern “longing to belong”<sup>24</sup> is not really in spite of today’s widespread family decay but because of the decay. Sometimes we don’t appreciate life’s sweetest gifts until we no longer have them or we seriously fear losing them. Nobody really wants to be lonely, but the lifestyles associated with today’s frenzied search for “individual freedom” often lead, unsurprisingly, to loneliness. And the search to transcend loneliness is a theme of modern life. Elder Neal A. Maxwell once said that the laughter of the world is just a lonely crowd trying to reassure itself.<sup>25</sup>

45. Research on current American attitudes toward family life further illustrates the difference between what people accept and what they wish for. People today are more tolerant than previous generations about the lifestyle choices others make. Yet, in spite of this new tolerance, most people still don’t believe that everything they tolerate is a wise choice. One survey found that “while there were marked shifts toward permitting previously [socially prohibited] behavior, there were no significant shifts toward believing that remaining single, getting divorced, not having children, or reversing gender roles were positive goals to be achieved. . . . [T]he vast majority of Americans still value marriage, parenthood, and family life. . . . [W]hat has changed [is] an increased tolerance for behavior not previously accepted, but not an increase in the active embracement of such behavior.”<sup>26</sup>

46. James Q. Wilson said of such data: “Half [of] us approve of other people’s daughters having children out of wedlock, but hardly any of us approve of that for our daughters.” In today’s “widening tension between tolerance and belief” we “don’t wish to be ‘judgmental,’ unless [we are judging] something we care about, [like] the well-being of the people we cherish.”<sup>27</sup>

47. Despite society’s increased tolerance for behavior once considered immoral, most people today—paradoxically—do still long deeply for permanent, loving marriages in their own lives. Yet despite those private hopes, the cultural changes of the last generation have also created a widespread pessimism about binding commitments. Such pessimism collides with the popular personal dream of family fulfillment, and that very pessimism is one of the biggest obstacles to fulfilling the dream.

48. In earlier years, most people worked hard to reach high ideals, such as stable marriage, even when they didn’t achieve their hopes “except at the high points of their lives.” And in those days, the ideals still served as “signposts pointing the way for man’s endless striving,”<sup>28</sup> even in the presence of common human weaknesses.

49. Striving is a crucial word when the subject is marriage. Marriage, like religious faith, is no more satisfying than we are willing—striving—to make it. William James said: “Belief and doubt are living attitudes, and involve conduct on our part.” If you are climbing a mountain and must jump a chasm to survive, you must “have faith that you can successfully make [the leap. For if you do,] your feet are nerved to its accomplishment. But mistrust yourself . . . and you will hesitate so long that . . . all unstrung and trembling . . . you roll into the abyss. . . . Refuse to believe, and you shall indeed be right, for you shall . . . perish. But believe, and again you shall be right. . . . You make one . . . of two possible universes true by your trust or mistrust. [Thus] optimism and pessimism are definitions of the world, [and often we create the kind of world we live in because] our faith beforehand in an uncertified result is the only thing that makes the result come true.”<sup>29</sup>

50. This principle applies to marriage with uncommon force. Whether we “strive” to make the marriage work may be the most important ingredient in whether it does work. As President Spencer W. Kimball taught, marriage is never easy:

51. “Happiness does not come by pressing a button. . . . It must be earned. . . .

52. “One comes to realize very soon after the marriage that the spouse has weaknesses not previously revealed or discovered. The virtues which were constantly magnified during courtship now grow relatively smaller, and the weaknesses that seemed so small and insignificant during courtship now

grow to sizeable proportions. . . . The habits of years now show themselves. . . .

53. “Often there is an unwillingness to settle down and to assume the heavy responsibilities that immediately are there. . . .

54. “[Still,] while marriage is difficult, and discordant and frustrated marriages are common, yet real, lasting happiness is possible, and marriage can be more an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive. This is within the reach of every couple, every person . . . if both are willing to pay the price.”<sup>30</sup>

55. Because this is a true principle, the survivability, the happiness, even the “exultant ecstasy” that is possible in a marriage may depend—more than it depends on any other single thing—on whether spouses (and their family and community) expect their marriage to succeed.

56. Most ordinary people, despite their disappointments, are still willing to believe that marriage can, or at least ought to, work. But as the pessimistic strains of modern culture stir their doubts, more and more people are losing the confidence they need to make their dream possible by their conduct. Then their own doubts will confirm that they were right.

57. As a silver lining to these modern clouds of confusion, the changing attitudes of the last thirty years may at least help us appreciate the clarity and power of the gospel’s teachings about marriage more than we did when society supported our assumptions. In this world of bewildering lifestyles and compromised commitments, the gospel is our surest hope for gaining the perspective and the discipline we need to fill our heart’s longing for the fullness that marriage can provide.

#### Notes

1. Gallagher, *Abolition of Marriage*, 4. See generally Waite and Gallagher, *Case for Marriage*.
2. Tribe, *American Constitutional Law*, sections 988-89.
3. *Roe v. Wade*, United States, 1973.
4. Schlesinger, “How Gay Marriage Thrust Two Outsiders onto Center Stage.”
5. Quoted in Hafen and Hafen, “Abandoning Children to Their Autonomy,” 450.
6. Dolgin, “Family in Transition,” 1519, 1520.
7. *Ibid.*, 1570.
8. *Ibid.*, 1571. v
9. “The trend towards getting married later has helped reduce the nationwide [United States] divorce rate from 4.7 per 1,000 people in 1990 to 4 in 2001. However, the figure still dwarfs the European Union’s rate of 1.9.” Ward, “South Finds Families That Pray Together May Not Stay Together,” 3.
10. Moir, “New Class of Disadvantaged Children,” 63.
11. *Lawrence v. Texas*, United States, 2003.
12. Goodridge et al. v. Department of Public Health et al., Massachusetts,

2003.

13. “Court Upholds Ban on Same-Sex Adoptions,” 23 July 2004, citing [worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp](http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp). The United States Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal from this decision. Biskupic, “Ban on Adoption by Gays Left Intact.”
14. Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community*, 125, 137-39; italics added.
15. Chesterton, “Superstition of Divorce,” *Collected Works*, 4:239.
16. Moir, “New Class of Disadvantaged Children,” 63 n. 2, 65; italics omitted.
17. For a brief historical summary of the movement and for a statement of its goals as of 2004, see *What Next for the Marriage Movement?* [www.americanvalues.org](http://www.americanvalues.org).
18. Heaton, “Factors Contributing to Increasing Marital Stability in the United States,” 392–409.
19. Gallagher, “What Marriage Is For,” 22.
20. Stuart, “Three Weddings and a Contract,” 22.
21. Saulny, “Here Comes the Bride, Again.”
22. McDannel and Lang, *Heaven*, 308.
23. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, 86.
24. See Hafen and Hafen, *Belonging Heart*, 3-20.
25. See Hafen, *Disciple’s Life*, 528.
26. Thornton, “Changing Attitudes,” 873, 891.
27. Wilson, *Marriage Problem*, 4–5.
28. Schneider, “Moral Discourse and the Transformation of Family Law,” 1803, 1860; italics added.
29. James, *Essays on Faith and Morals*, 23–28.
30. Kimball, *Marriage and Divorce*, 12–16; italics added; or “Marriage and Divorce” (address); see also *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 305. President Gordon B. Hinckley has similarly said, “There is no greater happiness than is found in the most meaningful of all human relationships the companionships of husband and wife and parents and children.” “Marriage That Endures,” 4.









## FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY

### Unit I Scriptures

#### **D&C 68:4**

4 And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.

#### **D&C 88:6-13, 15, 20-25, 34-38**

...

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

20 That bodies who are of the celestial kingdom may possess it forever and ever; for, for this intent was it made and created, and for this intent are they sanctified.

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

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

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

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

25 And again, verily I say unto you, the earth abideth the law of a celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its creation, and transgresseth not the law— ...

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

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

36 All kingdoms have a law given;

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

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

#### **D&C 93:24-34 (See Also D&C 93:1-39)**

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

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

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

fulness of truth, yea, even of all truth;

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

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

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

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

33 For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy;

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

#### **D&C 130:1-11**

...

4 In answer to the question—Is not the reckoning of God's time, angel's time, prophet's time, and man's time, according to the planet on which they reside?

5 I answer, Yes. But there are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have belonged to it.

6 The angels do not reside on a planet like this earth;

7 But they reside in the presence of God, on a globe like a sea of glass and fire, where all things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord.

8 The place where God resides is a great Urim and Thummim.

9 This earth, in its sanctified and immortal state, will be made like unto crystal and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon, whereby all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order, will be manifest to those who dwell on it; and this earth will be Christ's.

10 Then the white stone mentioned in Revelation 2:17, will become a Urim and Thummim to each individual who receives one, whereby things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms will be made known;

11 And a white stone is given to each of those who come into the celestial kingdom, whereon is a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. The new name is the key word.

#### **Romans 8:16-17**

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

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

**Abr. 1**

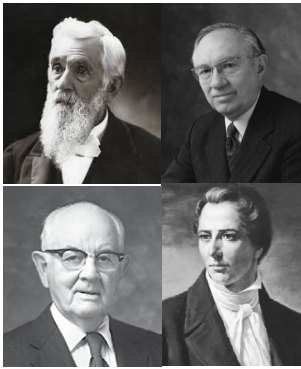
2 And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; ...

4 I sought for mine appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed. ...

15 And as they lifted up their hands upon me, that they might offer me up and take away my life, behold, I lifted up my voice unto the Lord my God, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and he filled me with the vision of the Almighty, and the angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands;

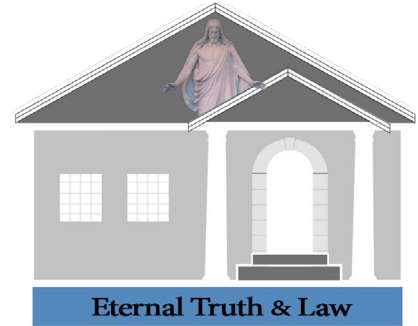
16 And his voice was unto me: Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee, ...

19 As it was with Noah so shall it be with thee; but through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God.



## “As God is...”

The Eternal Nature of Truth  
From selected readings



### Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, 2011

When we comprehend the character of God, we comprehend ourselves and know how to approach him.

1. When we comprehend the character of God, we comprehend ourselves and know how to approach Him.
2. “There are but a very few beings in the world who understand rightly the character of God. The great majority of mankind do not comprehend anything, either that which is past, or that which is to come, as it respects their relationship to God. They do not know, neither do they understand the nature of that relationship; and consequently they know but little above the brute beast, or more than to eat, drink and sleep. This is all man knows about God or His existence, unless it is given by the inspiration of the Almighty.”
3. “If a man learns nothing more than to eat, drink and sleep, and does not comprehend any of the designs of God, the beast comprehends the same things. It eats, drinks, sleeps, and knows nothing more about God; yet it knows as much as we, unless we are able to comprehend by the inspiration of Almighty God. If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves. I want to go back to the beginning, and so lift your minds into more lofty spheres and a more exalted understanding than what the human mind generally aspires to.”
4. “... The scriptures inform us that ‘This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.’ [John 17:3.]
5. “If any man does not know God, and inquires what kind of a being He is,—if he will search diligently his own heart—if the declaration of Jesus and the apostles be true, he will realize that he has not eternal life; for there can be eternal life on no other principle.
6. “My first object is to find out the character of the only wise and true God, and what kind of a being He is. ...
7. “God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by His power, was to make Himself visible,—I say, if you were to see Him today, you would see Him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with Him, as one man talks and communes with another. ...
8. “... Having a knowledge of God, we begin to know how to approach Him, and how to ask so as to receive an answer. When we understand the character of God, and know how to come to Him, He begins to unfold the heavens to us, and to tell us all about it. When we are ready to come to Him, He is ready to come to us.”

### Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow, 2013

9. In the spring of 1840, Lorenzo Snow was in Nauvoo, Illinois, preparing to leave for a mission in England. He visited the home of his friend Henry G. Sherwood, and he asked Brother Sherwood to explain a passage of scripture. “While attentively listening to his explanation,” President Snow later recalled, “the Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon me—the eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw as clear as the sun at noonday, with wonder and astonishment, the pathway of God and man. I formed the following couplet which expresses the revelation, as it was shown me. ...
10. “As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be.”
11. Feeling that he had received “a sacred communication” that he should guard carefully, Lorenzo Snow did not teach the doctrine publicly until he knew that the Prophet Joseph Smith had taught it. Once he knew the doctrine was public knowledge, he testified of it frequently.
12. In addition to making this truth a theme for many of his sermons, he adopted it as the theme for his life. His son

LeRoi said, “This revealed truth impressed Lorenzo Snow more than perhaps all else; it sank so deeply into his soul that it became the inspiration of his life and gave him his broad vision of his own great future and the mighty mission and work of the Church.” It was his “constant light and guide” and “a bright, illuminating star before him all the time—in his heart, in his soul, and all through him.”

13. We were born in the image of God our Father; he begat us like unto himself. There is the nature of deity in the composition of our spiritual organization; in our spiritual birth our Father transmitted to us the capabilities, powers and faculties which he himself possessed, as much so as the child on its mother’s bosom possesses, although in an undeveloped state, the faculties, powers and susceptibilities of its parent.

14. I believe that we are the sons and daughters of God, and that He has bestowed upon us the capacity for infinite wisdom and knowledge, because He has given us a portion of Himself. We are told that we were made in His own image, and we find that there is a character of immortality in the soul of man. There is a spiritual organism within this tabernacle [the physical body], and that spiritual organism has a divinity in itself, though perhaps in an infantile state; but it has within itself the capability of improving and advancing, as the infant that receives sustenance from its mother. Though the infant may be very ignorant, yet there are possibilities in it that by passing through the various ordeals of childhood to maturity enable it to rise to a superiority that is perfectly marvellous, compared with its infantile ignorance.

15. We have divinity within ourselves; we have immortality within ourselves; our spiritual organism is immortal; it cannot be destroyed; it cannot be annihilated. We will live from all eternity to all eternity.

16. It is a wonderful pleasure to speak upon the great things that God proposes to bestow upon His sons and daughters, and that we shall attain to if we are faithful. . . . Our travel in this path of exaltation will bring to us the fullness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to stand in the presence of our Father, to receive of His fullness, to have the pleasure of increasing in our posterity worlds without end, to enjoy those pleasant associations that we have had in this life, to have our sons and our daughters, our husbands and our wives, surrounded with all the enjoyment that heaven can bestow, our bodies glorified like unto the Savior’s, free from disease and all the ills of life, and free from the disappointments and vexations and the unpleasant sacrifices that we are making here.

17. Through a continual course of progression our Heavenly Father has received exaltation and glory and he points us out the same path and, inasmuch as he is clothed with power, authority and glory, he says, “walk ye up and come in possession of the same glory and happiness that I

possess.”

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley, October 1994 General Conference, “Don’t Drop the Ball.”**

18. On the other hand, the whole design of the gospel is to lead us onward and upward to greater achievement, even, eventually, to godhood. This great possibility was enunciated by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the King Follet sermon (see Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 342–62; and emphasized by President Lorenzo Snow. It is this grand and incomparable concept: As God now is, man may become! (See The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow, comp. Clyde J. Williams, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984, p. 1.)

19. Our enemies have criticized us for believing in this. Our reply is that this lofty concept in no way diminishes God the Eternal Father. He is the Almighty. He is the Creator and Governor of the universe. He is the greatest of all and will always be so. But just as any earthly father wishes for his sons and daughters every success in life, so I believe our Father in Heaven wishes for his children that they might approach him in stature and stand beside him resplendent in godly strength and wisdom.

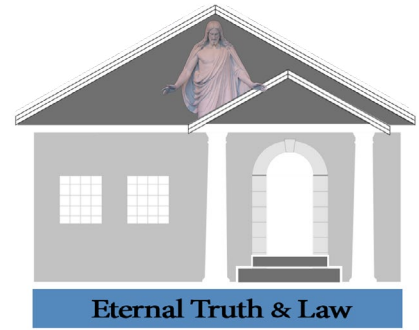
### **President Spencer W. Kimball, April 1977 General Conference, “Our Great Potential.”**

20. God has taken these intelligences, given to them spirit bodies, and given them instructions and training. Then he proceeded to create a world for them and sent them as spirits to obtain a mortal body, for which he made preparation. And when they were upon the earth, he gave them instructions on how to go about developing and conducting their lives to make them perfect, so they could return to their Father in heaven after their transitions. Then came the periods of time when souls were to be placed upon the earth and born to parents who were permitted to furnish the bodies. But no parent has ever yet on this earth been the parent of a spirit, because we are so far yet from perfection. Remember what was said a while ago, that “As man is, God once was; and as God is, man may become.” They came with the definite understanding that they could return to become like God and go forward in their great development and progress.



## What is Truth

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf  
CES Devotionals, January 2013



1. My beloved brothers and sisters, my dear young friends, I am grateful for the privilege to be with you today. It always lifts my spirits to be surrounded by the young adults of the Church, and you inspire me to declare, “Let Zion in her beauty rise.” As you are living all around the world, you represent in a beautiful way the future and strength of the Church. Because of your righteous desires and your commitment to follow the Savior, the future of this Church looks bright.

2. I bring you the love and blessing of President Thomas S. Monson. The First Presidency prays for you often. We always ask the Lord to bless, keep, and guide you.

### The Blind Men and the Elephant

3. Well over one hundred years ago, an American poet put to rhyme an ancient parable. The first verse of the poem speaks about:

4. Six men of Indostan  
To learning much inclined,  
Who went to see the Elephant  
(Though all of them were blind),  
That each by observation  
Might satisfy his mind.

5. In the poem each of the six travelers takes hold of a different part of the elephant and then describes to the others what he has discovered.

6. One of the men finds the elephant’s leg and describes it as being round and rough like a tree. Another feels the tusk and describes the elephant as a spear. A third grabs the tail and insists that an elephant is like a rope. A fourth discovers the trunk and insists that the elephant is like a large snake. Each is describing truth.

7. And because his truth comes from personal experience, each insists that he knows what he knows. The poem concludes:

8. And so these men of Indostan  
Disputed loud and long,  
Each in his own opinion

exceeding stiff and strong,  
Though each was partly in the right,  
And all were in the wrong.

9. We look at this story from a distance and smile. After all, we know what an elephant looks like. We have read about them and watched them on film, and many of us have even seen one with our own eyes. We believe we know the truth of what an elephant is. That someone could make a judgment based on one aspect of truth and apply it to the whole seems absurd or even unbelievable. On the other hand, can’t we recognize ourselves in these six blind men? Have we ever been guilty of the same pattern of thought?

10. I suppose the reason this story has remained so popular in so many cultures and over so many years is because of its universal application. The Apostle Paul said that in this world the light is dim and we see only part of the truth as though we are looking “through a glass, darkly.” And yet it seems to be part of our nature as human beings to make assumptions about people, politics, and piety based on our incomplete and often misleading experience.

11. I am reminded of a story about a couple who had been married for 60 years. They had rarely argued during that time, and their days together passed in happiness and contentment. They shared everything and had no secrets between them—except one. The wife had a box that she kept at the top of a sideboard, and she told her husband when they were married that he should never look inside.

12. As the decades passed, the moment came that her husband took the box down and asked if he could finally know what it contained. The wife consented, and he opened it to discover two doilies and \$25,000. When he asked his wife what this meant, she responded, “When we were married, my mother told me that whenever I was angry with you or whenever you said or did something I didn’t like, I should knit a small doily and then talk things through with you.”

13. The husband was moved to tears by this sweet story. He marveled that during 60 years of marriage he had only disturbed his wife enough for her to knit two doilies. Feeling extremely good about himself, he took his wife’s hand and said, “That explains the doilies, but what about the \$25,000?”

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

### **What is Truth?**

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

### **Can Anyone Know the Truth?**

29. Now, can anyone know the truth? Some of the greatest minds that have ever lived on this earth have attempted to answer that question. The elusive nature of truth has been

a favorite theme of history’s great poets and storytellers. Shakespeare seemed especially intrigued with it. The next time you read one of Shakespeare’s tragedies, notice how often the plot turns on a misunderstanding of an important truth.

30. Now, never in the history of the world have we had easier access to more information—some of it true, some of it false, and much of it partially true.

31. Consequently, never in the history of the world has it been more important to learn how to correctly discern between truth and error.

32. Part of our problem in the quest for truth is that human wisdom has disappointed us so often. We have so many examples of things that mankind once “knew” were true but have since been proven false.

33. For example, in spite of one-time overwhelming consensus, the earth isn’t flat. The stars don’t revolve around the earth. Eating a tomato will not cause instant death. And, of course, man actually can fly—even break the sound barrier.

34. The scriptures are filled with stories of men and women who misinterpreted “truth.”

35. In the Old Testament, Balaam could not resist the “wages of unrighteousness”<sup>5</sup> offered him by the Moabites. So he convinced himself to believe a new truth and helped the Moabites get the Israelites to curse themselves through immorality and disobedience.

36. The apostate Korihor, after leading many away from the truth, confessed that the devil had deceived him to the point where he actually believed that what he was saying was the truth.

37. In the Book of Mormon, both the Nephites as well as the Lamanites created their own “truths” about each other. The Nephites’ “truth” about the Lamanites was that they “were a wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people,”<sup>8</sup> never able to accept the gospel. The Lamanites’ “truth” about the Nephites was that Nephi had stolen his brother’s birthright and that Nephi’s descendants were liars who continued to rob the Lamanites of what was rightfully theirs. These “truths” fed their hatred for one another until it finally consumed them all.

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

### **Human Nature and Truth**



39. In some way we are all susceptible to such strange thinking.

40. The “truths” we cling to shape the quality of our societies as well as our individual characters. All too often these “truths” are based on incomplete and inaccurate evidence, and at times they serve very selfish motives.

41. Part of the reason for poor judgment comes from the tendency of mankind to blur the line between belief and truth. We too often confuse belief with truth, thinking that because something makes sense or is convenient, it must be true. Conversely, we sometimes don’t believe truth or reject it—because it would require us to change or admit that we were wrong. Often, truth is rejected because it doesn’t appear to be consistent with previous experiences.

42. When the opinions or “truths” of others contradict our own, instead of considering the possibility that there could be information that might be helpful and augment or complement what we know, we often jump to conclusions or make assumptions that the other person is misinformed, mentally challenged, or even intentionally trying to deceive.

43. Unfortunately, this tendency can spread to all areas of our lives—from sports to family relationships and from religion to politics.

### **Ignaz Semmelweis**

44. A tragic example of this tendency is the story of Ignaz Semmelweis, a Hungarian physician who practiced medicine during the mid-19th century. Early in his career, Dr. Semmelweis learned that 10 percent of the women who came to his clinic died of childbed fever, while the death rate at a nearby clinic was less than 4 percent. He was determined to find out why.

45. After investigating the two clinics, Dr. Semmelweis concluded that the only significant difference was that his was a teaching clinic where corpses were examined. He observed doctors who went directly from performing autopsies to delivering babies. He concluded that somehow the corpses had contaminated their hands and caused the deadly fevers.

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

47. But Semmelweis insisted, and he made it a policy for doctors in his clinic to wash their hands before delivering babies. As a consequence, the death rate promptly dropped by 90 percent. Semmelweis felt vindicated and was certain that this practice would now be adopted throughout the medical

community. But he was wrong. Even his dramatic results were not enough to change the minds of many doctors of the day.

### **Is it Possible to Know the Truth?**

48. The thing about truth is that it exists beyond belief. It is true even if nobody believes it.

49. We can say west is north and north is west all day long and even believe it with all our heart, but if, for example, we want to fly from Quito, Ecuador, to New York City in the United States, there is only one direction that will lead us there, and that is north—west just won’t do.

50. Of course, this is just a simple aviation analogy. However, there is indeed such a thing as absolute truth—unassailable, unchangeable truth.

51. This truth is different from belief. It is different from hope. Absolute truth is not dependent upon public opinion or popularity. Polls cannot sway it. Not even the inexhaustible authority of celebrity endorsement can change it.

52. So how can we find truth?

53. I believe that our Father in Heaven is pleased with His children when they use their talents and mental faculties to earnestly discover truth. Over the centuries many wise men and women—through logic, reason, scientific inquiry, and, yes, through inspiration—have discovered truth. These discoveries have enriched mankind, improved our lives, and inspired joy, wonder, and awe.

54. Even so, the things we once thought we knew are continually being enhanced, modified, or even contradicted by enterprising scholars who seek to understand truth.

55. As we all know, it is difficult enough to sort out the truth from our own experiences. To make matters worse, we have an adversary, “the devil, [who] as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

56. Satan is the great deceiver, “the accuser of [the] brethren,” the father of all lies, who continually seeks to deceive that he might overthrow us.

57. The adversary has many cunning strategies for keeping mortals from the truth. He offers the belief that truth is relative; appealing to our sense of tolerance and fairness, he keeps the real truth hidden by claiming that one person’s “truth” is as valid as any other.

58. Some he entices to believe that there is an absolute truth out there somewhere but that it is impossible for anyone to know it.

59. For those who already embrace the truth, his primary strategy is to spread the seeds of doubt. For example, he has caused many members of the Church to stumble when they discover information about the Church that seems to contradict what they had learned previously.

60. If you experience such a moment, remember that in this age of information there are many who create doubt about anything and everything, at any time and every place.

61. You will find even those who still claim that they have evidence that the earth is flat, that the moon is a hologram, and that certain movie stars are really aliens from another planet. And it is always good to keep in mind, just because something is printed on paper, appears on the Internet, is frequently repeated, or has a powerful group of followers doesn't make it true.

62. Sometimes untrue claims or information are presented in such a way that they appear quite credible. However, when you are confronted with information that is in conflict with the revealed word of God, remember that the blind men in the parable of the elephant would never be able to accurately describe the full truth.

63. We simply don't know all things—we can't see everything. What may seem contradictory now may be perfectly understandable as we search for and receive more trustworthy information. Because we see through a glass darkly, we have to trust the Lord, who sees all things clearly.

64. Yes, our world is full of confusion. But eventually all of our questions will be answered. All of our doubts will be replaced by certainty. And that is because there is one source of truth that is complete, correct, and incorruptible. That source is our infinitely wise and all-knowing Heavenly Father. He knows truth as it was, as it is, and as it yet will be. "He comprehendeth all things, ... and he is above all things, ... and all things are by him, and of him."

65. Our loving Heavenly Father offers His truth to us, His mortal children.

66. Now, what is this truth?

67. It is His gospel. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life."

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

### **Our Obligation to Seek for Truth**

69. But how can we know that this "truth" is different from any other? How can we trust this "truth"?

70. The invitation to trust the Lord does not relieve us from the responsibility to know for ourselves. This is more than an opportunity; it is an obligation—and it is one of the reasons we were sent to this earth.

71. Latter-day Saints are not asked to blindly accept everything they hear. We are encouraged to think and discover truth for ourselves. We are expected to ponder, to search, to evaluate, and thereby to come to a personal knowledge of the truth.

72. Brigham Young said: "I am ... afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security. ... Let every man and woman know, by the whispering of the Spirit of God to themselves, whether their leaders are walking in the path the Lord dictates."

73. We seek for truth wherever we may find it. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "Mormonism is truth. ... The first and fundamental principle of our holy religion is, that we believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or ... being ... prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men."

74. Yes, we do have the fulness of the everlasting gospel, but that does not mean that we know everything. In fact, one principle of the restored gospel is our belief that God "will yet reveal many great and important things."

75. The Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ came about because of a young man with a humble heart and a keen mind seeking for truth. Joseph studied and then acted accordingly. He discovered that if a man lacks wisdom, he can ask of God and the truth really will be given unto him.

76. The great miracle of the Restoration was not just that it corrected false ideas and corrupt doctrines—though it certainly did that—but that it flung open the curtains of heaven and initiated a steady downpour of new light and knowledge that has continued to this day.

77. So we continually seek truth from all good books and other wholesome sources. "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things." In this manner we can resist the deceit of the evil one. In this manner we learn the truth "precept upon precept; line upon line." And we will learn that intelligence cleaves unto intelligence, and wisdom receives wisdom, and truth embraces truth.

78. My young friends, as you accept the responsibility to seek after truth with an open mind and a humble heart, you

will become more tolerant of others, more open to listen, more prepared to understand, more inclined to build up instead of tearing down, and more willing to go where the Lord wants you to go.

## The Holy Ghost - Our Guide to All Truth

79. Just think about it. You actually have a powerful companion and trustworthy guide in this ongoing search for truth. Who is it? It is the Holy Ghost. Our Heavenly Father knew how difficult it would be for us to sift through all the competing noise and discover truth during our mortality. He knew we would see only a portion of the truth, and He knew that Satan would try to deceive us. So He gave us the heavenly gift of the Holy Ghost to illuminate our minds, teach us, and testify to us of the truth.

80. The Holy Ghost is a revelator. He is the Comforter, who teaches us “the truth of all things; ... [who] knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment.”

81. The Holy Ghost is a certain and safe guide to assist all mortals who seek God as they navigate the often troubling waters of confusion and contradiction.

82. The Witness of truth from the Holy Ghost is available to all, everywhere, all around the globe. All who seek to know the truth, who study it out in their minds, and who “ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, [will know] the truth ... by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

83. And there is the additional, unspeakable Gift of the Holy Ghost available to all who qualify themselves through baptism and by living worthy of His constant companionship.

84. Yes, your loving Father in Heaven would never leave you alone in this mortality to wander in the dark. You need not be deceived. You can overcome the darkness of this world and discover divine truth.

85. Some, however, do not seek for truth so much as they strive for contention. They do not sincerely seek to learn; rather, they desire to dispute, to show off their supposed learning and thus cause contention. They ignore or reject the counsel of the Apostle Paul to Timothy: “Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do [generate contention].”

86. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we know that such contention is completely inconsistent with the Spirit upon whom we depend in our search for truth. As the Savior warned the Nephites, “For verily ... I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention.”

87. If you follow the Spirit, your personal search for the truth inevitably leads you to the Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, for He is “the way, the truth, and the life.” This may not be the most convenient way; it will probably also be the road less traveled, and it will be the path with mountains to climb, swift rivers to cross, but it will be His way—the Savior’s redeeming way.

88. I add my witness as an Apostle of the Lord, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. I know this with all my heart and mind. I know this by the witness and power of the Holy Ghost.

89. I ask you to spare no efforts in your search to know this truth for yourself—because this truth will make you free.

90. My dear young friends, you are the hope of Israel. We love you. The Lord knows you; He loves you. The Lord has great confidence in you. He knows your successes, and He is mindful of your challenges and questions in life.

91. It is my prayer that you will seek the truth earnestly and unceasingly, that you will yearn to drink from the fount of all truth, whose waters are pure and sweet, “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

92. I bless you with confidence in the Lord and a deep-rooted desire to rightfully discern truth from error—now and throughout your life. This is my prayer and my blessing, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

What Is truth?  
(QR Code)





# Why Marriage, Why Family

Elder D. Todd Christofferson

General Conference, April 2015



1. Above the Great West Door of the renowned Westminster Abbey in London, England, stand the statues of 10 Christian martyrs of the 20th century. Included among them is Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a brilliant German theologian born in 1906.<sup>1</sup> Bonhoeffer became a vocal critic of the Nazi dictatorship and its treatment of Jews and others. He was imprisoned for his active opposition and finally executed in a concentration camp. Bonhoeffer was a prolific writer, and some of his best-known pieces are letters that sympathetic guards helped him smuggle out of prison, later published as *Letters and Papers from Prison*.

2. One of those letters was to his niece before her wedding. It included these significant insights: “Marriage is more than your love for each other. . . . In your love you see only your two selves in the world, but in marriage you are a link in the chain of the generations, which God causes to come and to pass away to his glory, and calls into his kingdom. In your love you see only the heaven of your own happiness, but in marriage you are placed at a post of responsibility towards the world and mankind. Your love is your own private possession, but marriage is more than something personal—it is a status, an office. Just as it is the crown, and not merely the will to rule, that makes the king, so it is marriage, and not merely your love for each other, that joins you together in the sight of God and man. . . . So love comes from you, but marriage from above, from God.”<sup>2</sup>

3. In what way does marriage between a man and a woman transcend their love for one another and their own happiness to become “a post of responsibility towards the world and mankind”? In what sense does it come “from above, from God”? To understand, we have to go back to the beginning.

4. Prophets have revealed that we first existed as intelligences and that we were given form, or spirit bodies, by God, thus becoming His spirit children—sons and daughters of heavenly parents.<sup>3</sup> There came a time in this premortal existence of spirits when, in furtherance of His desire that we “could have a privilege to advance like himself,”<sup>4</sup> our Heavenly Father prepared an enabling plan. In the scriptures it is given various names, including “the plan of salvation,”<sup>5</sup> “the great plan of happiness,”<sup>6</sup> and “the plan of redemption.”<sup>7</sup> The two principal purposes of the plan were explained to Abra-

ham in these words:

5. “And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these [spirits] may dwell; “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; “And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; . . . and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.”<sup>8</sup>

6. Thanks to our Heavenly Father, we had already become spirit beings. Now He was offering us a path to complete or perfect that being. The addition of the physical element is essential to the fulness of being and glory that God Himself enjoys. If, while with God in the premortal spirit world, we would agree to participate in His plan—or in other words “keep [our] first estate”—we would “be added upon” with a physical body as we came to dwell on the earth that He created for us.

7. If, then in the course of our mortal experience, we chose to “do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God [should] command [us],” we would have kept our “second estate.” This means that by our choices we would demonstrate to God (and to ourselves) our commitment and capacity to live His celestial law while outside His presence and in a physical body with all its powers, appetites, and passions. Could we bridle the flesh so that it became the instrument rather than the master of the spirit? Could we be trusted both in time and eternity with godly powers, including power to create life? Would we individually overcome evil? Those who did would “have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever”—a very significant aspect of that glory being a resurrected, immortal, and glorified physical body.<sup>9</sup> No wonder we “shouted for joy” at these magnificent possibilities and promises.<sup>10</sup>

8. At least four things are needed for the success of this divine plan:

9. First was the Creation of the earth as our dwelling place. Whatever the details of the creation process, we know that it

was not accidental but that it was directed by God the Father and implemented by Jesus Christ—“all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”<sup>11</sup>

10. Second is the condition of mortality. Adam and Eve acted for all who had chosen to participate in the Father’s great plan of happiness.<sup>12</sup> Their Fall created the conditions needed for our physical birth and for mortal experience and learning outside the presence of God. With the Fall came an awareness of good and evil and the God-given power to choose.<sup>13</sup> Finally, the Fall brought about physical death needed to make our time in mortality temporary so that we would not live forever in our sins.<sup>14</sup>

11. Third is redemption from the Fall. We see the role of death in our Heavenly Father’s plan, but that plan would become void without some way to overcome death in the end, both physical and spiritual. Thus, a Redeemer, the Only Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, suffered and died to atone for Adam and Eve’s transgression, thereby providing resurrection and immortality for all. And since none of us will have been perfectly and consistently obedient to the gospel law, His Atonement also redeems us from our own sins on condition of repentance. With the Savior’s atoning grace providing forgiveness of sins and sanctification of the soul, we can spiritually be born again and reconciled to God. Our spiritual death—our separation from God—will end.<sup>15</sup>

12. Fourth, and finally, is the setting for our physical birth and subsequent spiritual rebirth into the kingdom of God. For His work to succeed to “[exalt us] with himself,”<sup>16</sup> God ordained that men and women should marry and give birth to children, thereby creating, in partnership with God, the physical bodies that are key to the test of mortality and essential to eternal glory with Him. He also ordained that parents should establish families and rear their children in light and truth,<sup>17</sup> leading them to a hope in Christ. The Father commands us:

13. “Teach these things freely unto your children, saying: “That . . . inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the [Holy] Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory.”<sup>18</sup>

14. Knowing why we left the presence of our Heavenly Father and what it takes to return and be exalted with Him, it becomes very clear that nothing relative to our time on earth can be more important than physical birth and spiritual rebirth, the two prerequisites of eternal life. This is, to use the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the “office” of marriage, the “post of responsibility towards . . . mankind,” that this divine

institution “from above, from God” occupies. It is the “link in the chain of the generations” both here and hereafter—the order of heaven.

15. A family built on the marriage of a man and woman supplies the best setting for God’s plan to thrive—the setting for the birth of children, who come in purity and innocence from God, and the environment for the learning and preparation they will need for a successful mortal life and eternal life in the world to come. A critical mass of families built on such marriages is vital for societies to survive and flourish. That is why communities and nations generally have encouraged and protected marriage and the family as privileged institutions. It has never been just about the love and happiness of adults.

16. The social science case for marriage and for families headed by a married man and woman is compelling.<sup>19</sup> And so “we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.”<sup>20</sup> But our claims for the role of marriage and family rest not on social science but on the truth that they are God’s creation. It is He who in the beginning created Adam and Eve in His image, male and female, and joined them as husband and wife to become “one flesh” and to multiply and replenish the earth.<sup>21</sup>

17. Each individual carries the divine image, but it is in the matrimonial union of male and female as one that we attain perhaps the most complete meaning of our having been made in the image of God—male and female. Neither we nor any other mortal can alter this divine order of matrimony. It is not a human invention. Such marriage is indeed “from above, from God” and is as much a part of the plan of happiness as the Fall and the Atonement.

18. In the premortal world, Lucifer rebelled against God and His plan, and his opposition only grows in intensity. He fights to discourage marriage and the formation of families, and where marriages and families are formed, he does what he can to disrupt them. He attacks everything that is sacred about human sexuality, tearing it from the context of marriage with a seemingly infinite array of immoral thoughts and acts. He seeks to convince men and women that marriage and family priorities can be ignored or abandoned, or at least made subservient to careers, other achievements, and the quest for self-fulfillment and individual autonomy. Certainly the adversary is pleased when parents neglect to teach and train their children to have faith in Christ and be spiritually born again.

19. Brothers and sisters, many things are good, many are important, but only a few are essential.

20. To declare the fundamental truths relative to marriage and family is not to overlook or diminish the sacrifices and successes of those for whom the ideal is not a present reality.

Some of you are denied the blessing of marriage for reasons including a lack of viable prospects, same-sex attraction, physical or mental impairments, or simply a fear of failure that, for the moment at least, overshadows faith. Or you may have married, but that marriage ended, and you are left to manage alone what two together can barely sustain. Some of you who are married cannot bear children despite overwhelming desires and pleading prayers.

21. Even so, everyone has gifts; everyone has talents; everyone can contribute to the unfolding of the divine plan in each generation. Much that is good, much that is essential—even sometimes all that is necessary for now—can be achieved in less than ideal circumstances. So many of you are doing your very best. And when you who bear the heaviest burdens of mortality stand up in defense of God’s plan to exalt His children, we are all ready to march. With confidence we testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ has anticipated and, in the end, will compensate all deprivation and loss for those who turn to Him. No one is predestined to receive less than all that the Father has for His children.

22. One young mother recently confided to me her anxiety about being inadequate in this highest of callings. I felt that the issues that concerned her were small and she needn’t worry; she was doing fine. But I knew she only wanted to please God and to honor His trust. I offered words of reassurance, and in my heart I pleaded that God, her Heavenly Father, would buoy her up with His love and the witness of His approval as she is about His work.

23. That is my prayer for all of us today. May we each find approval in His sight. May marriages flourish and families prosper, and whether our lot is a fulness of these blessings in mortality or not, may the Lord’s grace bring happiness now and faith in sure promises to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. See Kevin Rudd, “Faith in Politics,” *The Monthly*, Oct. 2006, [themonthly.com.au/monthly-essays-kevin-rudd-faith-politics--300](http://themonthly.com.au/monthly-essays-kevin-rudd-faith-politics--300).

2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (1953), 42–43.

3. See, for example, Psalm 82:6; Acts 17:29; Hebrews 12:9; Doctrine and Covenants 93:29, 33; Moses 6:51; Abraham 3:22. The Prophet Joseph Smith provided this detail: “The first principles of man are self-existent with God. God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits [or intelligences] and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself. . . . He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted with himself” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007]*, 210).

4. Teachings: Joseph Smith, 210.

5. Alma 24:14.

6. Alma 42:8.

7. Alma 12:25; see also verses 26–33.

8. Abraham 3:24–26.

9. The Prophet Joseph Smith offered this summary statement: “The design of God before the foundation of the world was that we should take tabernacles [bodies], that through faithfulness we should overcome and thereby obtain a resurrection from the dead, in this wise obtaining glory, honor, power, and dominion.” The Prophet also stated: “We came to this earth

that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man, and when cast out by the Savior he asked to go into the herd of swine, showing that he would prefer a swine’s body to having none. All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 211).

10. Job 38:7.

11. John 1:3; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:23–24.

12. See 1 Corinthians 15:21–22; 2 Nephi 2:25.

13. See 2 Nephi 2:15–18; Alma 12:24; Doctrine and Covenants 29:39; Moses 4:3. Joseph Smith said: “All persons are entitled to their agency, for God has so ordained it. He has constituted mankind moral agents, and given them power to choose good or evil; to seek after that which is good, by pursuing the pathway of holiness in this life, which brings peace of mind, and joy in the Holy Ghost here, and a fulness of joy and happiness at His right hand hereafter; or to pursue an evil course, going on in sin and rebellion against God, thereby bringing condemnation to their souls in this world, and an eternal loss in the world to come.” The Prophet also noted: “Satan cannot seduce us by his enticements unless we in our hearts consent and yield. Our organization is such that we can resist the devil; if we were not organized so, we would not be free agents” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 213).

14. See Genesis 3:22–24; Alma 42:2–6; Moses 4:28–31.

15. Even those who do not repent are redeemed from spiritual death by the Atonement in the sense that they come again into the presence of God for the Final Judgment (see Helaman 14:17; 3 Nephi 27:14–15).

16. Teachings: Joseph Smith, 210.

17. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:36–40.

18. Moses 6:58–59.

19. People may be loyal to one another in nonmarital relationships, and children can be born and raised, sometimes quite successfully, in other than a married two-parent family environment. But on average and in the majority of cases, evidence of the social benefits of marriage and of the comparatively superior outcomes for children in families headed by a married man and woman is extensive. On the other hand, the social and economic costs of what one commentator calls “the global flight from the family,” weigh increasingly on society. Nicholas Eberstadt catalogs the worldwide declines in marriage and childbearing and the trends regarding fatherless homes and divorce and observes: “The deleterious impact on the hardly inconsequential numbers of children disadvantaged by the flight from the family is already plain enough. So too the damaging role of divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing in exacerbating income disparities and wealth gaps—for society as a whole, but especially for children. Yes, children are resilient and all that. But the flight from family most assuredly comes at the expense of the vulnerable young. That same flight also has unforgiving implications for the vulnerable old.” (See “The Global Flight from the Family,” *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 21, 2015, [wsj.com/articles/nicholas-eberstadt-the-global-flight-from-the-family-1424476179](http://wsj.com/articles/nicholas-eberstadt-the-global-flight-from-the-family-1424476179).)

20. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.

21. See Genesis 1:26–28; 2:7, 18, 21–24; 3:20; Moses 2:26–28; 3:7–8, 18, 20–24; 4:26.

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Why Marriage, Why Family  
(QR Code)





## The Family

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



1. Since the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith until September 23, 1995, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has issued a proclamation only four times. It has been more than fifteen years since the last one, which described the progress the Church had made in 150 years of its history. Thus you can imagine the importance our Heavenly Father places upon the subject of this most recent proclamation.

2. Newspapers and television flood us with words and pictures about issues and events to think about and worry about. One of the great blessings of having faith in living prophets is that we can know what really matters, what is worth our attention in this confusing world and in our crowded lives.

3. Because our Father loves his children, he will not leave us to guess about what matters most in this life concerning where our attention could bring happiness or our indifference bring sadness. Sometimes he will tell us directly, by inspiration. But he will, in addition, tell us through his servants. In the words of a prophet named Amos, recorded long ago, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). He does that so that even those who cannot feel inspiration can know, if they will only listen, that they have been told the truth and been warned.

4. The title of the proclamation reads: “The Family: A Proclamation to the World--The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (see *Ensign*, November 1995, p. 102).

5. Three things about the title are worth our careful reflection. First, the subject: the family. Second, the audience, which is the whole world. And third, those who proclaimed are those we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators. That means that the family must be as important to us as anything we can consider, that what the proclamation says could help anyone in the world, and that the proclamation fits the Lord's promise when he said, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

6. Before we start to listen to the words of the proclamation together, the title tells us something about

how to prepare. We can expect that God won't just tell us a few interesting things about the family; he will tell us what a family ought to be and why. And we know at the outset that we could be easily overwhelmed with such thoughts as “This is so high a standard, and I am so weak that I can never hope for such a family.” That feeling can come because what our Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ want for us is to become like them so that we can dwell with them forever, in families. We know that from this simple statement of their intent: “This is my work and my glory--to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

7. Eternal life means to become like the Father and to live in families in happiness and joy forever, so of course what he wants for us will require help beyond our powers. That feeling of our inadequacy can make it easier to repent and to be ready to rely on the Lord's help.

8. The fact that the proclamation goes to all the world--to every person and government in it--gives us assurance that we need not be overwhelmed. Whoever we are, however difficult our circumstances, we can know that what our Father commands we do to qualify for the blessings of eternal life will not be beyond us. What a young boy said long ago when he faced a seemingly impossible assignment is true:

*9. I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them. [1 Nephi 3:7]*

10. We may have to pray with faith to know what we are to do, and we must pray with a determination to obey, but we can know what to do and be sure that the way has been prepared for us by the Lord. As we read of what the proclamation tells us about the family, we can expect, in fact we must expect, impressions to come to our minds as to what we are to do, and we can be confident it is possible. The proclamation begins this way:

11. We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to

the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

12. Try to imagine yourself as a little child, hearing those words for the first time and believing that they are true. This can be a useful attitude whenever we read or hear the word of God because he has told us, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein" (Luke 18:17).

13. A little child would feel safe hearing the words that marriage between a man and woman is ordained of God. The child would know that the longing to have the love of both a father and a mother, distinct but somehow perfectly complementary, exists because that is the eternal pattern, the pattern of happiness. The child would also feel safer knowing that God would help mother and father resolve differences and love each other, if only they ask for his help and try. Prayers of children across the earth would go up to God, pleading for his help for parents and for families.

14. Read in that same way, as if you were a little child, the next words of the proclamation:

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

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

17. Understanding these truths ought to make it easier for us to feel like a little child, not just as we read the proclamation, but throughout our lives, because we are children--but in what a family and of what parents! We can picture ourselves as we were, for longer than we can imagine, sons and daughters associating in our heavenly home with parents who knew and loved us. But now we can see ourselves home again with our heavenly parents in that wonderful place, not only as sons and daughters but as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, grandsons and granddaughters, bound together forever in loving families. And we know that in the premortal world we were men or women, with unique gifts because of our gender, and that the opportunity to be married and to become one was necessary for us to have eternal happiness.

18. With that picture before us, we can never be tempted

even to think "Maybe I wouldn't like eternal life. Maybe I would be just as happy in some other place in the life after death. I've heard that even the lowest kingdoms are more beautiful than anything we have ever seen."

19. We must have the goal not just in our minds but in our hearts. What we want is eternal life in families. We don't just want it if that is what works out, nor do we want something approaching eternal life. We want eternal life, whatever its cost in effort, pain, and sacrifice. Whenever we are tempted to make eternal life our hope instead of our determination, we might think of a building I took a look at a few weeks ago.

20. I was in Boston. For a little nostalgia, my wife and I walked up to the front of the boarding house I was living in when I met Kathleen, who is now my wife. That was a long time ago, so I expected to find the house a little more dilapidated than it was, since I seem to be a little more dilapidated. But to our surprise it was freshly painted and much renovated. A university has purchased it from the Sopers, the people who owned it and ran it as a boarding house.

21. The building was locked, so we couldn't get in to see the back room on the top floor, which once was mine. Costs have changed, so this will be hard for you to believe, but this was the deal the Sopers gave me: My own large room and bath, furniture and sheets provided, maid service, six big breakfasts and five wonderful dinners a week--all at the price of twenty-one dollars a week. More than that, the meals were ample and prepared with such skill that we called our landlady with some affection "Ma Soper." Just talking about it with you makes me realize that I didn't thank Mrs. Soper often enough, nor Mr. Soper and their daughter, since it must have been some burden to have twelve single men to dinner every weeknight.

22. Now, you aren't tempted by that description of a boarding house, and neither am I. It could have the most spacious rooms, the best service, and the finest eleven men you could ever know as fellow boarders and we wouldn't want to live there more than a short while. If it were beautiful beyond our power to imagine, we wouldn't want to live there forever, single, if we have even the dimmest memory or the faintest vision of a family with beloved parents and children like the one from which we came to this earth and the one that is our destiny to form and to live in forever. There is only one place where there will be families--the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. That is where we will want to be.

23. A child hearing and believing those words would begin a lifetime of looking for a holy temple where ordinances and covenants perpetuate family relationships beyond the grave and would begin striving to become worthy, and to find a potential mate who has become worthy, of such ordinances. The words of the proclamation make it clear that to receive



those blessings requires some sort of perfecting experiences. A child might not sense at first, but soon would learn, that all the making of resolutions and trying harder can produce only faltering progress toward perfection. With age will come temptations to acts that create feelings of guilt. Every child will someday feel those pangs of conscience, as we all have. And those who feel that priceless sense of guilt and cannot shake it may despair, sensing that eternal life requires a progress toward perfection that seems increasingly to be beyond them. So you and I will resolve to speak to someone who doesn't yet know what we know about how that perfection is produced. We will do that because we know that someday they will want what we want, and will then realize that we were their brother or sister and that we knew the way to eternal life. Tonight and tomorrow it won't be hard to be a member missionary if you think of that future moment when they and we will see things as they really are.

24. Some other words in the proclamation will have special meaning for us, knowing what we know about eternal life. They are in the next two paragraphs:

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

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

27. Believing those words, a child could spot easily the mistakes in reasoning made by adults. For instance, apparently wise and powerful people blame poverty and famine on there being too many people in some parts of the earth or in all the earth. With great passion they argue for limiting births as if that will produce human happiness. A child believing the proclamation will know that cannot be so, even before hearing these words from the Lord through his prophet, Joseph Smith: "For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves" (D&C 104:17).

28. A child could see that Heavenly Father would not command men and women to marry and to multiply and replenish the earth if the children they invited into mortality would deplete the earth. Since there is enough and to spare, the enemy of human happiness as well as the cause of poverty and starvation is not the birth of children. It is the failure of people to do with the earth what God could teach them to do, if only they would ask and then obey, for they are agents unto themselves.

29. We would also see that the commandment to be chaste, to employ the powers of procreation only as husband and wife, is not limiting but rather expanding and exalting. Children are the inheritance of the Lord to us not only in this life, but also in eternity. Eternal life is not only to have forever our descendants from this life. It is also to have eternal increase. This is the description of what awaits those of us married as husband and wife by a servant of God with authority to offer us the sacred sealing ordinances. Here are the words of the Lord:

30. It shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

31. Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting. [D&C 132:19-20]

32. Now you can see why our Father in Heaven puts such a high standard before us in using procreative powers whose continuation is at the heart of eternal life. He told us what that was worth this way: "And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7).

33. We can understand why our Heavenly Father commands us to reverence life and to cherish the powers that produce it as sacred. If we do not have those feelings in this life, how could our Father give them to us in the eternities? Family life here is the schoolroom in which we prepare for family life there. And to give us the opportunity for family life there was and is the purpose of creation. That is why the coming of Elijah was described this way:

34. And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming. [JS--H 1:39]

35. For some of us, the test in the schoolroom of mortality will be to want marriage and children in this life with all our hearts, but to have it delayed or denied. Even such a sorrow can be turned to a blessing by a just and loving Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. No one who strives with full faith and heart for the blessings of eternal life will be denied. And how great will be the joy and how much deeper the appreciation then after enduring in patience and faith now.

36. The proclamation describes our schooling here for family life in the presence of our Eternal Father:

37. Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility

to love and care for each other and for their children. “Children are an heritage of the Lord” (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives--mothers and fathers--will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

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

39. Those two paragraphs are filled with practical implications. There are things we can start to do now. They have to do with providing for the spiritual and the physical needs of a family. There are things we can do now to prepare, long before the need, so that we can be at peace knowing we have done all we can.

40. To begin with, we can decide to plan for success, not for failure. Statistics are thrown at us every day to persuade us that a family composed of a loving father and mother with children loved, taught, and cared for in the way the proclamation enjoins is going the way of the dinosaurs, toward extinction. You have enough evidence in your own families that righteous people sometimes have their families ripped apart by circumstances beyond their control. It takes courage and faith to plan for what God holds before you as the ideal rather than what might be forced upon you by circumstances.

41. There are important ways in which planning for failure can make failure more likely and the ideal less so. Consider these twin commandments as an example: “Fathers are to . . . provide the necessities of life . . . for their families” and “mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children.” Knowing how hard that might be, a young man might choose a career on the basis of how much money he could make, even if it meant he couldn’t be home enough to be an equal partner. By doing that, he has already decided

he cannot hope to do what would be best. A young woman might prepare for a career incompatible with being primarily responsible for the nurture of her children because of the possibilities of not marrying, of not having children, or of being left alone to provide for them herself. Or she might fail to focus her education on the gospel and knowledge of the world that nurturing a family would require, not realizing that the highest and best use she could make of her talents and her education would be in her home. Because a young man and woman had planned to take care of the worst, they might make the best less likely.

42. They are both wise to worry about the physical needs of that future family. The costs of buying a home, compared to average salaries, seem to be rising, and jobs seem harder to hold. But there are other ways the young man and the young woman could think about preparing to provide for that future family. Income is only one part of it. Have you noticed husbands and wives who feel pinched for lack of money, then choose ways to make their family income keep rising, and then find that the pinch is there whatever the income? There is an old formula you’ve heard that goes something like this: Income five dollars and expenses six dollars: misery. Income four dollars and expenses three dollars: happiness (see Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, chapter 12).

43. Whether the young man can provide and still be in the home and whether the young woman can be there to nurture children can depend as much on how they learn to spend as how they learn to earn. Brigham Young said it this way, speaking to us as much as he did to the people in his day:

44. If you wish to get rich, save what you get. A fool can earn money; but it takes a wise man to save and dispose of it to his own advantage. Then go to work, and save everything, and make your own bonnets and clothing. [JD 11:301]

45. In today’s world, instead of telling you to make bonnets, he might suggest you think carefully about what you really need in cars and houses and vacations and whatever else you will someday try to provide for your children. And he might point out that the difference in cost between what the world tells you is necessary and what your children really need could allow you the margin in time that a father and a mother might need with their children to bring them home to their Heavenly Father.

46. Even the most frugal spending habits and the most careful planning for employment may not be enough to ensure success, but it could be enough to allow you the peace that comes from knowing you did the best you could to provide and to nurture.

47. There is another way we could plan to succeed, despite the difficulties that might lie before us. The proclamation sets a high hurdle for us to clear when it describes our obligation to teach our children. We are somehow to teach them so that

they love one another and serve one another and keep the commandments and are law-abiding citizens. If we think of good families who have not met that test, and few meet it without some degree of failure over a generation or two, we could lose heart.

48. We cannot control what others choose to do, and so we cannot force our children to heaven, but we can determine what we will do. And we can decide that we will do all that we can to bring down the powers of heaven into that family we want so much to have forever.

49. A key for us is in the proclamation in this sentence: “Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

50. What could make it more likely that people in a family would love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and obey the law? It is not simply teaching them the gospel. It is in their hearing the word of God and then trying it in faith. If they do, their natures will be changed in a way that produces the happiness we seek. These words from Moroni describe exactly how that change is the natural fruit of living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

51. And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins;

52. And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God. [Moroni 8:25–26]

53. When we prepare a child for baptism, if we do it well, we prepare them for the process that will bring the effects of the Atonement into their lives and the powers of heaven into our home. Think of the change we need. We need the Holy Ghost to fill us with hope and perfect love so that we can endure by diligence unto prayer. And then we can dwell forever with God in families. How can it come? By the simple promise Mormon described to his son Moroni. Faith in Jesus Christ unto repentance and then baptism by those with authority leads to remission of sins. And that produces meekness and lowliness of heart. And that in turn allows us to have the companionship of the Holy Ghost, which fills us with hope and perfect love.

54. You know that is true; I know that is true from my own experience and from the experiences of those in my family. We found on our bedspread after a twenty-hour flight across the world a sign written in colors in a childish hand: “You must be so tired! Lie down and relax! You’re back home where we’ll take care of everything!” And in a phone call

made at a stopping place on that flight home the older sister said, “Oh, I’m just vacuuming the house.”

55. How does an eleven-year-old who has never flown across the sea know the effects of jet lag on her mother and father? How does a fifteen-year-old decide to run a vacuum without being asked? Or how does a husband know the feelings of his wife, or a wife the feelings of her husband, and so understand without being told and then help without being asked? Why does a niece give up her bed to an aunt and a nephew share his house and dinner table? How do a son and a daughter-in-law find it possible to take children into their already busy home and act as if it were a blessing? It takes the powers of heaven brought down by believing these words and acting on them:

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

57. And may I add the words in families.

58. The proclamation is careful in what it promises: “Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.” My heart aches a little to know that many who read those words will be surrounded by those who do not know or who deny the teachings of Jesus Christ. They can only do their best. But they can know this: Their placement in a family, however challenging, is known by a loving Heavenly Father. They can know that a way is prepared for them to do all that will be required for them to qualify for eternal life. They may not see how God could give them that gift, nor with whom they will share it. Yet the promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ is sure:

59. But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come. I, the Lord, have spoken it, and the Spirit beareth record. Amen. [D&C 59:23–24]

60. That peace will come from the assurance that the Atonement has worked in our lives and from the hope of eternal life that springs from it.

61. The proclamation warns that for those who fail to respond, the result will be more disastrous than simply lack of peace in this life or absence of happiness. Here is the prophetic warning and the call to action with which the proclamation ends:

62. We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family

will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

63. We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

64. The family unit is not only fundamental to society and to the Church but to our hope for eternal life. We begin to practice in the family, the smaller unit, what will spread to the Church and to the society in which we live in this world and what then will be what we practice in families bound together forever by covenants and faithfulness. We can start now to “promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family.” I pray that we will. I pray that you will ask, “Father, how can I prepare?” Tell him how much you want what it is that he wants so much to give you. You will receive impressions, and if you act on them I promise you the help of the powers of heaven.

65. I testify that our Heavenly Father lives, that we lived with him as spirits, and that we would be lonely living anywhere but with him in the world to come.

66. I testify that Jesus Christ is our Savior, that he made possible the changes in you and me that can give us eternal life by suffering for the sins of all of us, his spirit brothers and sisters, the children of his Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Father.

67. I testify that the Holy Ghost can fill us with hope and with perfect love.

68. And I testify that the sealing power restored to Joseph Smith and now held by President Gordon B. Hinckley can bind us in families and give us eternal life, if we do all that we can do in faith. And I so testify and express my love to you, in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Family  
(QR Code)





## The Eternal Family

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



1. I wish to speak to all those who would like to know about eternal families and about families being forever. One year ago the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a proclamation to the world concerning the family. It summarizes eternal gospel principles that have been taught since the beginning of recorded history and even before the earth was created.

2. The doctrine of the family begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them. The Apostle Paul taught that God is the father of our spirits (see Heb. 12:9). From the proclamation we read, “In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life.” The proclamation also reiterates to the world that “marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102).

3. From the earliest beginnings, God established the family and made it eternal. Adam and Eve were sealed in marriage for time and all eternity:

4. “And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance, and the Gospel preached, and a decree sent forth, that it should be in the world, until the end thereof; and thus it was” (Moses 5:59).

5. “And Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth” (Moses 5:2).

6. The Savior Himself spoke of this sacred marriage covenant and promise when He gave the authority to His disciples to bind in heaven sacred covenants made on earth:

7. “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19).

8. In this latter day the promise of eternal families was restored in 1829 when the powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood were restored to the earth. Seven years later, in the Kirtland Temple, the keys to perform the sealing ordinances were restored, as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants:

9. “Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

10. “Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi— ...

11. “... The keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands” (D&C 110:13–14, 16).

12. With the restoration of these keys and priesthood authority comes the opportunity for all who are worthy to receive the blessings of eternal families. “Yea the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out, and the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house” (D&C 110:9).

13. What is the promise of these sealings which are performed in the temples? The Lord outlines the promise and requirements in this sacred verse:

14. “And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life ... and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever” (D&C 132:19).

15. As taught in this scripture, an eternal bond doesn’t

just happen as a result of sealing covenants we make in the temple. How we conduct ourselves in this life will determine what we will be in all the eternities to come. To receive the blessings of the sealing that our Heavenly Father has given to us, we have to keep the commandments and conduct ourselves in such a way that our families will want to live with us in the eternities. The family relationships we have here on this earth are important, but they are much more important for their effect on our families for generations in mortality and throughout all eternity.

16. By divine commandment, spouses are required to love each other above all others. The Lord clearly declares, “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else” (D&C 42:22). The proclamation states: “By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families [see D&C 83:2–4; 1 Tim. 5:8]. [By divine design,] mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children.” By divine design, husband and wife are equal partners in their marriage and parental responsibilities. By direct commandment of God, “parents have a sacred duty ... to teach [their children] to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens [in the countries where they reside]” (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102; emphasis added; see D&C 68:25–28; Mosiah 4:14–15).

17. Because of the importance of the family to the eternal plan of happiness, Satan makes a major effort to destroy the sanctity of the family, demean the importance of the role of men and women, encourage moral uncleanness and violations of the sacred law of chastity, and to discourage parents from placing the bearing and rearing of children as one of their highest priorities.

18. So fundamental is the family unit to the plan of salvation that God has declared a warning that those “individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God [their maker]. ... The disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets” (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102).

19. While our individual salvation is based on our individual obedience, it is equally important that we understand that we are each an important and integral part of a family and the highest blessings can be received only within an eternal family. When families are functioning as designed by God, the relationships found therein are the most valued of mortality. The plan of the Father is that family love and companionship will continue into the eternities. Being one in a family carries a great responsibility of caring, loving, lifting, and strengthening each member of the family

so that all can righteously endure to the end in mortality and dwell together throughout eternity. It is not enough just to save ourselves. It is equally important that parents, brothers, and sisters are saved in our families. If we return home alone to our Heavenly Father, we will be asked, “Where is the rest of the family?” This is why we teach that families are forever. The eternal nature of an individual becomes the eternal nature of the family.

20. The eternal nature of our body and our spirit is a question often pondered by those who live in mortality. All people who will ever live on earth are members of a human family and are eternal children of God, our loving Heavenly Father. After birth and tasting of death in mortality, all will be resurrected because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God the Father. Depending on our individual obedience to the laws, ordinances, and commandments of God, each mortal can have the blessing of attaining eternal life; that is, returning to live in the presence of their Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, having eternal increase for all the eternities to come. Through making and keeping the sacred covenants found in the temple ordinances, individuals can return to the presence of God and will be reunited with their families eternally.

21. The home is where we are nurtured and where we prepare ourselves for living in mortality. It is also where we prepare ourselves for death and for immortality because of our belief and understanding that there is life after death, not only for the individual but also for the family.

22. Some of the greatest lessons of gospel principles about the eternal nature of the family are learned as we observe how members of the Church, when faced with adversity, apply gospel principles in their lives and in their homes. In the past year I have witnessed the blessings of joy which come to those who honor and revere the gospel teaching of the eternal family during times of adversity in their lives.

23. A few months ago I had the opportunity of visiting a man who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness. As a devoted priesthood holder, he was confronted with the realities of mortality. He found strength, however, in the example of the Savior, who said, in the Lord’s Prayer, “After this manner therefore pray ye: ... Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:9–10). My friend took courage in knowing that as Jesus was required to endure great pain and agony in the Garden of Gethsemane while completing the atoning sacrifice, He uttered the words, “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done” (Matt. 26:42).

24. My friend came to accept the phrase “Thy will be done” as he faced his own poignant trials and tribulations. As a faithful member of the Church, he was now confronted with some sobering concerns. Particularly touching were his questions, “Have I done all that I need to do to faithfully

endure to the end?” “What will death be like?” “Will my family be prepared to stand in faith and be self-reliant when I am gone?”

25. We had the opportunity to discuss all three questions. They are clearly answered in the doctrine taught to us by our Savior. We discussed how he had spent his life striving to be faithful, to do what God asked of him, to be honest in his dealings with his fellowmen and all others, to care for and love his family. Isn't that what is meant by enduring to the end? We talked about what happens immediately after death, about what God has taught us about the world of spirits. It is a place of paradise and happiness for those who have lived righteous lives. It is not something to fear.

26. After our conversation, he called together his wife and the extended family—children and grandchildren—to teach them again the doctrine of the Atonement that all will be resurrected. Everyone came to understand that just as the Lord has said, while there will be mourning at the temporary separation, there is no sorrow for those who die in the Lord (see Rev. 14:13; D&C 42:46). His blessing promised him comfort and reassurance that all would be well, that he would not have pain, that he would have additional time to prepare his family for his departure—even that he would know the time of his departure. The family related to me that on the night before he passed away, he said he would go on the morrow. He passed away the next afternoon at peace, with all his family at his side. This is the solace and comfort that comes to us when we understand the gospel plan and know that families are forever.

27. Contrast these events with an incident which happened to me when I was a young man in my early twenties. While serving in the Air Force, one of the pilots in my squadron crashed on a training mission and was killed. I was assigned to accompany my fallen comrade on his final journey home to be buried in Brooklyn. I had the honor of standing by his family during the viewing and funeral services and of representing our government in presenting the flag to his grieving widow at the graveside. The funeral service was dark and dismal. No mention was made of his goodness or his accomplishments. His name was never mentioned. At the conclusion of the services, his widow turned to me and asked, “Bob, what is really going to happen to Don?” I was then able to give her the sweet doctrine of the Resurrection and the reality that, if baptized and sealed in the temple for time and all eternity, they could be together eternally. The clergyman standing next to her said, “That is the most beautiful doctrine I have ever heard.”

28. The fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ brings great comfort in stressing times of mortality. It brings light where there is darkness and a calming influence where there is turmoil. It gives eternal hope where there is mortal despair. It is more than just beautiful doctrine. It is a reality in our lives that if we can be obedient and obtain the eternal

rewards that God grants us, if we will draw nigh unto Him and embrace the eternal doctrine, we will be blessed.

29. Another incident that has touched my life recently happened when a young man with a terminal illness passed away. He knew that his illness would first take away his manual dexterity and his ability to walk, then its progression would take his ability to speak, and finally his respiratory system would cease to function. But he also had faith that families are forever. With this knowledge, he spoke to each of his children through video recordings for use when he was gone. He produced recordings to be given to his sons and daughters at important, sacred occasions in their lives, such as baptisms, priesthood ordinations, and weddings. He spoke to them with the tender love of a father who knew that while his family was forever, for a time he would not physically be able to be with them, but spiritually he would never leave their side.

30. The examples of faith shown by steadfast widows and widowers, along with that of their children, after the passing of a spouse or parent are an inspiration to all of us. Great lessons can be learned as we observe their faith and obedience as they strive to remain faithful so that they can once again be together as families through eternity.

31. The knowledge and understanding of the doctrine that God lives and Jesus is the Christ and that we have an opportunity to be resurrected and live in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, makes it possible to endure otherwise tragic events. This doctrine brings a brightness of hope into an otherwise dark and dreary world. It answers the simple questions of where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. These are truths that must be taught and practiced in our homes.

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

The Eternal Family  
(QR Code)





## “No Other Gods” and “As He Thinketh”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks  
General Conference, October 2013



- The Ten Commandments are fundamental to the Christian and Jewish faiths. Given by God to the children of Israel through the prophet Moses, the first two of these commandments direct our worship and our priorities. In the first, the Lord commanded, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Centuries later, when Jesus was asked, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” He answered, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:36–37).
- The second of the Ten Commandments elaborates the direction to have no other gods and identifies what should be the ultimate priority in our lives as His children. “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing” in the heavens or the earth (Exodus 20:4). The commandment then adds, “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them” (Exodus 20:5). More than merely forbidding physical idols, this states a fundamental priority for all time. Jehovah explains, “For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, ... shewing mercy unto ... them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:5–6). The meaning of jealous is revealing. Its Hebrew origin means “possessing sensitive and deep feelings” (Exodus 20:5, footnote b). Thus we offend God when we “serve” other gods—when we have other first priorities.<sup>1</sup>
- What other priorities are being “served” ahead of God by persons—even religious persons—in our day? Consider these possibilities, all common in our world:
  - Cultural and family traditions
  - Political correctness
  - Career aspirations
  - Material possessions
  - Recreational pursuits
  - Power, prominence, and prestige
- If none of these examples seems to apply to any one of us, we can probably suggest others that do. The principle is more important than individual examples. The principle is not whether we have other priorities. The question posed by the second commandment is “What is our ultimate priority?” Are we serving priorities or gods ahead of the God we profess to worship? Have we forgotten to follow the Savior who taught that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments? (see John 14:15). If so, our priorities have been turned upside down by the spiritual apathy and undisciplined appetites so common in our day.
- For Latter-day Saints, God’s commandments are based on and inseparable from God’s plan for His children—the great plan of salvation. This plan, sometimes called the “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8), explains our origin and destiny as children of God—where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. The plan of salvation explains the purpose of creation and the conditions of mortality, including God’s commandments, the need for a Savior, and the vital role of mortal and eternal families. If we Latter-day Saints, who have been given this knowledge, do not establish our priorities in accord with this plan, we are in danger of serving other gods.
- Knowledge of God’s plan for His children gives Latter-day Saints a unique perspective on marriage and family. We are correctly known as a family-centered church. Our theology begins with heavenly parents, and our highest aspiration is to attain the fulness of eternal exaltation. We know this is possible only in a family relationship. We know that the marriage of a man and a woman is necessary for the accomplishment of God’s plan. Only this marriage will provide the approved setting for mortal birth and to prepare family members for eternal life. We look on marriage and the bearing and nurturing of children as part of God’s plan and a sacred duty of those given the opportunity to do so. We believe that the ultimate treasures on earth and in heaven are our children and our posterity.
- Because of what we understand about the potentially eternal role of the family, we grieve at the sharply declining numbers of births and marriages in many Western countries whose historic cultures are Christian and Jewish. Responsible sources report the following:
  - The United States now has the lowest birthrate in its history, and in many European Union nations and other developed countries, birthrates are below the level necessary to maintain their populations. This threatens the survival of cultures and even of nations.



- In America, the percentage of young adults ages 18 to 29 who are married fell from 59 percent in 1960 to 20 percent by 2010. The median age for first marriage is now at its highest level in history: 26 for women and almost 29 for men.
  - In many countries and cultures (1) the traditional family of a married mother and father and children is coming to be the exception rather than the rule, (2) the pursuit of a career instead of marriage and the bearing of children is an increasing choice of many young women, and (3) the role and perceived necessity of fathers is diminishing.
8. In the midst of these concerning trends, we are also conscious that God’s plan is for all of His children and that God loves all of His children, everywhere. The first chapter of the Book of Mormon declares that God’s “power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth” (1 Nephi 1:14). A later chapter declares that “he hath given [his salvation] free for all men” and that “all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden” (2 Nephi 26:27–28). Consequently, the scriptures teach that we are responsible to be compassionate and charitable (loving) toward all men (see 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 John 3:17; D&C 121:45).
  9. We are also respectful of the religious beliefs of all people, even of those increasing numbers who profess no belief in God. We know that through the God-given power of choice, many will hold beliefs contrary to ours, but we are hopeful that others will be equally respectful of our religious beliefs and understand that our beliefs compel us to some different choices and behaviors than theirs. For example, we believe that, as an essential part of His plan of salvation, God has established an eternal standard that sexual relations should occur only between a man and a woman who are married.
  10. The power to create mortal life is the most exalted power God has given to His children. Its use was mandated by God’s first commandment to Adam and Eve (see Genesis 1:28), but other important commandments were given to forbid its misuse (see Exodus 20:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:3). The emphasis we place on the law of chastity is explained by our understanding of the purpose of our procreative powers in the accomplishment of God’s plan. Outside the bonds of marriage between a man and a woman, all uses of our procreative powers are to one degree or another sinful and contrary to God’s plan for the exaltation of His children.
  11. The importance we attach to the law of chastity explains our commitment to the pattern of marriage that originated with Adam and Eve and has continued through the ages as God’s pattern for the procreative relationship between His sons and daughters and for the nurturing of His children. Fortunately, many persons affiliated with other denominations or organizations agree with us on the nature and importance of marriage, some on the basis of religious doctrine and others on the basis of what they deem best for society.
  12. Our knowledge of God’s plan for His children explains why we are distressed that more and more children are born outside of marriage—currently 41 percent of all births in the United States—and that the number of couples living together without marriage has increased dramatically in the past half century. Five decades ago, only a tiny percentage of first marriages were preceded by cohabitation. Now cohabitation precedes 60 percent of marriages. And this is increasingly accepted, especially among teenagers. Recent survey data found about 50 percent of teenagers stating that out-of-wedlock childbearing was a “worthwhile lifestyle.”
  13. There are many political and social pressures for legal and policy changes to establish behaviors contrary to God’s decrees about sexual morality and contrary to the eternal nature and purposes of marriage and childbearing. These pressures have already authorized same-gender marriages in various states and nations. Other pressures would confuse gender or homogenize those differences between men and women that are essential to accomplish God’s great plan of happiness.
  14. Our understanding of God’s plan and His doctrine gives us an eternal perspective that does not allow us to condone such behaviors or to find justification in the laws that permit them. And, unlike other organizations that can change their policies and even their doctrines, our policies are determined by the truths God has identified as unchangeable.
  15. Our twelfth article of faith states our belief in being subject to civil authority and “in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.” But man’s laws cannot make moral what God has declared immoral. Commitment to our highest priority—to love and serve God—requires that we look to His law for our standard of behavior. For example, we remain under divine command not to commit adultery or fornication even when those acts are no longer crimes under the laws of the states or countries where we reside. Similarly, laws legalizing so-called “same-sex marriage” do not change God’s law of marriage or His commandments and our standards concerning it. We remain under covenant to love God and keep His commandments and to refrain from serving other gods and priorities—even those becoming popular in our particular time and place.
  16. In this determination we may be misunderstood, and we may incur accusations of bigotry, suffer discrimination, or have to withstand invasions of our free exercise of religion. If so, I think we should remember our first priority—to serve God—and, like our pioneer predecessors, push our personal handcarts forward with the same fortitude they exhibited.

17. A teaching of President Thomas S. Monson applies to this circumstance. At this conference 27 years ago, he boldly declared: “Let us have the courage to defy the consensus, the courage to stand for principle. Courage, not compromise, brings the smile of God’s approval. Courage becomes a living and an attractive virtue when it is regarded not only as a willingness to die manfully, but as the determination to live decently. A moral coward is one who is afraid to do what he thinks is right because others will disapprove or laugh. Remember that all men have their fears, but those who face their fears with dignity have courage as well.”
18. I pray that we will not let the temporary challenges of mortality cause us to forget the great commandments and priorities we have been given by our Creator and our Savior. We must not set our hearts so much on the things of the world and aspire to the honors of men (see D&C 121:35) that we stop trying to achieve our eternal destiny. We who know God’s plan for His children—who have made covenants to participate in it—have a clear responsibility. We must never deviate from our paramount desire, which is to achieve eternal life. We must never dilute our first priority—to have no other gods and to serve no other priorities ahead of God the Father and His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.
19. May God help us to understand this priority and to be understood by others as we seek to pursue it in a wise and loving way, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. See, for example, Doctrine and Covenants 124:84.
2. See Joyce A. Martin and others, “Births: Final Data for 2011,” National Vital Statistics Reports, vol. 62, no. 1 (June 28, 2013), 4; Gloria Goodale, “Behind a Looming Baby Bust,” Christian Science Monitor Weekly, Feb. 4, 2013, 21, 23.
3. See Population Reference Bureau, “2012 World Population Data Sheet,” [www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2012/world-population-data-sheet/data-sheet.aspx](http://www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2012/world-population-data-sheet/data-sheet.aspx).
4. See D’Vera Cohn and others, “Barely Half of U.S. Adults Are Married—a Record Low,” Pew Research Center, Social and Demographic Trends, Dec. 14, 2011, available at [www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/14/barely-half-of-u-s-adults-are-married-a-record-low](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/14/barely-half-of-u-s-adults-are-married-a-record-low); “Rash Retreat from Marriage,” Christian Science Monitor, Jan. 2 and 9, 2012, 34.
5. U.S. Census Bureau, “Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to the Present,” available at [www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/ms2.xls](http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/ms2.xls).
6. See Dallin H. Oaks, “All Men Everywhere,” Ensign or Liahona, May 2006, 77–80.
7. See Dallin H. Oaks, “The Great Plan of Happiness,” Ensign, Nov. 1993, 72–75.
8. See Martin, “Births: Final Data for 2011,” 4.
9. See The State of Our Unions: Marriage in America, 2012 (2012), 76.
10. See The State of Our Unions, 101, 102.
11. Thomas S. Monson, “Courage Counts,” Ensign, Nov. 1986, 41.
12. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Desire,” Ensign or Liahona, May 2011, 42–45.

## As He Thinketh in His Heart (excerpts) - Church Educational System “Evening with a General Authority” devotional on February 8, 2013

1. ...Sometimes the most important things we can teach—the things most needed by our students—are things we teachers tend to take for granted. We can neglect to teach simple basic truths because we assume they are understood by all. For example, consider the fundamental importance of this basic Bible truth taught by the prophet Isaiah:
2. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.
3. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9).
4. Second Nephi chapter 9 has a similar teaching about the foolishness of learned men who set aside the counsel of God (see 2 Nephi 9:28). And in the book of Luke we read Jesus’s response to the Pharisees who “derided” Him for His teachings: “Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:14–15).
5. From these scriptures I conclude that followers of Christ think differently than others. ...When I say that Latter-day Saints “think differently,” I do not suggest that we have a different way of reasoning in the sense of how we think. I am referring to the fact that on many important subjects our assumptions—our starting points or major premises—are different from many of our friends and associates. They are also different from many assumptions currently used in the media and in other common discourse. For example, because Latter-day Saints know our Heavenly Father’s plan for His children, we know that this mortal life is not a one-act play sandwiched between an unknowable past and an uncertain future. This life is like the second act in a three-act play. Its purpose is defined by what is revealed about our spiritual existence in act 1 and our eternal destiny in act 3. Because of our knowledge of this plan and other truths that God has revealed, we start with different assumptions than those who do not share our knowledge. As a result, we reach different conclusions on many important subjects that others judge only in terms of their opinions about mortal life.
6. .... How should our youth respond when their associates and even their classroom teachers conclude that marriage is not important anymore and that children suffer no disadvantage if their parents are not married? Similarly, how should they respond to familiar

proposals to redefine the family?

7. I suggest that it may be preferable for our young people to refrain from arguing with their associates about such assertions or proposals. They will often be better off to respond by identifying the worldly premises or assumptions in the assertions they face and then by identifying the different assumptions or premises that guide the thinking of Latter-day Saints. This won't elicit agreement from persons who don't share our faith, but it can move the discussion away from arguing over conclusions to identifying the real source of disagreement.
8. .... Latter-day Saints obviously begin with a different premise: there is a God who is the source of eternal law, and He has given commandments that establish a right and a wrong for many choices. Also, in the third act of His eternal plan, we will be held accountable for the extent to which our mortal deeds and desires have been in harmony with those commandments. We oppose moral relativism, and we must help our youth avoid being deceived and persuaded by reasoning and conclusions based on its false premises.
9. Where do we look for the premises with which we begin our reasoning on the truth or acceptability of various proposals? We anchor ourselves to the word of God, contained in the scriptures and in the teachings of modern prophets. Unless we are anchored to these truths as our major premises and assumptions, we cannot be sure that our conclusions are true. Being anchored to eternal truth will not protect us from the tribulation and persecution Jesus predicted (see Matthew 13:21), but it will give us the peace that comes from faith in Jesus Christ and the knowledge that we are on the pathway to eternal life.
10. .... When we begin by measuring modern practices and proposals against what we know of God's plan and the premises given in the word of God and the teachings of His living prophets, we must anticipate that our conclusions will differ from persons who do not think in that way. But we are firm in this because we know that this puts us on safe ground eternally. Many others will not agree, but our explanation of why we think in this way will give others a better understanding of our positions...

No Other Gods  
(QR Code)



As He Thinketh  
(QR Code)



# Unit I Additional Readings

Links and QR Codes



[Elder Tad R. Callister, "Our Identity and Destiny"](#)



Our Identity and Destiny





## FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY

### Unit 2 Scriptures

#### **Moses 3:18-25**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Moses 4:26**

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

#### **D&C 30:6**

6 And be you afflicted in all his afflictions, ever lifting up your heart unto me in prayer and faith, for his and your deliverance; for I have given unto him power to build up my church among the Lamanites;

#### **Alma 48:11-13, 17-18**

11 And Moroni was a strong and a mighty man; he was a man of a perfect understanding; yea, a man that did not delight in bloodshed; a man whose soul did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery;

12 Yea, a man whose heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed upon his people; a man who did labor exceedingly for the welfare and safety of his people.

13 Yea, and he was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ, and he had sworn with an oath to defend his people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his blood.

17 Yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been,

and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men.

18 Behold, he was a man like unto Ammon, the son of Mosiah, yea, and even the other sons of Mosiah, yea, and also Alma and his sons, for they were all men of God.

#### **D&C 25**

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

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

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

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

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

6 And thou shalt go with him at the time of his going, and be unto him for a scribe, while there is no one to be a scribe for him, that I may send my servant, Oliver Cowdery, whithersoever I will.

7 And thou shalt be ordained under his hand to expound scriptures, and to exhort the church, according as it shall be given thee by my Spirit.

8 For he shall lay his hands upon thee, and thou shalt receive the Holy Ghost, and thy time shall be given to writing, and to learning much.

9 And thou needest not fear, for thy husband shall support thee in the church; for unto them is his calling, that all things might be revealed unto them, whatsoever I will, according to their faith.

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

11 And it shall be given thee, also, to make a selection of sacred hymns, as it shall be given thee, which is pleasing unto me, to be had in my church.

12 For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.

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

14 Continue in the spirit of meekness, and beware of pride. Let thy soul delight in thy husband, and the glory

which shall come upon him.

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

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





# Marriage Is Essential To His Eternal Plan

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



## The Doctrinal Ideal of Marriage

1. We have been counseled strongly by the First Presidency to devote our best efforts to the strengthening of marriage and the home. Such instruction has never been more needed in the world than it is today, as the sanctity of marriage is attacked and the importance of the home is undermined.

2. Even though the Church and its programs support marriage and family and generally are successful at doing so, we should always remember this basic truth: no instrumentality or organization can take the place of the home or perform its essential functions.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, today I will speak with you primarily as men and women, as husbands and wives, and as mothers and fathers and secondarily as priesthood and auxiliary leaders in the Church. My assignment is to discuss the essential role of eternal marriage in our Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness.

3. We will focus on the doctrinal ideal of marriage. My hope is that a review of our eternal possibilities and a reminder about who we are and why we are here in mortality will provide direction, comfort, and sustaining hope for us all, regardless of our marital status or personal present circumstances. The disparity between the doctrinal ideal of marriage and the reality of daily life may seem at times to be quite large, but you gradually are doing and becoming much better than you probably recognize.

4. I invite you to keep in mind the following questions as we discuss principles related to eternal marriage.

Question 1: In my own life, am I striving to become a better husband or a wife, or preparing to be a husband or a wife, by understanding and applying these basic principles?

Question 2: As a priesthood or auxiliary leader, am I helping those I serve to understand and apply these basic principles, thereby strengthening marriage and the home?

5. As we prayerfully ponder these questions and consider our own marriage relationships and our responsibilities in the Church, I testify the Spirit of the Lord will enlighten our

minds and teach us the things we need to do and to improve (see John 14:26).

## Why Marriage is Essential

6. In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles proclaim “that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”<sup>2</sup> This keynote sentence of the proclamation teaches us much about the doctrinal significance of marriage and emphasizes the primacy of marriage and family in the Father’s plan. Righteous marriage is a commandment and an essential step in the process of creating a loving family relationship that can be perpetuated beyond the grave.

7. Two compelling doctrinal reasons help us to understand why eternal marriage is essential to the Father’s plan.

Reason 1: The natures of male and female spirits complete and perfect each other, and therefore men and women are intended to progress together toward exaltation.

8. The eternal nature and importance of marriage can be fully understood only within the over arching context of the Father’s plan for His children. “All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and . . . has a divine nature and destiny.”<sup>3</sup> The great plan of happiness enables the spirit sons and daughters of Heavenly Father to obtain physical bodies, to gain earthly experience, and to progress toward perfection.

9. “Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose”<sup>4</sup> and in large measure defines who we are, why we are here upon the earth, and what we are to do and become. For divine purposes, male and female spirits are different, distinctive, and complementary.

10. After the earth was created, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden. Importantly, however, God said it was “not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18; Moses

3:18), and Eve became Adam's companion and helpmeet. The unique combination of spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional capacities of both males and females were needed to implement the plan of happiness. Alone, neither the man nor the woman could fulfill the purposes of his or her creation.

11. By divine design, men and women are intended to progress together toward perfection and a fullness of glory. Because of their distinctive temperaments and capacities, males and females each bring to a marriage relationship unique perspectives and experiences. The man and the woman contribute differently but equally to a oneness and a unity that can be achieved in no other way. The man completes and perfects the woman and the woman completes and perfects the man as they learn from and mutually strengthen and bless each other. "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:11; italics added).

Reason 2: By divine design, both a man and a woman are needed to bring children into mortality and to provide the best setting for the rearing and nurturing of children.

12. The commandment given anciently to Adam and Eve to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force today. "God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife. ... The means by which mortal life is created [are] divinely appointed." <sup>5</sup> Thus, marriage between a man and a woman is the authorized channel through which premortal spirits enter mortality. Complete sexual abstinence before marriage and total fidelity within marriage protect the sanctity of this sacred channel.

13. A home with a loving and loyal husband and wife is the supreme setting in which children can be reared in love and righteousness and in which the spiritual and physical needs of children can be met. Just as the unique characteristics of both males and females contribute to the completeness of a marriage relationship, so those same characteristics are vital to the rearing, nurturing, and teaching of children. "Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity." <sup>6</sup>

### Guiding Principles

14. The two doctrinal reasons we have reviewed about the importance of eternal marriage in the Father's plan of happiness suggest guiding principles for those who are preparing to marry, for those who are married, and for our service in the Church.

Principle 1: The importance of eternal marriage can be understood only within the context of the Father's plan of happiness.

14. We frequently speak about and highlight marriage as a fundamental unit of society, as the foundation of a strong nation, and as a vital sociological and cultural institution. But the restored gospel helps us to understand that it is so much more!

15. Do we perhaps talk about marriage without adequately teaching the importance of marriage in the Father's plan? Emphasizing marriage without linking it to the simple and fundamental doctrine of the plan of happiness cannot provide sufficient direction, protection, or hope in a world that grows increasingly confused and wicked. We would all do well to remember the teaching of Alma—that "God gave unto [the children of men] commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption" (Alma 12:32; italics added).

16. Elder Parley P. Pratt expressed beautifully the blessings that come to us as we learn about, understand, and strive to apply in our lives the doctrinal ideal of marriage:

17. "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.

18. "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. ...

19. "I had loved before, but I knew not why. But now I loved—with a pureness—an intensity of elevated, exalted feeling, which would lift my soul from the transitory things of this grovelling sphere and expand it as the ocean. ... In short, I could now love with the spirit and with the understanding also.

20. "Yet, at that time, my dearly beloved brother, Joseph Smith, had ... merely lifted a corner of the veil and given me a single glance into eternity." <sup>7</sup>

21. As men and women, as husbands and wives, and as Church leaders, can we see how the importance of eternal marriage can be understood only within the context of the Father's plan of happiness? The doctrine of the plan leads men and women to hope and prepare for eternal marriage, and it defeats the fears and overcomes the uncertainties that may cause some individuals to delay or avoid marriage. A correct understanding of the plan also strengthens our resolve to steadfastly honor the covenant of eternal marriage. Our individual learning, our teaching, and our testifying in both the home and at church will be magnified as we ponder and more fully understand this truth.

Principle 2: Satan desires that all men and women might be miserable like unto himself.

22. Lucifer relentlessly assails and distorts the doctrines that matter most to us individually, to our families, and to the world. Where is the adversary focusing his most direct and diabolical attacks? Satan works unremittingly to confuse understanding about gender, to promote the premature and unrighteous use of procreative power, and to hinder righteous marriage precisely because marriage is ordained of God and the family is central to the plan of happiness. The adversary's attacks upon eternal marriage will continue to increase in intensity, frequency, and sophistication.

23. Because today we are engaged in a war for the welfare of marriage and the home, in my latest reading of the Book of Mormon I paid particular attention to the ways the Nephites prepared for their battles against the Lamanites. I noted that the people of Nephi "were aware of the intent of [their enemy], and therefore they did prepare to meet them" (Alma 2:12; italics added). As I read and studied, I learned that understanding the intent of an enemy is a key prerequisite to effective preparation. We likewise should consider the intent of our enemy in this latter-day war.

24. The Father's plan is designed to provide direction for His children, to help them become happy, and to bring them safely home to Him. Lucifer's attacks on the plan are intended to make the sons and daughters of God confused and unhappy and to halt their eternal progression. The over arching intent of the father of lies is that all of us would become "miserable like unto himself" (2 Ne. 2:27), and he works to warp the elements of the Father's plan he hates the most. Satan does not have a body, he cannot marry, and he will not have a family. And he persistently strives to confuse the divinely appointed purposes of gender, marriage, and family. Throughout the world, we see growing evidence of the effectiveness of Satan's efforts.

25. More recently the devil has attempted to combine and legally validate confusion about gender and marriage. As we look beyond mortality and into eternity, it is easy to discern that the counterfeit alternatives the adversary advocates can never lead to the completeness that is made possible through the sealing together of a man and a woman, to the happiness of righteous marriage, to the joy of posterity, or to the blessing of eternal progression.

26. Given what we know about our enemy's intent, each of us should be especially vigilant in seeking personal inspiration as to how we can protect and safeguard our own marriages—and how we can learn and teach correct principles in the home and in our Church assignments about the eternal significance of gender and of the role of marriage in the Father's plan.

Principle 3: The ultimate blessings of love and happiness are obtained through the covenant relationship of eternal marriage.

27. The Lord Jesus Christ is the focal point in a covenant marriage relationship. Please notice how the Savior is positioned at the apex of this triangle, with a woman at the base of one corner and a man at the base of the other corner. Now consider what happens in the relationship between the man and the woman as they individually and steadily "come unto Christ" and strive to be "perfected in Him" (Moro. 10:32). Because of and through the Redeemer, the man and the woman come closer together.

28. As a husband and wife are each drawn to the Lord (see 3 Ne. 27:14), as they learn to serve and cherish one another, as they share life experiences and grow together and become one, and as they are blessed through the uniting of their distinctive natures, they begin to realize the fulfillment that our Heavenly Father desires for His children. Ultimate happiness, which is the very object of the Father's plan, is received through the making and honoring of eternal marriage covenants.

29. As men and women, as husbands and wives, and as Church leaders, one of our paramount responsibilities is to help young men and women learn about and prepare for righteous marriage through our personal example. As young women and men observe worthiness, loyalty, sacrifice, and the honoring of covenants in our marriages, then those youth will seek to emulate the same principles in their courting and marriage relationships. As young people notice that we have made the comfort and convenience of our eternal companion our highest priority, then they will become less self-centered and more able to give, to serve, and to create an equal and enduring companionship. As young women and men perceive mutual respect, affection, trust, and love between a husband and a wife, then they will strive to cultivate the same characteristics in their lives. Our children and the youth of the Church will learn the most from what we do and what we are—even if they remember relatively little of what we say.

30. Unfortunately many young members of the Church today are fearful of and stumble in their progress toward eternal marriage because they have seen too much of divorce in the world and of broken covenants in their homes and in the Church.

31. Eternal marriage is not merely a temporary legal contract that can be terminated at any time for almost any reason. Rather, it is a sacred covenant with God that can be binding in time and throughout all eternity. Faithfulness and fidelity in marriage must not simply be attractive words spoken in sermons; rather, they should be principles evident in our own covenant marriage relationships.

32. As we consider the importance of our personal example, do you and I discern areas where we need to improve? Is the Holy Ghost inspiring our minds and softening our hearts and encouraging us to do and to

become better? As priesthood and auxiliary leaders, are we focusing our efforts on strengthening marriage and the home?

33. Husbands and wives need time together to fortify themselves and their homes against the attacks of the adversary. As we strive to magnify our callings in the Church, are we unintentionally hindering husbands and wives and mothers and fathers from fulfilling their sacred responsibilities in the home? For example, do we sometimes schedule unnecessary meetings and activities in a way that interferes with the essential relationship between a husband and a wife and their relationships with children?

34. As we sincerely ponder these questions, I am confident the Spirit is even now helping and will continue to help each of us learn the things we should do at home and in the Church.

### **The Spiritual Resources We Need**

35. Our responsibilities to learn and understand the doctrine of the plan, to uphold and be examples of righteous marriage, and to teach correct principles in the home and at church may cause us to wonder if we are equal to the task. We are ordinary people who must accomplish a most extraordinary work.

36. Many years ago, Sister Bednar and I were busy trying to meet the countless competing demands of a young and energetic family—and of Church, career, and community responsibilities. One evening after the children were asleep, we talked at length about how effectively we were attending to all of our important priorities. We realized that we would not receive the promised blessings in eternity if we did not honor more fully the covenant we had made in mortality. We resolved together to do and to be better as a husband and a wife. That lesson learned so many years ago has made a tremendous difference in our marriage.

37. The sweet and simple doctrine of the plan of happiness provides precious eternal perspective and helps us understand the importance of eternal marriage. We have been blessed with all of the spiritual resources we need. We have the fullness of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. We have the Holy Ghost and revelation. We have saving ordinances, covenants, and temples. We have priesthood and prophets. We have the holy scriptures and the power of the word of God. And we have The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

38. I testify that we have been blessed with all of the spiritual resources we need to learn about, to teach, to strengthen, and to defend righteous marriage—and that indeed we can live together in happiness as husbands and wives and families in eternity. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes:

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

Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan  
(QR Code)



# The Divine Institution of Marriage

LDS Commentary from newsroom.lds.org  
January 2014



## Introduction

1. In 1995, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints published “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” which declares the following truths about marriage:

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. . . .

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.[1]

2. Since the publication of that statement, there have been many challenges to the institution of marriage. Prominent among these challenges has been the recognition by several national governments and some states and provinces that same-sex marriage—formal unions between two individuals of the same gender—are the equivalent of traditional marriage. Yet God’s purposes for establishing marriage have not changed. One purpose of this document is to reaffirm the Church’s declaration that marriage is the lawful union of a man and a woman.

3. Another purpose is to reaffirm that the Church has a single, undeviating standard of sexual morality: intimate relations are acceptable to God only between a husband and a wife who are united in the bonds of matrimony.

4. A third purpose is to set forth the Church’s reasons for defending marriage between a man and a woman as an issue of moral imperative. The Church’s opposition to same-sex marriage derives from its doctrine and teachings, as well as from its concern about the consequences of same-sex marriage on religious freedom, society, families, and children.

5. A fourth purpose of this document is to reaffirm that Church members should address the issue of same-sex marriage with respect and civility and should treat all people

with love and humanity.

## The Vital Importance of Marriage

6. Marriage is sacred and was ordained of God from before the foundation of the world. Jesus Christ affirmed the divine origins of marriage: “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”[2]

7. From the beginning, the sacred nature of marriage was closely linked to the power of procreation. After creating Adam and Eve, God commanded them to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,”[3] and they brought forth children, forming the first family. Only a man and a woman together have the natural biological capacity to conceive children. This power of procreation—to create life and bring God’s spirit children into the world—is divinely given. Misuse of this power undermines the institution of the family.[4]

8. For millennia, strong families have served as the fundamental institution for transmitting to future generations the moral strengths, traditions, and values that sustain civilization. In 1948, the world’s nations issued the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, affirming that “the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society.”[5]

9. Marriage is far more than a contract between individuals to ratify their affections and provide for mutual obligations. Rather, marriage is a vital institution for rearing children and teaching them to become responsible adults. Throughout the ages, governments of all types have recognized marriage as essential in preserving social stability and perpetuating life. Regardless of whether marriages were performed as a religious rite or a civil ceremony, in almost every culture marriage has been protected and endorsed by governments primarily to preserve and foster the institution most central to rearing children and teaching them the moral values that undergird civilization.

10. It is true that some couples who marry will not have children, either by choice or because of infertility. The special

status granted marriage is nevertheless closely linked to the inherent powers and responsibilities of procreation and to the innate differences between the genders. By contrast, same-sex marriage is an institution no longer linked to gender—to the biological realities and complementary natures of male and female. Its effect is to decouple marriage from its central role in creating life, nurturing time-honored values, and fostering family bonds across generations.

11. In recent decades, high rates of divorce and out-of-wedlock births have resulted in an exceptionally large number of single parents. Many of these single parents have raised exemplary children. Extensive studies have shown, however, that a husband and wife who are united in a loving, committed marriage generally provide the ideal environment for protecting, nurturing, and raising children.[6] This is in part because of the differing qualities and strengths that husbands and wives bring to the task by virtue of their gender. As an eminent academic on family life has written:

The burden of social science evidence supports the idea that gender differentiated parenting is important for human development and that the contribution of fathers to child rearing is unique and irreplaceable. . . . The complementarity of male and female parenting styles is striking and of enormous importance to a child's overall development.[7]

12. In view of the close links that have long existed between marriage, procreation, gender, and parenting, same-sex marriage cannot be regarded simply as the granting of a new "right." It is a far-reaching redefinition of the very nature of marriage itself. It marks a fundamental change in the institution of marriage in ways that are contrary to God's purposes for His children and detrimental to the long-term interests of society.

### **Threats to Marriage and Family**

13. Our modern era has seen traditional marriage and family—defined as a husband and wife with children in an intact marriage—come increasingly under assault, with deleterious consequences. In 2012, 40% of all births in the United States were to unwed mothers.[8] More than 50% of births to mothers under age 30 were out of wedlock. Further, the marriage rate has been declining since the 1980s. These trends do not bode well for the development of the rising generation.

14. A wide range of social ills has contributed to this weakening of marriage and family. These include divorce, cohabitation, non-marital childbearing, pornography, the erosion of fidelity in marriage, abortion, the strains of unemployment and poverty, and many other social phenomena. The Church has a long history of speaking out on these issues and seeking to minister to our members with regard to them. The focus of this document on same-sex marriage is not intended to minimize these long-standing

issues.

15. More recently, the movement to promote same-sex marriage as an inherent or constitutional right has gained notable ground in recent years. Court rulings, legislative actions, and referenda have legalized same-sex marriage in a number of nations, states, and jurisdictions. In response, societal and religious leaders of many persuasions and faiths have made the case that redefining marriage in this way will further weaken the institution over time, resulting in negative consequences for both adults and children.[9]

16. A large number of people around the world recognize the crucial role that traditional marriage has played and must continue to play if children and families are to be protected and moral values propagated. Because the issue of same-sex marriage strikes at the very heart of the family and has the potential for great impact upon the welfare of children, the Church unequivocally affirms that marriage should remain the lawful union of a man and a woman.

### **Unchanging Standards of Morality**

17. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that God has established clear standards of morality for His children, who are accountable before Him for their behavior. Such standards cannot be changed by the reasoning, emotions, personal interests, or opinions of mortal beings. [10] Without the higher authority of God, as revealed in scripture and by His prophets, secular society will founder and drift.

18. Many advocates of same-sex marriage argue that traditional standards of sexual morality have changed and that "tolerance" requires that these new standards be recognized and codified in law. If tolerance is defined as showing kindness for others and respect for differing viewpoints, it is an important value in all democratic societies. But as Elder Dallin H. Oaks has observed, "Tolerance does not require abandoning one's standards or one's opinions on political or public policy choices. Tolerance is a way of reacting to diversity, not a command to insulate it from examination." [11]

19. The Savior taught that we should love the sinner without condoning the sin. In the case of the woman taken in adultery, He treated her kindly but exhorted her to "sin no more." [12] His example manifested the highest love possible.

20. In addition to using the argument of tolerance to advocate redefining marriage, proponents have advanced the argument of "equality before the law." No mortal law, however, can override or nullify the moral standards established by God. Nor can the laws of men change the natural, innate differences between the genders or deny the close biological and social link between procreation and marriage.

## How Would Same-Sex Marriage Affect Religious Freedom?

21. As governments have legalized same-sex marriage as a civil right, they have also enforced a wide variety of other policies to ensure there is no discrimination against same-sex couples. These policies have placed serious burdens on individual conscience and on religious organizations.[13]

22. Same-sex marriage and anti-discrimination laws have already spawned legal collisions with the rights of free speech and of action based on religious beliefs. For example, advocates and government officials in certain states have challenged the long-held right of religious adoption agencies to follow their religious beliefs and place children only in homes with both a mother and a father. As a result, Catholic Charities in several states was forced to give up its adoption services rather than be forced to place children with same-sex couples.[14]

23. In the United States, the First Amendment right of free exercise of religion is coming under pressure from proponents of same-sex marriage. Some of these proponents advocate that tax exemptions and benefits should be withdrawn from any religious organization that does not accept such marriages.[15] The First Amendment may protect clergy from being forced to perform same-sex marriages, but other people of faith have faced and likely will continue to face legal pressures and sanctions. The same will happen with religiously affiliated institutions and educational systems. For example, a Georgia counselor contracted by the Centers for Disease Control was fired after an investigation into her decision to refer someone in a same-sex relationship to another counselor. In New Jersey, a ministry lost its tax-exempt status for denying a lesbian couple the use of its pavilion for their wedding. New Mexico's Human Rights Commission prosecuted a commercial photographer for refusing to photograph a same-sex commitment ceremony. When public schools in Massachusetts began teaching students about same-sex civil marriage, a Court of Appeals ruled that parents had no right to exempt their students.[16]

24. Similar limitations on religious freedom have already become the social and legal reality in several European nations, and the European Parliament has recommended that laws protecting the status of same-sex couples be made uniform across the European Union.[17] Where same-sex marriage becomes a recognized civil right, it inevitably conflicts with the rights of believers, and religious freedom is diminished.

## How Would Same-Sex Marriage Affect Society?

25. The possible diminishing of religious freedom is not the only societal implication of legalizing same-sex marriage. Perhaps the most common argument that proponents of same-sex marriage make is that it is essentially harmless

and will not affect the institution of traditional heterosexual marriage in any way. "It won't affect your marriage, so why should you care?" is the common refrain. While it may be true that allowing same-sex marriage will not immediately and directly affect existing marriages, the real question is how it will affect society as a whole over time, including the rising generation and future generations.

26. In addition to undermining and diluting the sacred nature of marriage, legalizing same-sex marriage brings many practical implications in the sphere of public policy that will be of concern to parents and society.[18] When a government legalizes same-sex marriage as a civil right, it will almost certainly enforce a wide variety of other policies to enforce this. The implications of these policies are critical to understanding the seriousness of condoning same-sex marriage.

27. The all-important question of public policy must be: what environment is best for the child and for the rising generation? While some same-sex couples will obtain guardianship over children, traditional marriage provides the most solid and well-established social identity for children.[19] It increases the likelihood that they will be able to form a clear gender identity, with sexuality closely linked to both love and procreation. By contrast, the legal recognition of same-sex marriage may, over time, erode the social identity, gender development, and moral character of children. No dialogue on this issue can be complete without taking into account the long-term consequences for children.

28. As one example of how children will be adversely affected, the establishment of same-sex marriage as a civil right will inevitably entail changes in school curricula. When the state says that same-sex marriages are equivalent to heterosexual marriages, public school administrators will feel obligated to support this claim.[20] This has already happened in many jurisdictions, where from elementary school through high school, children are taught that marriage can be defined as a legal union between two adults of any gender, that the definition of family is fluid, and in some cases that consensual sexual relations are morally neutral.[21] In addition, in many areas, schools are not required to notify parents of this curriculum or to give families the opportunity to opt out.[22] These developments are already causing clashes between the agenda of secular school systems and the right of parents to teach their children deeply held standards of morality.

29. Throughout history, the family has served as an essential bulwark of individual liberty. The walls of a home provide a defense against detrimental social influences and the sometimes overreaching powers of government. In the absence of abuse or neglect, government does not have the right to intervene in the rearing and moral education of children in the home. Strong, independent families are vital for political and religious freedom.

## Civility and Kindness

30. The Church acknowledges that same-sex marriage and the issues surrounding it can be divisive and hurtful. As Church members strive to protect marriage between a man and a woman, they should show respect, civility, and kindness toward others who have different points of view.

31. The Church has advocated for legal protection for same-sex couples regarding “hospitalization and medical care, fair housing and employment rights, or probate rights, so long as these do not infringe on the integrity of the traditional family or the constitutional rights of churches.”[23] In Salt Lake City, for example, the Church supported ordinances to protect gay residents from discrimination in housing and employment.[24]

32. The Church’s affirmation of marriage as being between a man and a woman “neither constitutes nor condones any kind of hostility toward gays and lesbians.”[25] Church members are to treat all people with love and humanity. They may express genuine love and kindness toward a gay or lesbian family member, friend, or other person without condoning any redefinition of marriage.

## Conclusion

33. Strong, stable families, headed by a father and mother, are the anchor of society. When marriage is undermined by gender confusion and by distortions of its God-given meaning, the rising generation of children and youth will find it increasingly difficult to develop their natural identities as men or women. Some will find it more difficult to engage in wholesome courtships, form stable marriages, and raise another generation imbued with moral strength and purpose.

34. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, along with many other churches, organizations, and individuals, will continue to defend the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman, because it is a compelling moral issue of profound importance to our religion and to the future of society.

35. The final words in the Church’s proclamation on the family are an admonition to the world from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “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.”[26]

This document is a revised and updated version of “The Divine Institution of Marriage,” first published by the Church in 2008 (.pdf file).

## Notes

- [1] “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
- [2] Matthew 19:4–5.
- [3] Genesis 1:28.
- [4] See M. Russell Ballard, “What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 41–44.
- [5] United Nations, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” General Assembly Resolution 217 A (III), Dec. 10, 1948.
- [6] David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Maggie Gallagher and Joshua K. Baker, “Do Moms and Dads Matter? Evidence from the Social Sciences on Family Structure and the Best Interests of the Child,” *Margins Law Journal* 4:161 (2004); Mark Regnerus, “How Different Are the Adult Children of Parents Who Have Same-Sex Relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study,” *Social Science Research* 41:4 (July 2012): 752–70; Regnerus, “Parental Same-Sex Relationships, Family Instability, and Subsequent Life Outcomes for Adult Children: Answering the Critics of the New Family Structures Study with Additional Analyses,” *Social Science Research* 41:6 (Nov. 2012): 1367–77; W. B. Wilcox, J. R. Anderson, W. Doherty, et al., *Why Marriage Matters, Third Edition: Thirty Conclusions from the Social Sciences* (New York: Institute for American Values and National Marriage Project, 2011); M. E. Scott, L. F. DeRose, L. H. Lippman, and E. Cook, *Two, One, or No Parents? Children’s Living Arrangements and Educational Outcomes around the World* (Washington, D.C.: Child Trends, 2013; [worldfamilymap.org/2013/articles/essay/two-one-or-no-parents](http://worldfamilymap.org/2013/articles/essay/two-one-or-no-parents)); Andrew J. Cherlin, *The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009).
- [7] David Popenoe, *Life Without Father* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 146.
- [8] See J. A. Martin, B. E. Hamilton, M. J. K. Osterman, et al. *Births: Final Data for 2012*. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol. 62, no. 9 (Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, 2013).
- [9] See Sherif Girgis, “Check Your Blind Spot: What Is Marriage?” *Marriage*, Feb. 15, 2013; [thepublicdiscourse.com/2013/02/7942/](http://thepublicdiscourse.com/2013/02/7942/); Lynn Wardle, “The Attack on Marriage as the Union of a Man and a Woman,” *North Dakota Law Review*, vol. 83 (June 2008): 1364–92; David Blankenhorn, *The Future of Marriage* (2007); Lynn Wardle, ed., *What’s the Harm? Does Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage Really Harm Individuals, Families, or Society?* (2008); R.R. Reno, “The Future of Marriage,” *First Things*, Jan. 2013, 3–4; Richard Neuhaus, “Disingenuousness and Clarity,” *On the Square*, May 30, 2008; [firstthings.com/onthesquare/2008/05/disingenuousness-and-clarity](http://firstthings.com/onthesquare/2008/05/disingenuousness-and-clarity).
- [10] See Dallin H. Oaks, “No Other Gods,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 72–75.
- [11] Dallin H. Oaks, “Weightier Matters,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2001,
- [12] John 8:11.
- [13] See Douglas Laycock, Anthony R. Picarello Jr., and Robin F. Wilson, eds., *Same-Sex Marriage and Religious Liberty, Emerging Conflicts* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).
- [14] See [usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/fortnight-for-freedom/upload/Catholic-Adoption-Services.pdf](http://usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/fortnight-for-freedom/upload/Catholic-Adoption-Services.pdf)
- [15] See Jonathan Turley, “An Unholy Union: Same-Sex Marriage and the Use of Governmental Programs to Penalize Religious Groups with Unpopular Practices,” in Laycock, Picarello, and Wilson, eds., *Same-Sex Marriage and Religious Liberty: Emerging Conflicts*, 59–76.
- [16] Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George, *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York and London: Encounter Books, 2012), 62–64.
- [17] See Roger Trigg, *Equality, Freedom, and Religion* (London and New



York: Oxford University Press, 2012); The Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe, Report 2012 (Vienna, Austria, 2013); “European Parliament Resolution on Homophobia in Europe,” adopted Jan. 18, 2006.

[18] See Girgis, Anderson, and George, *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense*.

[19] See endnote 6.

[20] Charles Russo, “Same-Sex Marriage and Public School Curricula: Preserving Parental Rights to Direct the Education of Their Children,” *University of Dayton Law Review*, vol. 32 (Spring 2007): 361–84.

[21] Gerry Shih, “Clashes Pit Parents vs. Gay-Friendly Curriculums in Schools,” *The New York Times*, Mar. 3, 2011, page A21A; John Smoot, “Children Need Our Marriage Tradition,” *Public Discourse*, June 13, 2013; [thepublicdiscourse.com/2013/06/10344/](http://thepublicdiscourse.com/2013/06/10344/); *Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism: A K-12 Curriculum Resource Guide*, Toronto District School Board (2011). [22] *Parker v. Hurley*, 514 F.3d 87 (1st Cir. 2008); *Fields v. Palmdale School District*, 427 F.3d 1197 (9th Cir. 2005). [23] [mormonnewsroom.org/article/church-responds-to-same-sex-marriage-votes](http://mormonnewsroom.org/article/church-responds-to-same-sex-marriage-votes).

[24] See [mormonnewsroom.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/news-releases-stories/statement-given-to-salt-lake-city-council-on-nondiscrimination-ordinances](http://mormonnewsroom.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/news-releases-stories/statement-given-to-salt-lake-city-council-on-nondiscrimination-ordinances).



## Finding Happiness (Excerpts)

Elder Richard G. Scott  
Brigham Young University Campus Education Week  
August 19, 1997



1. Through repeated prayers offered in preparation of this message, I have had one objective: that I be led to communicate truths that would significantly help each of you find happiness. I recognize that the great majority I address are faithful sons and daughters of Father in Heaven who strive to obey his commandments--or sincere individuals who want to do so. For that reason I would speak to each of you as though we were in a private conversation where we share our purest feelings, our aspirations, our hopes, and our dreams as two can do when there is mutual trust and a common basis of belief. I encourage you to write the feelings and impressions that come to you. I have prayed that the Spirit confirm to your mind and heart the essence of what I would like to communicate.
2. For some time I have known how I wanted to begin this message, yet I have always been very careful not to share sacred experiences without a feeling of authorization to do so. I thought first of merely stating the principles that I learned from one such experience without reference to the specific event. Yet I realized that it would be far more meaningful if I related exactly what occurred. After prayerfully seeking guidance, I feel I can communicate an experience that is sacred to me. It indelibly taught how precious and of inestimable worth is the gospel plan or plan of happiness Heavenly Father has given us. I have seen that plan from a different perspective than ever before in my life, and that has given me greater understanding and appreciation for it. I pray that when we conclude you may feel that same gratitude. May you also resolve to take fuller advantage of the inexpressibly rich opportunities the Lord has given us for true happiness, now and forever.
3. Recently I awoke from a most disturbing dream. I ached physically, was saturated with perspiration, and my heart was pounding. Every sense was sharpened. The transition from sleep to wakefulness was imperceptible. I have come to recognize that as an indication of a significant spiritual experience in a dream. I had been taught lessons that would change my life. Although the actual dream was extensive, the key lessons communicated can be summarized by reference to a few specific experiences in the dream.
4. In it I found myself in a very different and unknown environment. Everything was strange to me. I could not recognize where I was or any of the individuals who surrounded me. I was anxiously seeking my wife, Jeanene. We had been separated, and I wanted very much to find her. Each individual I encountered said that I would not be able to do that. Repeatedly as I sought in different directions to find her, I was emphatically told to forget her for she would not be found. I was frustrated at every turn. One said, "She is no longer the same individual. There isn't a Jeanene like you knew?"
5. I thought, that is impossible. I know her, and I know she will never change.
6. Then I was told, "You are not the same. There is no individual by the name of Richard Scott, and soon all of the memories you've had of Jeanene, your children, and other loved ones will be eradicated."
7. Fear entered my heart, accompanied by a horrifying feeling. Then came the thought: "No, that is impossible. Those relationships are enduring and unchanging. As long as we live righteously, they cannot be eliminated. They are eternally fixed."
8. As more encounters came I realized that I was surrounded with evil individuals who were completely unhappy, with no purpose save that of frustrating the happiness of others so that they too would become miserable. These wicked ones were striving to manipulate those persons over whom they sought to exercise control. I somehow was conscious that those who believed their lies were being led through treachery and deceit from what they wanted most. They soon began to believe that their individuality, their experience, and their relationships as families and friends were being altered and lost. They became angry, aggressive, and engulfed by feelings of hopelessness.
9. The pressure became more intense to accept as reality that what I had been no longer existed and that my cherished wife was no longer the same. Should I encounter her she wouldn't recognize me nor want me. I resisted those thoughts with every capacity that I could find. I was determined to find her. I knew that there must be a way and was resolute in searching no matter what the cost in time or effort.

10. It was then that I broke out of that oppressive surrounding and could see that it was an ugly, artificial, contrived environment. So intense were the feelings generated by what I had been told by those bent on destroying my hope to take me captive that I had not realized the forces of opposition that made my efforts appear fruitless could have no power over me unless I yielded through fear or abandonment of my principles. The environment appeared real, yet it had been generated from fear and threat. Although it was simulated, to those who let themselves believe the falsehoods thrust upon them it became reality.
11. I can now understand that because of my faith in the truths of the gospel plan, I could break through Satan's manipulative, evil environment to see it as it is--not only in the dream, but in real life as well--a confining, controlling, destructive influence that can be overcome by faith in and obedience to truth. Others were disheartened, disoriented, and finally overcome as they lost hope because they either lacked a foundation of truth to engender conviction, courage, and confidence or they let their belief be overcome by the pressure of the moment.
12. As I awoke there flooded over me feelings of love and gratitude for our Heavenly Father and his Beloved Son that I do not have the capacity to express. My heart and mind filled with consuming love for them and inexpressible appreciation for the blessings that are available to every spiritual child of Father in Heaven willing to believe and be obedient to the plan of happiness. I cannot convey the unspeakable joy, the feeling of being wrapped in pure love, the absolute assurance that we will never lose our identity or memory of cherished relationships or the benefits of righteous acts as we continue to resist evil and are obedient to truth.
13. Our Father's love, his perfections, and his perfect righteousness are absolute guarantees that we will ever exist as an individual entity, an intelligence clothed with spirit and body with latent divine capacities that mature and flower through obedience to his plan and his commandments. We have in his Son a perfect example of willing obedience and perfect love. How hopeless life would be without the absolute assurance of justice centered in fixed laws that are the bedrock foundation of the Father's plan. What is true one day cannot be manipulated to be something else by the whim or command of another personage. Your happiness is absolutely guaranteed as you willingly obey his commandments, receive all of the necessary ordinances, and are obedient to them, for he is a perfect, loving Father who will never change.
14. Somehow during that horrifying experience, I glimpsed how except for the Atonement of Jesus Christ, which lets us rectify mistakes through his plan of redemption, justice would demand a recompense for every error committed in life that we could not fulfill. Thus we could not return to Father in Heaven's presence. We would be left under the dominion of Lucifer, whose intent is to capture us and to destroy everything that is good and righteous in our beings. Over time we would become like Satan because we would lose all hope of returning to Father in Heaven and of benefiting from his righteousness, his mercy, and his perfect love.
15. Although I would not welcome another like experience, this dream has taught me how easy it is to take for granted our relationship with our Father in Heaven and his Beloved Son, our Master and Savior. Oh, how blessed are we that they are as they say they are, perfect in every possible capacity and attribute. Fundamental to their purpose is that you "might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25).
16. Recognizing that you are a person who wants to live worthily and be obedient to Father in Heaven, how would Satan strive to lead you from the path to happiness? Surely he would not be successful by tempting you to commit serious transgression--at least not initially. He would more likely fill your mind and heart with visions of many, many worthwhile things--none of which could be criticized as being wrong, but, taken together, they would so occupy your time that you would not do those things that are absolutely essential for eternal life with Father in Heaven and his Beloved Son. Nephi warned of that approach:
17. And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well--and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.
18. And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none--and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance. [2 Nephi 28:21-22]
19. It is clear that no one who has an inclination to live the commandments of God would intentionally do things that would separate him or her from the Lord. I am confident you have the intention of doing all of the right things. Yet I wonder, are you doing them as fully and as completely as you are capable of doing? That is not an accusatory question. It is one asked in sincerity to help you, if needed, to open your eyes and evaluate each day's decisions to confirm that what you are doing will lead you to where you most desire to be. Be certain that you are not being led "carefully" from the main track to happiness onto a sidetrack that can, in time, result in the loss of that which is most precious.
20. What are some of the warning signals that are red flags indicating danger ahead? Do you think of others more than of yourself? If you are married, are you more understanding of your companion, more anxious to make life easier for that beloved being than for yourself? Do you seek time with your children or your parents

in preference to a group of private friends? Have you received all the ordinances of the temple that you can receive--or is that something left for a future day? If so, that day may never come. Does the acquiring of things, when viewed in the brilliant light of reality, sometimes mean more to you than obeying principles known to be true? Do you thirst after righteousness? Or are there times when the allure of stimulating images is allowed to temporarily fill your mind because, after all, they are really not that bad? Do your actions focus on entertainment, immediate satisfaction, self-interests, or personal gratification even though your goals are elsewhere?

21. Do you find yourself often thinking of all of the things that you wish you had that you've not been blessed to have--maybe even very desirable ones like a husband or wife or children, good health, more personal attractiveness, more joy and happiness and peace of mind--while neglecting to recognize all that the Lord has blessed you with already? Do you ever pray to him when your heart is so filled with things to thank him for that you do not feel inclined to ask for anything else?
22. If you are one of the truly happy individuals who love your Father in Heaven and are grateful for each day's blessings, reaching out to others in preference to thoughts of self, I rejoice for you. You have found a pattern of life that will ever bring you happiness. I can do little more than encourage you to continue to enjoy a life squarely centered in love of your Father in Heaven, your Savior, and those blessed to be within the circle of your righteous influence. If, however, you are among those who have not found a fullness of joy, even in your determination to live the commandments of the Lord, I pray that there could be something of worth in what we've talked about. I pray that you may feel how very much your Father in Heaven loves you and wants you to be happy. I pray that you will be stirred to recognize how infinitely blessed you are to have a Father in Heaven, to have a plan that is perfect, to be able to acquire a clear understanding of what brings happiness in life through pondering, prayer, and application of his teachings. I pray that you may grasp how comforting it is to have a fixed identity that can be counted on forever and to live in an environment where there is unchanging truth and justice tempered by mercy. May you be even more sensitive to the direction the Lord would give you in your personal life so that you may grow in understanding and perfection.
23. In my dream there was no physical evidence that what my faith led me to do could be done. There was nothing to indicate in any way that what I so much desired could possibly happen. There was nothing that I could see or hear or touch to encourage me. On the contrary, all around me was like a confirmation that I would never see the Jeanene I so much love ever again. Now I recognize that it was my faith in our Father in Heaven and his perfect Son as well as in their holy plan of happiness that freed me from that devastating environment. Fortunately you do not have to live in a world where there is nothing to support you in your convictions. By the choices you make, you can surround yourself with individuals and influences that will constantly aid you in your determination to live the commandments of God. In so doing you will receive the fullness of blessings possible from his comprehensive plan of happiness conditioned to your specific needs. By choosing to continually participate in Church activities you constantly renew influences for good from others with like dreams and the determination to live righteous lives. As you serve others there comes a strengthening of your own capacities. There quietly distills upon you a confirmation that those principles that guide your life taken from the Lord's commandments are true. Your selfless service to others in your home, in the Church, and in every other walk of life will help verify your confidence in the plan of the Lord. You will know that Satan can have no power over you except as permitted by fear, indolence, disobedience, and appetite.
24. In contrast, everywhere about you there are individuals that embrace the appealing offerings of Satan as the only real way of life. They do not recognize and many even deny the existence of spiritual guidance or the reality of a loving Father in Heaven. They allow themselves to be convinced that what is really enduring is what they see, touch, smell, hear, and taste. In short, they confine themselves to the world Satan wants them to be confined in. They cut themselves off from the glorious opportunities that their holy Father in Heaven wants them to have. Don't you make that mistake.
25. One can center his or her life in falsehood as though it were truth and be increasingly bound by the arch enemy of God while being subtly led from eternal happiness.
26. Although it may not be a welcome insight, you will grow more rapidly through challenge and trial than from a life of ease and serenity with no disturbing elements. The intent of your Father in Heaven is to lift you from where you are to where he knows you will have eternal purpose and unspeakable happiness. By using the talents, abilities, and latent capacities developed in the premortal existence, he will lead you through growth experiences here on earth. When faced squarely and lived fully without complaint, they will raise you to glorious heights of accomplishment and service. To do all of that during the brief period you are on earth is a tremendous challenge. To accelerate your growth and attainment in his plan for you, sometimes he employs a pattern described on the label of some medicines: "shake well before using."
27. Such shaking comes through stirring challenges and stretching tests. You likely have encountered some already. You undoubtedly will encounter others. They may come in the form of an accident, the conferral of a

great responsibility, or a move that dramatically changes your surroundings and circle of trusted friends. You may begin educational or professional pursuits that prove far more demanding than anticipated. Perhaps personal illness, handicaps, or the death of a loved one puts seeming barriers in your path. In truth they are more likely giant steps intended to lift you to higher levels of understanding and accomplishment. How these challenges are confronted is critically important to your happiness and personal growth now and forever. When armed with the power that an understanding and application of the teachings of the Lord provide--and with faith in him and in the capacity of the Holy Ghost to guide and fortify--you will overcome those challenges and gain the intended growth and attainment. As you remember that you are an eternal being, with latent capacities derived from divine parentage, you will not allow yourself to be limited by the confining world that Satan would have you believe is all that exists.

28. .... All of what we have discussed is true because you have a Father in Heaven who loves you very much and wants your eternal happiness and also because you have a Savior and Redeemer. He willingly took upon himself the consequences of all the transgressions of the Father's children that have been or ever will be committed. As Jehovah he understood what his Father asked him to do, as only a god could. Yet it was through this experience and those that followed--culminating in his giving of his life, being laid in the tomb, and his glorious resurrection--that he earned the right to judge each of Father in Heaven's children according to how they use this time of probation here on earth. Although he committed absolutely no transgression, he allowed the consequences of all others' transgressions to come upon him and thereby learned what, as a Savior, he needed to know and feel. We cannot comprehend, we cannot appreciate adequately the price he paid nor what this selfless, sinless, perfect being has done for us in total obedience to his Father's will.
29. I solemnly witness that God our Father lives, that his plan is perfect. I bear testimony that as you raise your voice in prayer, those prayers are heard and can best be answered when they come from a broken heart and a contrite spirit. I know that someday I will be judged on how well I testified of my certain knowledge of Jesus Christ. Therefore I solemnly witness that because of the Atonement of the Savior, the plan of happiness will succeed and Satan's plan is doomed to failure. I know that Jesus Christ lives. I solemnly witness with every capacity that I possess that he lives and that he loves you and will help you find happiness. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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Finding Happiness  
(QR Code)





## The Moral Force of Women

Elder D. Todd Christofferson  
General Conference, October 2013



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

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

10. Most sacred is a woman's role in the creation of life. We know that our physical bodies have a divine origin<sup>4</sup> and that we must experience both a physical birth and a spiritual rebirth to reach the highest realms in God's celestial kingdom.<sup>5</sup> Thus, women play an integral part (sometimes at the risk of their own lives) in God's work and glory "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."<sup>6</sup> As grandmothers, mothers, and role models, women have been the guardians of the wellspring of life, teaching each generation the importance of sexual purity—of chastity before marriage and fidelity within marriage. In this way, they have been a civilizing influence in society; they have brought out the best in men; they have perpetuated wholesome environments in which to raise secure and healthy children.
11. Sisters, I don't want to overpraise you as we sometimes do in Mother's Day talks that make you cringe. You don't have to be perfect;<sup>7</sup> I don't claim that you are (with one possible exception who is sitting nearby at the moment). What I mean to say is that whether you are single or married, whether you have borne children or not, whether you are old, young, or in between, your moral authority is vital, and perhaps we have begun to take it and you for granted. Certainly there are trends and forces at work that would weaken and even eliminate your influence, to the great detriment of individuals, families, and society at large. Let me mention three as a caution and a warning.
12. A pernicious philosophy that undermines women's moral influence is the devaluation of marriage and of motherhood and homemaking as a career. Some view homemaking with outright contempt, arguing it demeans women and that the relentless demands of raising children are a form of exploitation.<sup>8</sup> They ridicule what they call "the mommy track" as a career. This is not fair or right. We do not diminish the value of what women or men achieve in any worthy endeavor or career—we all benefit from those achievements—but we still recognize there is not a higher good than motherhood and fatherhood in marriage. There is no superior career, and no amount of money, authority, or public acclaim can exceed the ultimate rewards of

family. Whatever else a woman may accomplish, her moral influence is no more optimally employed than here.

13. Attitudes toward human sexuality threaten the moral authority of women on several fronts. Abortion for personal or social convenience strikes at the heart of a woman's most sacred powers and destroys her moral authority. The same is true of sexual immorality and of revealing dress that not only debases women but reinforces the lie that a woman's sexuality is what defines her worth.
14. There has long been a cultural double standard that expected women to be sexually circumspect while excusing male immorality. The unfairness of such a double standard is obvious, and it has been justifiably criticized and rejected. In that rejection, one would have hoped that men would rise to the higher, single standard, but just the opposite has occurred—women and girls are now encouraged to be as promiscuous as the double standard expected men to be. Where once women's higher standards demanded commitment and responsibility from men, we now have sexual relations without conscience, fatherless families, and growing poverty. Equal-opportunity promiscuity simply robs women of their moral influence and degrades all of society.<sup>9</sup> In this hollow bargain, it is men who are "liberated" and women and children who suffer most.
15. A third area of concern comes from those who, in the name of equality, want to erase all differences between the masculine and the feminine. Often this takes the form of pushing women to adopt more masculine traits—be more aggressive, tough, and confrontational. It is now common in movies and video games to see women in terribly violent roles, leaving dead bodies and mayhem in their wake. It is soul-numbing to see men in such roles and certainly no less so when women are the ones perpetrating and suffering the violence.
16. Former Young Women general president Margaret D. Nadauld taught: "The world has enough women who are tough; we need women who are tender. There are enough women who are coarse; we need women who are kind. There are enough women who are rude; we need women who are refined. We have enough women of fame and fortune; we need more women of faith. We have enough greed; we need more goodness. We have enough vanity; we need more virtue. We have enough popularity; we need more purity."<sup>10</sup> In blurring feminine and masculine differences, we lose the distinct, complementary gifts of women and men that together produce a greater whole.
17. My plea to women and girls today is to protect and cultivate the moral force that is within you. Preserve that innate virtue and the unique gifts you bring with you into the world. Your intuition is to do good and to be good, and as you follow the Holy Spirit, your moral

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

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

#### Notes

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

8. It is true that many women over many generations have been exploited or saddled with unfair burdens both in family and employment, but selflessness and sacrifice need not and should not become abusive or exploitative. Elder Bruce C. Hafen observed: "If being 'selfless' means a woman must give up her own inner identity and personal growth, that understanding of selflessness is wrong. ... But today's liberationist model goes too far the other way, stereotyping women as excessively independent of their families. A more sensible view is that husbands and wives are interdependent with each other. ... The critics who moved mothers from dependence to independence skipped the fertile middle ground of interdependence. Those who moved mothers from selflessness to selfishness skipped the fertile middle ground of self-chosen service that contributes toward a woman's personal growth. Because of these excesses, debates about the value of motherhood have, ironically, caused the general society to discount not only mothers but women in general" ("Motherhood and the Moral Influence of Women" [remarks to the World Congress of Families II, Geneva, Plenary Session IV, Nov. 16, 1999], [http://worldcongress.org/wcf2\\_spkrs/wcf2\\_hafen](http://worldcongress.org/wcf2_spkrs/wcf2_hafen)).

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

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

11. See John 8:29.

12. 1 Peter 3:15.

13. 2 Timothy 4:2.

14. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40.

15. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28.

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### The Moral Force of Women (QR Code)







# “Brethren We Have a Work to Do” & “Let Us Be Men”

(Excerpts)

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



## Brethren We Have a Work to Do

1. Brethren, much has been said and written in recent years about the challenges of men and boys. A sampling of book titles, for example, includes *Why There Are No Good Men Left*, *The Demise of Guys*, *The End of Men*, *Why Boys Fail*, and *Manning Up*. Interestingly, most of these seem to have been written by women. In any case, a common thread running through these analyses is that in many societies today men and boys get conflicting and demeaning signals about their roles and value in society.
2. The author of *Manning Up* characterized it this way: “It’s been an almost universal rule of civilization that whereas girls became women simply by reaching physical maturity, boys had to pass a test. They needed to demonstrate courage, physical prowess, or mastery of the necessary skills. The goal was to prove their competence as protectors of women and children; this was always their primary social role. Today, however, with women moving ahead in an advanced economy, provider husbands and fathers are now optional, and the character qualities men had needed to play their role—fortitude, stoicism, courage, fidelity—are obsolete and even a little embarrassing.”<sup>1</sup>
3. In their zeal to promote opportunity for women, something we applaud, there are those who denigrate men and their contributions. They seem to think of life as a competition between male and female—that one must dominate the other, and now it’s the women’s turn. Some argue that a career is everything and marriage and children should be entirely optional—therefore, why do we need men?<sup>2</sup> In too many Hollywood films, TV and cable shows, and even commercials, men are portrayed as incompetent, immature, or self-absorbed. This cultural emasculation of males is having a damaging effect. ...
4. Some men and young men have taken the negative signals as an excuse to avoid responsibility and never really grow up. In an observation that is too often accurate, one university professor remarked, “The men come into class with their backward baseball caps and [their lame] the ‘word processor ate my homework’ excuses. Meanwhile, the women are checking their day planners and asking for recommendations for law school.”<sup>3</sup> One female movie reviewer expressed the rather cynical view that “what we can count on men for, if we’re lucky and we choose to have a partner, is to be just that—a partner. Someone who stands in his own space even as he respects our standing in our own.”<sup>4</sup>
5. Brethren, it cannot be this way with us. As men of the priesthood, we have an essential role to play in society, at home, and in the Church. But we must be men that women can trust, that children can trust, and that God can trust. In the Church and kingdom of God in these latter days, we cannot afford to have boys and men who are drifting. We cannot afford young men who lack self-discipline and live only to be entertained. We cannot afford young adult men who are going nowhere in life, who are not serious about forming families and making a real contribution in this world. We cannot afford husbands and fathers who fail to provide spiritual leadership in the home. We cannot afford to have those who exercise the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God, waste their strength in pornography or spend their lives in cyberspace (ironically being of the world while not being in the world).
6. Brethren, we have work to do.
7. Young men, you need to do well in school and then continue your education beyond high school. Some of you will want to pursue university studies and careers in business, agriculture, government, or other professions. Some will excel in the arts, music, or teaching. Others will choose a military career or learn a trade. Over the years, I have had a number of craftsmen work on projects and repairs at my home, and I have admired the hard work and skill of these men. In whatever you choose, it is essential that you become proficient so that you can support a family and make a contribution for good in your community and your country. ...
8. You adult men—fathers, single adults, leaders, home teachers—be worthy models and help the rising generation of boys become men. Teach them social and other skills: how to participate in a conversation, how to get acquainted and interact with others, how to relate to women and girls, how to serve, how to be active and enjoy recreation, how to pursue hobbies without

becoming addicted, how to correct mistakes and make better choices.

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

## NOTES

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

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

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

4. Amanda Dickson, “‘Hunger Games’ Main Character a Heroine for Our Day,” *Deseret News*, Apr. 2, 2012, [www.deseretnews.com](http://www.deseretnews.com).

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

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

## Let Us Be Men (excerpts)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Notes

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brethren We Have a Work to Do  
(QR Code)



Let Us Be Men  
(QR Code)





## “For Time and All Eternity” (Excerpts)

President Boyd K. Packer  
General Conference, October 1993



1. Dear brethren and sisters, the scriptures and the teachings of the Apostles and prophets speak of us in premortal life as sons and daughters, spirit children of God. Gender existed before, and did not begin at mortal birth.
2. In the great council in heaven, God’s plan was presented: the plan of salvation, the plan of redemption, the great plan of happiness. The plan provides for a proving; all must choose between good and evil. His plan provides for a Redeemer, an atonement, the Resurrection, and, if we obey, our return to the presence of God.
3. The adversary rebelled and adopted a plan of his own. Those who followed him were denied the right to a mortal body. Our presence here confirms that we sanctioned our Father’s plan.
4. 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. The specters of heartbreak and guilt follow him about. Only repentance can heal what he hurts.
5. The plan of happiness requires the righteous union of male and female, man and woman, husband and wife. Doctrines teach us how to respond to the compelling natural impulses which too often dominate how we behave.
6. A body patterned after the image of God was created for Adam, and he was introduced into the Garden. At first, Adam was alone. He held the priesthood, but alone, he could not fulfill the purposes of his creation.
7. No other man would do. Neither alone nor with other men could Adam progress. Nor could Eve with another woman. It was so then. It is so today.
8. Eve, an help meet, was created. Marriage was instituted, for Adam was commanded to cleave unto his wife [not just to a woman] and “to none else.”
9. A choice, it might be said, was imposed upon Eve. She should be praised for her decision. Then “Adam fell that men might be.”
10. Elder Orson F. Whitney described the Fall as having “a twofold direction—downward, yet forward. It brought man into the world and set his feet upon progression’s highway.”
11. God blessed Adam and Eve “and said unto them: Be fruitful, and multiply.” And so the family was established.
12. There is nothing in the revelations which suggests that to be a man rather than to be a woman is preferred in the sight of God, or that He places a higher value on sons than on daughters.
13. All virtues listed in the scriptures—love, joy, peace, faith, godliness, charity—are shared by both men and women, and the highest priesthood ordinance in mortality is given only to man and woman together.
14. After the Fall, natural law had far-reaching sovereignty over mortal birth. There are what President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., called “pranks” of nature, which cause a variety of abnormalities, deficiencies, and deformities. However unfair they seem to man’s way of reasoning, they somehow suit the purposes of the Lord in the proving of mankind.
15. The following of every worthy instinct, the responding to every righteous urge, the consummating of every exalting human relationship are provided for and approved in the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ and protected by commandments revealed to His church.
16. Except Adam and Eve by nature be different from one another, they could not multiply and fill the earth. 28 The complementing differences are the very key to the plan of happiness.
17. Some roles are best suited to the masculine nature and others to the feminine nature. Both the scriptures and the patterns of nature place man as the protector, the provider.
18. Those responsibilities of the priesthood, which have to do with the administration of the Church, of necessity function outside the home. By divine decree, they have been entrusted to men. It has been that way since the beginning, for the Lord revealed that “the order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son. . . . This order was instituted in the days of Adam.”

19. A man who holds the priesthood does not have an advantage over a woman in qualifying for exaltation. The woman, by her very nature, is also co-creator with God and the primary nurturer of the children. Virtues and attributes upon which perfection and exaltation depend come naturally to a woman and are refined through marriage and motherhood....
20. I close with a parable.
21. Once a man received as his inheritance two keys. The first key, he was told, would open a vault which he must protect at all cost. The second key was to a safe within the vault which contained a priceless treasure. He was to open this safe and freely use the precious things which were stored therein. He was warned that many would seek to rob him of his inheritance. He was promised that if he used the treasure worthily, it would be replenished and never be diminished, not in all eternity. He would be tested. If he used it to benefit others, his own blessings and joy would increase.
22. The man went alone to the vault. His first key opened the door. He tried to unlock the treasure with the other key, but he could not, for there were two locks on the safe. His key alone would not open it. No matter how he tried, he could not open it. He was puzzled. He had been given the keys. He knew the treasure was rightfully his. He had obeyed instructions, but he could not open the safe.
23. In due time, there came a woman into the vault. She, too, held a key. It was noticeably different from the key he held. Her key fit the other lock. It humbled him to learn that he could not obtain his rightful inheritance without her.
24. They made a covenant that together they would open the treasure and, as instructed, he would watch over the vault and protect it; she would watch over the treasure. She was not concerned that, as guardian of the vault, he held two keys, for his full purpose was to see that she was safe as she watched over that which was most precious to them both. Together they opened the safe and partook of their inheritance. They rejoiced for, as promised, it replenished itself.
25. With great joy they found that they could pass the treasure on to their children; each could receive a full measure, undiminished to the last generation.
26. Perhaps some few of their posterity would not find a companion who possessed the complementary key, or one worthy and willing to keep the covenants relating to the treasure. Nevertheless, if they kept the commandments, they would not be denied even the smallest blessing.
27. Because some tempted them to misuse their treasure, they were careful to teach their children about keys and covenants.
28. There came, in due time, among their posterity some few who were deceived or jealous or selfish because one was given two keys and another only one. "Why," the selfish ones reasoned, "cannot the treasure be mine alone to use as I desire?"
29. Some tried to reshape the key they had been given to resemble the other key. Perhaps, they thought, it would then fit both locks. And so it was that the safe was closed to them. Their reshaped keys were useless, and their inheritance was lost.
30. Those who received the treasure with gratitude and obeyed the laws concerning it knew joy without bounds through time and all eternity.
31. I bear witness of our Father's plan for happiness, and bear testimony in the name of
32. Him who wrought the Atonement, that it might be, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. See D&C 76:24; see also Num. 16:22; Heb. 12:9.
2. See D&C 132:63; First Presidency, "Origin of Man" (Nov. 1909), in James R. Clark, comp., Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 4:203; see also Spencer W. Kimball, Ensign, Mar. 1976, p. 71; Gordon B. Hinckley, Ensign, Nov. 1983, p. 83.
3. See Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 348-49, 357, 365.
4. See Abr. 3:24-27.
5. See Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14; Alma 42:5; Moses 6:62.
6. See Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25-36; Alma 17:16; Alma 18:39; Alma 22:13-14; Alma 39:18; Alma 42:11, 13.
7. Alma 42:8.
8. See Alma 42:2-5.
9. See 2 Ne. 9:28; Alma 12:4, 5; Hel. 2:8; 3 Ne. 1:16; D&C 10:12, 23; Moses 4:3.
10. See Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 181, 297.
11. See Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 181.
12. See 2 Ne. 2:18; 2 Ne. 28:20.
13. See Alma 39:5; Moro. 9:9.
14. See D&C 130:2; D&C 131:2; 1 Cor. 11:11; Eph. 5:31.
15. See Moses 6:8-9.
16. See Moses 3:8.
17. See Moses 6:67.
18. See Moses 3:18.
19. See Moses 3:23-24.
20. D&C 42:22; emphasis added.
21. See Moses 4:7-12.
22. 2 Ne. 2:25.
23. Cowley and Whitney on Doctrine, comp. Forace Green (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1963), p. 287.
24. Moses 2:28; see also Gen. 1:28; Gen. 9:1.
25. See Gal. 5:22-23; D&C 4:5-6; Alma 7:23-24.
26. See D&C 131:2.
27. See "Our Wives and Our Mothers in the Eternal Plan," address given in general Relief Society conference, 3 Oct. 1946, in J. Reuben Clark: Selected Papers on Religion, Education, and Youth, ed. David H. Yarn, Jr. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1984).
28. See Gen. 1:28, note 28c.
29. See D&C 75:28; 1 Tim. 5:8.
30. D&C 107:40-41; see also D&C 84:14-16.

For Time and All Eternity  
(QR Code)



# Unit 2 Additional Readings

Links and QR Codes



[Elder Oaks & Elder Wickman, “Same Gender Attraction Interview”](#)



Same Gender Attraction Interview

[First Presidency Letter and Statement on Same-Sex Marriage](#)



First Presidency Letter and Statement on Same-Sex Marriage







## FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY

### Unit 3 Scriptures

#### **Abraham 2:8-11**

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

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

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

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

#### **D&C 131:1-4**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

...

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

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

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

#### **Mosiah 21:13, 14, 31-32**

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

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

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

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

#### **Mosiah 23:21**

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

#### **Mosiah 24:10-16**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Hebrew 11:13-14**

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

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

See Also:

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

Moses 5-6 – Covenants and Ordinances

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

1 Nephi 5 – Covenants help us lean on each other

Gen. 28 – Jacob's Ladder

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



## The Power of Covenants

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



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

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

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

"It's gone," she said simply.

"What about your belongings?" he inquired.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Strengthened by Gifts and Blessings**

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

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

### **Strengthened with Increased Faith**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Strengthened through the “Power of Godliness”**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Apostle James taught the same lesson:

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

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

Notes

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

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

3. The Apostle James taught the same lesson:

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

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

The Power of Covenants  
(QR Code)







# Covenants & Ordinances (Excerpts)

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



## Covenants

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

## Ordinances

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

22. We learn from the revelations that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

46. .... in the Church we hold sufficient authority to

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**For QR Code, see page 96**



## Celestial Marriage

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Covenants  
(QR Code)



Celestial Marriage  
(QR Code)







## Covenant Marriage

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Notes

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

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

Covenant Marriage  
(QR Code)





## Honorably Hold A Name And A Standing

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



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

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

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

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

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

### The Divine Purpose of Gathering

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No Combination of Wickedness Shall Prevail over Thy People

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### The Fire of the Covenant

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

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

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

#### Invitations and Commendation

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

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

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

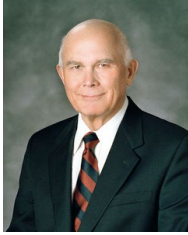
35. Within the sound of my voice are individuals who have received the ordinances of the temple and for various reasons have not returned to the house of the Lord in quite some time. Please repent, prepare, and do whatever needs to be done so you can again worship in the temple and more fully remember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

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

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

Honorably Hold a Name and a Standing  
(QR Code)





## Divorce

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



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

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

I.

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

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

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

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

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

are made to suffer.<sup>2</sup>

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

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

### III.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

#### IV.

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

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

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

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

#### Notes

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

Divorce  
(QR Code)





## Receive the Temple Blessings

Elder Richard G. Scott  
Ensign, May 1999, 25



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Receive the Temple Blessings  
(QR Code)







## FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY

### Unit 4 Scriptures

#### **D&C 42:22-24**

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

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

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

#### **D&C 59:6**

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

#### **Gen. 39:1-12**

1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

7 ¶ And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

8 But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

10 And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

11 And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.

12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

#### **D&C 38:42**

42 And go ye out from among the wicked. Save yourselves. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Even so. Amen.

#### **Souls**

##### **D&C 88:15**

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

##### **D&C 93:33-34**

33 For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy;

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

##### **1 Cor. 6:13-20**

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

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

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

16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

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

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

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

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

#### **Symbols**

##### **Gen. 2:24-25**

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

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

#### **Sacraments**

##### **D&C 132:19-20**

19 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no

murder whereby to shed innocent blood, 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.

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

#### See Also

Genesis 1:31 Sacrament

Genesis 1:27-28; Gen. 48:4 Be Fruitful, multiply, fill

Psalms 127:3 Children are an heritage

Genesis 38:9-10 Unfruitful

Exodus 21:22 – Sanctity of Life

Proverbs 6:25-28, 32-33

1 Corinthians 7:1-5 – Due Benevolence

Hebrews 13:4

Alma 39:2-5

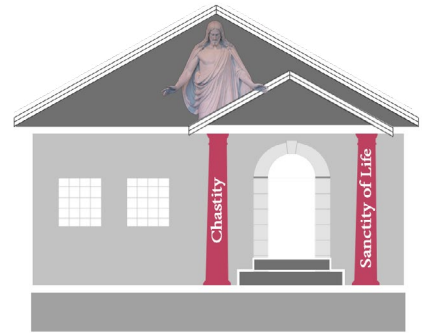
1 Thessalonians 4:1-4





## Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments

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



1. The topic of human intimacy is as sacred as any I know. In discussing it, the subject can quickly slide from the sacred into the merely sensational. It would be better not to address the topic at all than to damage it with casualness or carelessness.

2. Some may feel this is a topic we hear discussed too frequently, but given the world in which we live, we may not be hearing it enough. All of the prophets, past and present, have spoken on it. Most in the Church are doing wonderfully well in the matter of personal purity, but some are not doing so well, and much of the world around us is not doing well at all.

3. Unfortunately, the degree of unchaste behavior around us is likely to increase rather than decrease as the times become more secular, more sophisticated, and more self-indulgent. Edward Gibbon, the distinguished British historian of the eighteenth century, wrote, “Although the progress of civilisation has undoubtedly contributed to assuage the fiercer passions of human nature, it seems to have been less favourable to the virtue of chastity. . . . The refinements of life [seem to] corrupt, [even as] they polish, the [relationship] of the sexes.”<sup>1</sup>

4. But it is not our purpose here to document social problems or wring our hands over the dangers that such outside influences may hold for us. As serious as such contemporary realities are, I wish to discuss this topic in quite a different way, discuss it specifically for Latter-day Saints. So I conspicuously set aside statistics on such tragedies as AIDS, abortions, and illegitimate births and refer rather to a gospel-based view of personal purity.

5. Indeed, I wish to do something even a bit more difficult than listing the dos and don'ts of personal purity. I wish to examine, to the best of my ability, why we should be clean, why moral discipline is such a significant matter in God's eyes. I know that may sound presumptuous, but a philosopher once said, “Tell me sufficiently why a thing should be done, and I will move heaven and earth to do it.” Hoping you will feel the same way as he, and with full recognition of my limitations, I wish to try to give at least a partial answer to “Why be morally clean?” I will need first to pose briefly what I see as the doctrinal seriousness of the

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

### The Significance of Sanctity

Why is the matter of sexual relationships so severe that fire is almost always the metaphor, with passion pictured vividly in flames?

6. May I begin with one-half of a nine-line poem by Robert Frost. (The other half is worth a sermon also, but it will have to wait for another day.) Here are the first four lines of Frost's “Fire and Ice”:

7. Some say the world will end in fire, Some say in ice. From what I've tasted of desire I hold with those who favor fire.<sup>2</sup>

8. A second, less poetic but more specific opinion is offered by the writer of Proverbs: “Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? . . . But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.”<sup>3</sup>

9. In getting at the doctrinal seriousness of this subject, why is the matter of sexual relationships so severe that fire is almost always the metaphor, with passion pictured vividly in flames? What is there in the potentially hurtful heat of this that leaves one's soul—or perhaps the whole world, according to Frost—destroyed, if that flame is left unchecked and those passions unrestrained? What is there in all of this that prompts Alma to warn his son Corianton that sexual transgression is “an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost”?<sup>4</sup>

10. Setting aside sins against the Holy Ghost as a special category unto themselves, it is LDS doctrine that sexual transgression is second only to murder in the Lord's list of life's most serious sins. By assigning such rank to a physical appetite so conspicuously evident in all of us, what is God trying to tell us about its place in His plan for all men and women in mortality? I submit to you He is doing precisely that—commenting about the very plan of life itself. Clearly God's greatest concerns regarding mortality are how one

gets into this world and how one gets out of it. These two most important issues in our very personal and carefully supervised progress are the two issues that He as our Creator, Father, and Guide wishes most to reserve to Himself. These are the two matters that He has repeatedly told us He wants us never to take illegally, illicitly, unfaithfully, without sanction.

11. As for the taking of life, we are generally quite responsible. Most people, it seems to me, readily sense the sanctity of life and as a rule do not run up to friends, put a loaded revolver to their heads, and cavalierly pull the trigger. Furthermore, when there is a click of the hammer rather than an explosion of lead, and a possible tragedy seems to have been averted, no one in such a circumstance would be so stupid as to sigh, “Oh, good. I didn’t go all the way.”

12. No, “all the way” or not, the insanity of such action with fatal powder and steel is obvious on the face of it. Such a person running about with an arsenal of loaded handguns or military weaponry firing at young people would be apprehended, prosecuted, and institutionalized if in fact such a lunatic would not himself have been killed in all the pandemonium.

13. After such a moment of horror, we would undoubtedly sit in our homes or classrooms with terror on our minds for many months to come, wondering how such a thing could possibly happen— especially to members of the Church.

14. Fortunately, in the case of how life is taken, I think we seem to be quite responsible. The seriousness of that does not often have to be spelled out, and not many sermons need to be devoted to it. But in the significance and sanctity of giving life, some of us are not so responsible, and in the larger world swirling around us we find near-criminal irresponsibility. What would in the case of taking life bring absolute horror and demand grim justice, in the case of giving life brings dirty jokes, four-letter language, and wholesale voyeurism in movies, on television, over the internet, and almost everywhere else we turn.

15. Is all of this so wrong? That question has always been asked, usually by the guilty. “Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.”<sup>5</sup> No murder here. Well, maybe not. But sexual transgression? “He that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.”<sup>6</sup> Sounds near-fatal to me.

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

## The Doctrine of the Soul

When one toys with the God-given . . . body of another, he or she toys with the very soul of that individual, toys with the central purpose and product of life.

17. First, we simply must understand the revealed, restored Latter-day Saint doctrine of the soul, and the high and inextricable part the body plays in that doctrine.

18. One of the “plain and precious” truths restored to this dispensation is that “the spirit and the body are the soul of man,”<sup>7</sup> and that when the spirit and body are separated, men and women “cannot receive a fulness of joy.”<sup>8</sup> Certainly that suggests something of the reason why obtaining a body is so fundamentally important to the plan of salvation in the first place, why sin of any kind is such a serious matter (namely, because its automatic consequence is death, the separation of the spirit from the body and the separation of the spirit and the body from God), and why the resurrection of the body is so central to the great abiding and eternal triumph of Christ’s atonement. We do not have to be a herd of demonically possessed swine charging down Gadarene slopes toward the sea<sup>9</sup> to understand that a body is the great prize of mortal life, and that even a pig’s will do for those frenzied premortal spirits that rebelled and to this day remain dispossessed in their first, unembodied estate.

19. May I quote a 1913 sermon by Elder James E. Talmage on this doctrinal point:

20. “We have been taught . . . to look upon these bodies of ours as gifts from God. We Latter-day Saints do not regard the body as something to be condemned, something to be abhorred. . . . We regard [the body] as the sign of our royal birthright. . . . We recognize the fact that those who kept not their first estate . . . were denied that inestimable blessing. . . . We believe that these bodies . . . may be made, in very truth, the temple of the Holy Ghost. . . .

21. “It is peculiar to the theology of the Latter-day Saints that we regard the body as an essential part of the soul. Read your dictionaries, the lexicons, and encyclopedias, and you will find that nowhere, outside of the Church of Jesus Christ, is the solemn and eternal truth taught that the soul of man is the body and the spirit combined.”<sup>10</sup>

22. So partly in answer to why such seriousness, we answer that when one toys with the God-given—and satanically coveted—body of another, he or she toys with the very soul of that individual, toys with the central purpose and product of life, “the very key” to life, as Elder Boyd K. Packer once called it.<sup>11</sup> In trivializing the soul of another (please include the word body there) we trivialize the atonement, which saved that soul and guaranteed its continued existence. And when one toys with the Son of Righteousness, the Day Star Himself, one toys with white heat and a flame hotter and holier than the noonday sun. You cannot do so and not be

burned. You cannot with impunity “crucify . . . the Son of God afresh.”<sup>12</sup> Exploitation of the body (please include the word soul there) is, in the last analysis, an exploitation of Him who is the Light and the Life of the world. Perhaps here Paul’s warning to the Corinthians takes on newer, higher meaning:

23. “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. . . . Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. . . . Flee fornication. . . . He that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”<sup>13</sup>

24. Our soul is what is at stake here—our spirit and our body. Paul understood that doctrine of the soul every bit as well as Elder James E. Talmage did, because it is gospel truth. The purchase price for our fullness of joy—body and spirit eternally united—is the pure and innocent blood of the Savior of the world. We cannot then say in ignorance or defiance, “Well, it’s my life” or worse yet, “It’s my body.” It is not your life or your body. “Ye are not your own,” Paul said. “Ye are bought with a price.” As a result of the excruciating suffering endured by Him in the atonement—the payment He made for our sins—we are eternally indebted to Jesus. That is one reason we call Him “Master,” in the holiest sense of the word. So in answer to the question, “Why does God care so much about sexual transgression?” it is partly because of the precious gift offered by and through His Only Begotten Son to redeem the souls—bodies and spirits—we too often share and abuse in such cheap and tawdry ways. Christ restored the very seeds of eternal lives,<sup>14</sup> and we desecrate them at our peril. The first key reason for personal purity? Our very souls are involved and at stake.

### **A Symbol of Total Unity**

You may come to that moment of real love, of total union, only to discover to your horror that what you should have saved has been spent.

25. Second, human intimacy, that sacred, physical union ordained of God for a married couple, deals with a symbol that demands special sanctity.

26. Such an act of love between a man and a woman is—or certainly was ordained to be—a symbol of total union: union of their hearts, their hopes, their lives, their love, their family, their future, their everything. It is a symbol that we try to suggest in the temple with a word like seal. The Prophet Joseph Smith once said we perhaps could render such a sacred bond as welding—that those united in matrimony and eternal families are welded together, inseparable if you

will, to withstand the temptations of the adversary and the afflictions of mortality.<sup>15</sup>

27. But such a total, virtually unbreakable union, such an unyielding commitment between a man and a woman, can come only with the proximity and permanence afforded in a marriage covenant, with the union of all that they possess—their very hearts and minds, all their days and all their dreams. They work together, they cry together, they enjoy Brahms and Beethoven and breakfast together, they sacrifice and save and live together for all the abundance that such a totally intimate life provides such a couple. And the external symbol of that union, the physical manifestation of what is a far deeper spiritual and metaphysical bonding, is the physical blending that is part of—indeed, a most beautiful and gratifying expression of—that larger, more complete union of eternal purpose and promise.

28. As delicate as it is to mention, I nevertheless trust the reader’s maturity to understand that physiologically we are created as men and women to form such a union. In this ultimate physical expression of one man and one woman, they are as nearly and as literally one as two separate physical bodies can ever be. It is in that act of ultimate physical intimacy that we most nearly fulfill the commandment of the Lord given to Adam and Eve, living symbols for all married couples, when He invited them to cleave unto one another only, and thus become “one flesh.”<sup>16</sup>

29. Obviously, such a commandment to these two, the first husband and wife of the human family, has unlimited implications—social, cultural, and religious as well as physical—but that is exactly my point. As all couples come to that moment of bonding in mortality, it is to be just such a complete union. That commandment cannot be fulfilled, and that symbolism of “one flesh” cannot be preserved, if we hastily, guiltily, and surreptitiously share intimacy in a darkened corner of a darkened hour, then just as hastily, guiltily, and surreptitiously retreat to our separate worlds—not to eat or live or cry or laugh together, not to do the laundry and the dishes and the homework, not to manage a budget and pay the bills and tend the children and plan together for the future. No, we cannot do that until we are truly one—united, bound, linked, tied, welded, sealed, married.

30. Can you see then the moral duplicity that comes from pretending we are one, sharing the physical symbols and physical intimacy of our union, but then fleeing, retreating, severing all such other aspects—and symbols—of what was meant to be a total obligation, only to unite again furtively some other night or, worse yet, furtively unite (and you can tell how cynically I use that word) with some other partner who is no more bound to us, no more one with us than the last was or than the one that will come next week or next month or next year or anytime before the binding commitments of marriage?

31. You must wait until you can give everything, and you cannot give everything until you are at least legally and, for Latter-day Saint purposes, eternally pronounced as one. To give illicitly that which is not yours to give (remember, “you are not your own”) and to give only part of that which cannot be followed with the gift of your whole heart and your whole life and your whole self is its own form of emotional Russian roulette. If you persist in sharing part without the whole, in pursuing satisfaction devoid of symbolism, in giving parts and pieces and inflamed fragments only, you run the terrible risk of such spiritual, psychic damage that you may undermine both your physical intimacy and your wholehearted devotion to a truer, later love. You may come to that moment of real love, of total union, only to discover to your horror that what you should have saved has been spent and that only God’s grace can recover that piecemeal dissipation of your virtue.

32. A good Latter-day Saint friend, Dr. Victor L. Brown Jr., has written of this issue:

33. “Fragmentation enables its users to counterfeit intimacy. . . . If we relate to each other in fragments, at best we miss full relationships. At worst, we manipulate and exploit others for our gratification. Sexual fragmentation can be particularly harmful because it gives powerful physiological rewards which, though illusory, can temporarily persuade us to overlook the serious deficits in the overall relationship. Two people may marry for physical gratification and then discover that the illusion of union collapses under the weight of intellectual, social, and spiritual incompatibilities. . . .

34. “Sexual fragmentation is particularly harmful because it is particularly deceptive. The intense human intimacy that should be enjoyed in and symbolized by sexual union is counterfeited by sensual episodes which suggest—but cannot deliver—acceptance, understanding, and love. Such encounters mistake the end for the means as lonely, desperate people seek a common denominator which will permit the easiest, quickest gratification.”<sup>17</sup>

35. Listen to a far more biting observation by a non-Latter-day Saint regarding such acts devoid of both the soul and the symbolism we have been discussing. He writes: “Our sexuality has been animalized, stripped of the intricacy of feeling with which human beings have endowed it, leaving us to contemplate only the act, and to fear our impotence in it. It is this animalization from which the sexual manuals cannot escape, even when they try to do so, because they are reflections of it. They might [as well] be textbooks for veterinarians.”<sup>18</sup>

36. In this matter of counterfeit intimacy and deceptive gratification, I express particular caution to the men who read this message. I have heard all my life that it is the young woman who has to assume the responsibility for controlling

the limits of intimacy in courtship because a young man cannot. Seldom have I heard any point made about this subject that makes me more disappointed than that. What kind of man is he, what priesthood or power or strength or self-control does this man have, that lets him develop in society, grow to the age of mature accountability, perhaps even pursue a university education and prepare to affect the future of colleagues and kingdoms and the course of the world, yet he does not have the mental capacity or the moral will to say, “I will not do that thing”? No, this sorry drugstore psychology would have us say, “I just can’t help myself. My glands have complete control over my life—my mind, my will, my entire future.”

37. To say that a young woman in such a relationship has to bear her responsibility and that of the young man too is one of the most inappropriate suggestions I can imagine. In most instances if there is sexual transgression, I lay the burden squarely on the shoulders of the young man—for our purposes probably a priesthood bearer—and that’s where I believe God intended responsibility to be. In saying that, I do not excuse young women who exercise no restraint and have not the character or conviction to demand intimacy only in its rightful role. Unfortunately, I have had enough experience in Church callings to know that women as well as men can be predatory, a phenomenon more and more evident (and more and more tragic) in modern times. But I also refuse to accept the feigned innocence of some young man who wants to sin and calls it psychology.

38. Indeed, most tragically, it is the young woman who is most often the victim; it is the young woman who most often suffers the greater pain; it is the young woman who most often feels used and abused and terribly unclean. And for that imposed uncleanliness the man as well as the woman will pay, as surely as the sun sets and rivers run to the sea.

39. Note the prophet Jacob’s straightforward language on this account in the Book of Mormon. After a bold confrontation on the subject of sexual transgression among the Nephites, he quotes Jehovah: “For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land. . . . And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Hosts, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people . . . shall come up unto me against the men of my people, saith the Lord of Hosts.

40. “For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction.”<sup>19</sup>

41. Don’t be deceived and don’t be destroyed. Unless such fire is controlled, your clothes and your future will be burned, and your world, short of painful and perfect repentance, can go up in flames. I give that to you on good word: I give it to you on God’s word.

## Sacramental Moments

Sexual union is . . . a sacrament of the highest order, a union not only of a man and a woman but very much the union of that man and that woman with God.

42. Third, after soul and symbol comes the word sacrament, a term closely related to the other two.

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

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

45. These are moments when we quite literally unite our will with God's will, our spirit with His Spirit, where communion through the veil becomes very real. At such moments we not only acknowledge His divinity, but we also quite literally take something of that divinity to ourselves. Such are the holy sacraments.

46. Now, I know of no one who would rush into a sacramental service, grab the linen from the tables, throw the bread the full length of the room, tip the water trays onto the floor, and laughingly retreat from the building to await an opportunity to do the same thing at another worship service the next Sunday. No one would do that during one of the truly sacred moments of our religious worship. Nor would anyone violate any of the other sacramental moments in our lives, those times when we consciously claim God's power and by invitation stand with Him in privilege and principality.

47. But I wish to stress, as my third of three reasons to be clean, that sexual union is also, in its own profound way, a sacrament of the highest order, a union not only of a man and a woman but very much the union of that man and that woman with God. Indeed, if our definition of sacrament is that act of claiming, sharing, and exercising

God's own inestimable power, then I know of virtually no other divine privilege so routinely given to us all—women or men, ordained or unordained, Latter-day Saint or non-Latter-day Saint—than the miraculous and majestic power of transmitting life, the unspeakable, unfathomable, unbroken power of procreation. There are those special moments in our lives when the other, more formal ordinances of the gospel—the sacraments, if you will—allow us to feel the grace and grandeur of God's power. Many are one-time experiences (such as our own confirmation or our own marriage), and some are repeatable (such as administering to the sick or doing ordinance work for others in the temple). But I know of nothing so earth-shatteringly powerful and yet so universally and unstintingly given to us as the God-given power available in every one of us from our early teen years on to create a human body, that wonder of all wonders, a genetically and spiritually unique being never before seen in the history of the world and never to be duplicated again in all the ages of eternity: a child, our child—with eyes and ears and fingers and toes and a future of unspeakable grandeur.

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

## A Serious Matter

“Sex is a river of fire that must be banked and cooled by a hundred restraints if it is not to consume [us] in chaos.” – Will and Ariel Durant

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

50. In closing, consider this from two students of civilization’s long, instructive story:

51. “No one man [or woman], however brilliant or well-informed, can come in one lifetime to such fullness of understanding as to safely judge and dismiss the customs or institutions of his society, for these are the wisdom of generations after centuries of experiment in the laboratory of history. A youth boiling with hormones will wonder why he should not give full freedom to his sexual desires; and if he is unchecked by custom, morals, or laws, he may ruin his life [or hers] before he matures sufficiently to understand that sex is a river of fire that must be banked and cooled by a hundred restraints if it is not to consume in chaos both the individual and the group.”<sup>22</sup>

52. Or, in the more ecclesiastical words of Elder James E. Talmage:

53. “It has been declared in the solemn word of revelation, that the spirit and the body constitute the soul of man; and, therefore, we should look upon this body as something that shall endure in the resurrected state, beyond the grave, something to be kept pure and holy. Be not afraid of soiling its hands; be not afraid of scars that may come to it if won in earnest effort, or [won] in honest fight, but beware of scars that disfigure, that have come to you in places where you ought not have gone, that have befallen you in unworthy undertakings [pursued where you ought not have been]; beware of the wounds of battles in which you have been fighting on the wrong side.”<sup>23</sup>

54. If some are feeling the “scars . . . that have come to you in places where you ought not have gone,” to them is

extended the special peace and promise available through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. His love and the restored gospel principles and ordinances that make His love available to us with all their cleansing and healing power are freely given. The power of these principles and ordinances, including complete and redeeming repentance, are fully realized only in this, the true and living Church of the true and living God. We should all “come unto Christ”<sup>24</sup> and be morally clean in order to claim all the blessings of love—His love for us, our love for Him, and a couple’s truest love for each other.

### Notes

1. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 40 of *Great Books of the Western World*, 1952, 92.
  2. In *New Hampshire* (New York: Henry Holt, 1923), 80.
  3. Proverbs 6:27–28, 32–33.
  4. Alma 39:5; emphasis added.
  5. Proverbs 30:20.
  6. Proverbs 6:32.
  7. D&C 88:15; emphasis added.
  8. D&C 93:34.
  9. See Matthew 8:28–32.
  10. Conference Report, October 1913, 117.
  11. “The Very Key,” filmstrip based on a talk by Elder Boyd K. Packer (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987).
  12. Hebrews 6:6.
  13. 1 Corinthians 6:13–20; emphasis added.
  14. See D&C 132:19, 24.
  15. See D&C 128:18.
  16. Genesis 2:24.
  17. *Human Intimacy: Illusion & Reality* (Salt Lake City: Parliament Publishers, 1981), 5–6.
  18. Fairlie, *The Seven Deadly Sins Today* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 182.
  19. Jacob 2:31–34; emphasis added.
  20. Genesis 1:31.
  21. Luke 16:24.
  22. Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), 35–36.
  23. Conference Report, October 1913, 117.
  24. Moroni 10:30, 32.
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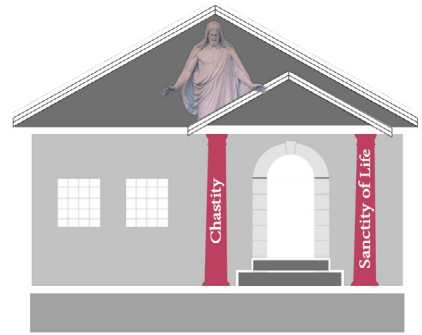
Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments  
(QR Code)





## We Believe in Being Chaste

Elder David A. Bednar  
General Conference, April 2013



1. My message addresses a fundamental question of great spiritual consequence: Why is the law of chastity so important? I pray the Holy Ghost will confirm the truthfulness of the principles I emphasize.

2. The eternal importance of chastity can only be understood within the overarching context of our Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness for His children. “All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and . . . has a divine nature and destiny” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129). All men and women lived with God as His spirit children before coming to the earth as mortal beings. The Father’s plan enables His spirit sons and daughters to obtain physical bodies, to gain mortal experience, and to progress toward exaltation..

3. Our physical bodies make possible a breadth, a depth, and an intensity of experience that simply could not be obtained in our premortal existence. Thus, our relationships with other people, our capacity to recognize and act in accordance with truth, and our ability to obey the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ are amplified through our physical bodies. In the school of mortality, we experience tenderness, love, kindness, happiness, sorrow, disappointment, pain, and even the challenges of physical limitations in ways that prepare us for eternity. Simply stated, there are lessons we must learn and experiences we must have, as the scriptures describe, “according to the flesh” (1 Nephi 19:6; Alma 7:12–13).

4. After the earth was created, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden. Importantly, however, God said “it was not good that the man should be alone” (Moses 3:18; see also Genesis 2:18), and Eve became Adam’s wife and helpmeet. The unique combination of spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional capacities of both males and females was needed to enact the plan of happiness. “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11). The man and the woman are intended to learn from, strengthen, bless, and complete each other.

5. The means by which mortal life is created is divinely appointed. “The first commandment . . . God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife” (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129). The commandment to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force today. Thus, marriage between a man and a woman is the authorized channel through which premortal spirits enter mortality. Complete sexual abstinence before marriage and total fidelity within marriage protect the sanctity of this sacred channel.

6. The power of procreation is spiritually significant. Misuse of this power subverts the purposes of the Father’s plan and of our mortal existence. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son are creators and have entrusted each of us with a portion of Their creative power. Specific guidelines for the proper use of the ability to create life are vital elements in the Father’s plan. How we feel about and use that supernal power will determine in large measure our happiness in mortality and our destiny in eternity

7. Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained: “The power to create mortal life is the most exalted power God has given his children. Its use was mandated in the first commandment, but another important commandment was given to forbid its misuse. The emphasis we place on the law of chastity is explained by our understanding of the purpose of our procreative powers in the accomplishment of God’s plan. . . .

8. “Outside the bonds of marriage, all uses of the procreative power are to one degree or another a sinful degrading and perversion of the most divine attribute of men and women” (“The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 74).

9. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a single, undeviating standard of sexual morality: intimate relations are proper only between a man and a woman in the marriage relationship prescribed in God’s plan. Such relations are not merely a curiosity to be explored, an appetite to be satisfied, or a type of recreation or entertainment to be pursued selfishly. They are not a conquest to be achieved or simply an act to be performed. Rather, they are in mortality one of the ultimate expressions of our divine nature and potential and a way

of strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife. We are agents blessed with moral agency and are defined by our divine heritage as children of God—and not by sexual behaviors, contemporary attitudes, or secular philosophies.

10. To some degree, the natural man described by King Benjamin is alive and well in each of us (see Mosiah 3:19). The natural man or woman is unrepentant, is carnal and sensual (see Mosiah 16:5; Alma 42:10; Moses 5:13), is indulgent and excessive, and is prideful and selfish. As President Spencer W. Kimball taught, “The ‘natural man’ is the ‘earthy man’ who has allowed rude animal passions to overshadow his spiritual inclinations” (“Ocean Currents and Family Influences,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 112).

11. In contrast, the “man [or woman] of Christ” (Helaman 3:29) is spiritual and bridles all passions (see Alma 38:12), is temperate and restrained, and is benevolent and selfless. Men and women of Christ lay hold upon the word of God, deny themselves and take up His cross (see Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; D&C 56:2), and press forward along a strait and narrow course of faithfulness, obedience, and devotion to the Savior and His gospel.

12. As sons and daughters of God, we have inherited divine capacities from Him. But we presently live in a fallen world. The very elements out of which our bodies were created are by nature fallen and ever subject to the pull of sin, corruption, and death. Consequently, the Fall of Adam and its spiritual and temporal consequences affect us most directly through our physical bodies. And yet we are dual beings, for our spirit that is the eternal part of us is tabernacled in a physical body that is subject to the Fall. As Jesus emphasized to the Apostle Peter, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41).

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

13. The Father’s plan is designed to provide direction for His children, to help them become happy, and to bring them safely home to Him with resurrected, exalted bodies. Heavenly Father desires us to be together in the light and filled with hope. In contrast, Lucifer labors to make the sons and daughters of God confused and unhappy and to hinder their eternal progression. The overarching intent of the father of lies is that all of us would become “miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27). Lucifer wants us ultimately to

be alone in the dark and without hope.

14. Satan relentlessly works to distort the most important elements of the Father’s plan. He does not have a body, and his eternal progress has been halted. Just as water flowing in a riverbed is stopped by a dam, so the adversary’s eternal progress is thwarted because he does not have a physical body. Because of his rebellion, Lucifer has denied himself all of the mortal blessings and experiences made possible through a body of flesh and bones. He cannot learn the lessons that only an embodied spirit can learn. He resents the reality of a literal and universal resurrection of all mankind. One of the potent scriptural meanings of the word damned is illustrated in his inability to continue developing and becoming like our Heavenly Father.

15. Because a physical body is so central to the Father’s plan of happiness and our spiritual development, Lucifer seeks to frustrate our progression by tempting us to use our bodies improperly. One of the ultimate ironies of eternity is that the adversary, who is miserable precisely because he has no physical body, entices us to share in his misery through the improper use of our bodies. The very tool he does not have is thus the primary target of his attempts to lure us to spiritual destruction.

16. Violating the law of chastity is a grievous sin and a misuse of our physical tabernacles. To those who know and understand the plan of salvation, defiling the body is an act of rebellion (see Mosiah 2:36–37; D&C 64:34–35) and a denial of our true identity as sons and daughters of God. As we look beyond mortality and into eternity, it is easy to discern that the counterfeit companionship advocated by the adversary is temporary and empty.

17. Alma counseled his son Shiblon to “bridle all [of his] passions, that [he] may be filled with love” (Alma 38:12). Significantly, disciplining the natural man in each of us makes possible a richer, a deeper, and a more enduring love of God and of His children. Love increases through righteous restraint and decreases through impulsive indulgence.

18. President Marion G. Romney declared:

19. “I can think of no blessings to be more fervently desired than those promised to the pure and the virtuous. Jesus spoke of specific rewards for different virtues but reserved the greatest, so it seems to me, for the pure in heart, ‘for they,’ said he, ‘shall see God’ (Matt. 5:8). And not only shall they see the Lord, but they shall feel at home in his presence.

20. “Here is ... the Savior’s promise: ‘Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God’ (D&C 121:45)” (“Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1979, 42).

21. We also are promised that, as we pursue the pathway of



virtue, “the Holy Ghost shall be [our] constant companion” (D&C 121:46). Thus, living the law of chastity invites some of the greatest blessings men and women can receive in mortality: appropriate spiritual confidence in the presence of family, friends, Church associates, and, ultimately, the Savior. Our innate longing to belong is fulfilled in righteousness as we walk in the light with hope.

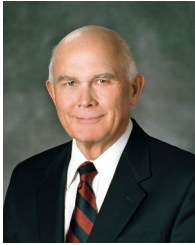
22. Some of you who receive this message need to repent of sexual or other sins. The Savior is often referred to as the Great Physician, and this title has both symbolic and literal significance. All of us have experienced the pain associated with a physical injury or wound. When we are in pain, we typically seek relief and are grateful for the medication and treatments that help to alleviate our suffering. Consider sin as a spiritual wound that causes guilt or, as described by Alma to his son Corianton, “remorse of conscience” (Alma 42:18). Guilt is to our spirit what pain is to our body—a warning of danger and a protection from additional damage. From the Atonement of the Savior flows the soothing salve that can heal our spiritual wounds and remove guilt. However, this salve can only be applied through the principles of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, and consistent obedience. The results of sincere repentance are peace of conscience, comfort, and spiritual healing and renewal.

23. Your bishop or branch president is the spiritual physician’s assistant who is authorized to help you repent and heal. Please remember, however, that the extent and intensity of your repentance must match the nature and severity of your sins—especially for Latter-day Saints who are under sacred covenant. Serious spiritual wounds require sustained treatment and time to heal completely and fully.

24. The doctrine I have described will seem to be archaic and outdated to many people in a world that increasingly mocks the sanctity of procreation and minimizes the worth of human life. But the Lord’s truth is not altered by fads, popularity, or public opinion polls. I promise that obedience to the law of chastity will increase our happiness in mortality and make possible our progress in eternity. Chastity and virtue are now, always have been, and always will be “most dear and precious above all things” (Moroni 9:9). I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

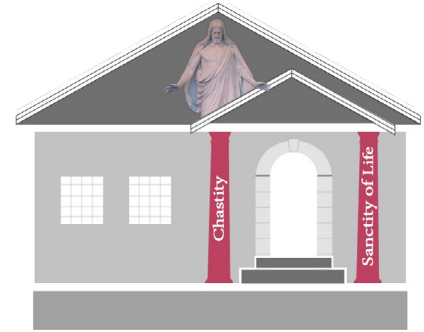
We Believe in Being Chaste  
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## Pornography

Elder Dallin H. Oaks  
General Conference, April 2005



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

13. One of the Savior's most memorable teachings applies to men who are secretly viewing pornography:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

"Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matthew 23:25–26; see also Alma 60:23).

The Savior continues His denunciation of those who treat what is visible but neglect to cleanse the inner man:

"Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

"Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matthew 23:27–28).

14. The immediate spiritual consequences of such hypocrisy are devastating. Those who seek out and use pornography forfeit the power of their priesthood. The Lord declares: "When we undertake to cover our sins, . . . behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man" (D&C 121:37).
15. Patrons of pornography also lose the companionship of the Spirit. Pornography produces fantasies that destroy spirituality. "To be carnally minded is death"—spiritual death (Romans 8:6; see also 2 Nephi 9:39).
16. The scriptures repeatedly teach that the Spirit of the Lord will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle. When we worthily partake of the sacrament, we are promised that we will "always have his Spirit to be with [us]." To qualify for that promise we covenant that we will "always remember him" (D&C 20:77). Those who seek out and use pornography for sexual stimulation obviously violate that covenant. They also violate a sacred covenant to refrain from unholy and impure practices. They cannot have the Spirit of the Lord to be with them. All such need to heed the Apostle Peter's plea: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22).
17. Brethren, you have noticed that I am not discussing the effects of pornography on mental health or criminal behavior. I am discussing its effects on spirituality—on our ability to have the companionship of the Spirit of the Lord and our capacity to exercise the power of the priesthood.
18. Pornography also inflicts mortal wounds on our most

precious personal relationships. In his talk to men of the priesthood last October, President Hinckley quoted the letter of a woman who asked him to warn Church members that pornography "has the effect of damaging hearts and souls to their very depths, strangling the life out of relationships" (Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2004, 60).

19. At a recent stake conference a woman handed me a similar letter. Her husband had also served in important Church callings for many years while addicted to pornography. She told of great difficulty in getting priesthood leaders to take this problem of pornography seriously: "I got all kinds of responses—like I was overreacting or it was my fault. The bishop we have now has been great. And now after 15 years my husband is trying to deal with his addiction, but now it is 15 years harder to quit for him and the loss has been incalculable."
20. Pornography impairs one's ability to enjoy a normal emotional, romantic, and spiritual relationship with a person of the opposite sex. It erodes the moral barriers that stand against inappropriate, abnormal, or illegal behavior. As conscience is desensitized, patrons of pornography are led to act out what they have witnessed, regardless of its effects on their life and the lives of others.
21. Pornography is also addictive. It impairs decision-making capacities and it "hooks" its users, drawing them back obsessively for more and more. A man who had been addicted to pornography and to hard drugs wrote me this comparison: "In my eyes cocaine doesn't hold a candle to this. I have done both. . . . Quitting even the hardest drugs was nothing compared to [trying to quit pornography]" (letter of Mar. 20, 2005).
22. Some seek to justify their indulgence by arguing that they are only viewing "soft," not "hard," porn. A wise bishop called this refusing to see evil as evil. He quoted men seeking to justify their viewing choices by comparisons such as "not as bad as" or "only one bad scene." But the test of what is evil is not its degree but its effect. When persons entertain evil thoughts long enough for the Spirit to withdraw, they lose their spiritual protection and they are subject to the power and direction of the evil one. When they use Internet or other pornography for what this bishop described as "arousal on demand" (letter of Mar. 13, 2005), they are deeply soiled by sin.
23. King Benjamin's great sermon describes the terrible consequences. When we withdraw from the Spirit of the Lord, we become an enemy to righteousness, we have a lively sense of our guilt, and we "shrink from the presence of the Lord" (see Mosiah 2:36–38). "Mercy hath no claim on that man," he concluded; "therefore his final

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

24. Consider the tragic example of King David. Though a spiritual giant in Israel, he allowed himself to look upon something he should not have viewed (see 2 Samuel 11). Tempted by what he saw, he violated two of the Ten Commandments, beginning with “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). In this way a prophet-king fell from his exaltation (see D&C 132:39).

25. But the good news is that no one needs to follow the evil, downward descent to torment. Everyone caught on that terrible escalator has the key to reverse his course. He can escape. Through repentance he can be clean.

26. Alma the Younger described it:

“Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell. . . .

“ . . . The very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror. . . .

“And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

“Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

“And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!” (Alma 36:13–14, 17–20).

27. My brethren who are caught in this addiction or troubled by this temptation, there is a way.

28. *First*, acknowledge the evil. Don’t defend it or try to justify yourself. For at least a quarter century our leaders have pleaded with men, and also with women and children, to avoid this evil.<sup>2</sup> Our current Church magazines are full of warnings, information, and helps on this subject—with more than a score of articles published or to be published this year and last year alone.<sup>3</sup>

29. *Second*, seek the help of the Lord and His servants. Hear and heed President Hinckley’s words:

30. “Plead with the Lord out of the depths of your soul that He will remove from you the addiction which enslaves you. And may you have the courage to seek the loving guidance of your bishop and, if necessary, the counsel of caring professionals” (Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2004, 62).

31. Third, do all that you can to avoid pornography. If you ever find yourself in its presence—which can happen to anyone in the world in which we live—follow the example of Joseph of Egypt. When temptation caught him in her grip, he left temptation and “got him out” (Genesis 39:12).

32. Don’t accommodate any degree of temptation. Prevent sin and avoid having to deal with its inevitable destruction. So, turn it off! Look away! Avoid it at all costs. Direct your thoughts in wholesome paths. Remember your covenants and be faithful in temple attendance. The wise bishop I quoted earlier reported that “an endowed priesthood bearer’s fall into pornography never occurs during periods of regular worship in the temple; it happens when he has become casual in his temple worship” (letter of Mar. 13, 2005).

33. We must also act to protect those we love. Parents install alarms to warn if their household is threatened by smoke or carbon monoxide. We should also install protections against spiritual threats, protections like filters on Internet connections and locating access so others can see what is being viewed. And we should build the spiritual strength of our families by loving relationships, family prayer, and scripture study.

34. *Finally*, do not patronize pornography. Do not use your purchasing power to support moral degradation. And young women, please understand that if you dress immodestly, you are magnifying this problem by becoming pornography to some of the men who see you.

35. Please heed these warnings. Let us all improve our personal behavior and redouble our efforts to protect our loved ones and our environment from the onslaught of pornography that threatens our spirituality, our marriages, and our children.

36. I testify that this is what we should do to enjoy the blessings of Him whom we worship. I testify of Jesus Christ, the Light and Life of the World, whose Church this is, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

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

2. See, for example, Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Tragic Evil among Us,” Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2004, 59–62; David E. Sorensen, “You Can’t Pet a Rattlesnake,” Liahona, July 2001, 48–50; Ensign, May 2001, 41–43; Thomas S. Monson, “Pornography—the Deadly Carrier,” Ensign, Nov. 1979, 66–67;

David B. Haight, "Personal Morality," *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 70–73.

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

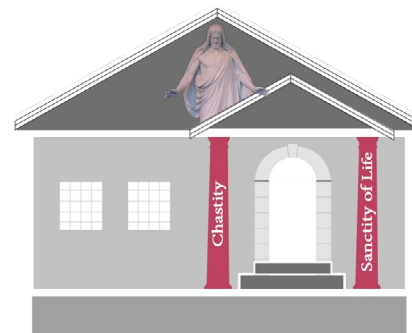
Pornography  
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## Making The Right Choices

Elder Richard G. Scott  
General Conference, October 1994



1. Present tonight are many young men who hold the priesthood of God.<sup>1</sup> Some of you look forward to being a missionary when you are older. Others are planning to go soon; still others have completed missions and are seeking an eternal companion. I am sobered by the realization that some of you will not reach these worthy goals because of other choices you are making now.

2. I am grateful this is a private priesthood meeting, for I have felt impressed to treat sensitive yet important matters. While they apply to all present, I particularly want to talk with you young men. I will speak as though you and I were alone in a private interview and no one else can hear us. My purpose is to help you learn how to make the right choices. That will help you develop strong feelings of self-worth. You will have confidence to do right and overcome strong negative peer pressure and bad influences.

3. As a young boy, I felt that some things that I heard discussed by others at school about private parts of the body were wrong. Yet I wasn't really sure how wrong or why they were wrong. You may have similar feelings. Since in tonight's setting you cannot ask me anything, I will use some of the confidential questions most frequently asked by youth I have met across the world. I will answer them by what I have learned from the scriptures and the prophets. You then will have clear standards from which to make choices. I pray that as we talk the Holy Ghost will let you feel the truth of what is said. I know that as you listen and think of how our interview applies to you, there will come impressions regarding what to do about it in your own life.

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

4. Answer: You can't please God without upsetting Satan, so you will get pressure from those he tempts to do wrong. Individuals who do wrong want you to join them because they feel more comfortable in what they are doing when others do it also. They may also want to take advantage of you. It is natural to want to be accepted by peers, to be part of a group—some even join gangs because of that desire

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

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

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

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

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

7. Answer: Fundamental to the great plan of happiness and central to the teachings of the Savior is the family. A new family begins when a man and woman make sacred marriage vows and are legally bound together to become husband and wife, father and mother. The perfect beginning is through sealing in the temple. With marriage they commit the best of themselves to be absolutely loyal to each other and to invite children to be nurtured and taught. The father assumes

his role as provider and protector, the mother her role as the heart of the home, with her tender, loving, nurturing influence.

8. Together they strive to instill in themselves and their children principles such as prayer, obedience, love, giving of oneself, and the quest for knowledge.

9. Within the enduring covenant of marriage, the Lord permits husband and wife the expression of the sacred procreative powers in all their loveliness and beauty within the bounds He has set.<sup>7</sup> One purpose of this private, sacred, intimate experience is to provide the physical bodies for the spirits Father in Heaven wants to experience mortality. Another reason for these powerful and beautiful feelings of love is to bind husband and wife together in loyalty, fidelity, consideration of each other, and common purpose.

10. However, those intimate acts are forbidden by the Lord outside the enduring commitment of marriage because they undermine His purposes.<sup>8</sup> Within the sacred covenant of marriage, such relationships are according to His plan. When experienced any other way, they are against His will. They cause serious emotional and spiritual harm. Even though participants do not realize that is happening now, they will later. Sexual immorality creates a barrier to the influence of the Holy Spirit with all its uplifting, enlightening, and empowering capabilities. It causes powerful physical and emotional stimulation. In time that creates an unquenchable appetite that drives the offender to ever more serious sin. It engenders selfishness and can produce aggressive acts such as brutality, abortion, sexual abuse, and violent crime. Such stimulation can lead to acts of homosexuality, and they are evil and absolutely wrong.<sup>9</sup>

11. Sexual transgression would defile the priesthood you now hold, sap your spiritual strength, undermine your faith in Jesus Christ, and frustrate your ability to serve Him. Consistent, willing obedience increases your confidence and ability. It produces character that allows you to face difficult challenges and overcome them. It qualifies you to receive inspiration and power from the Lord.<sup>10</sup>

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

12. Answer: Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage—I mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another's body, with or without clothing—is a sin and is forbidden by God. It is also a transgression to intentionally stimulate these emotions within your own body.<sup>11</sup> Satan tempts one to believe that there are allowable levels of physical contact between consenting individuals who seek the powerful stimulation of emotions they produce, and if kept within bounds, no harm will result. As a witness of Jesus Christ, I testify that is absolutely false. Satan particularly seeks to tempt one who has lived a pure, clean life to experiment through magazines, videocassettes, or

movies with powerful images of a woman's body. He wants to stimulate appetite to cause experimentation that quickly results in intimacies and defilement. Powerful habits are formed which are difficult to break. Mental and emotional scars result.

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

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

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

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

15. Answer: All of the sexual transgressions we have discussed require sincere repentance with the participation of the bishop. Should you have done any of this, repent now. It is wrong to violate these commandments of the Lord. It is worse to do nothing about it. Sin is like cancer in the body. It will never heal itself. It will become worse unless cured through repentance. Your parents can help strengthen you. Then you can become clean and pure by repentance under the guidance of the bishop. He may seem to be busy or unavailable. Tell him you are in trouble and need help. He will listen.

16. A youth in serious trouble said: "I have done things that I knew were bad. I have been taught they were ever since I can remember. I know repentance is a great gift; without it I would be lost. But I'm not ready to repent of my sins, yet I know when I am ready I can." How tragic. The thought of intentionally committing serious sin now and repenting later is perilously wrong. Never do that.<sup>14</sup> Many start that journey of intentional transgression and never make it back. Premeditated sin has greater penalties and is harder to

overcome. If there is sin, repent now—while you can.

17. I pray that as we have talked you have had feelings to do better.<sup>15</sup> You hold the priesthood of God. That is a sacred responsibility,<sup>16</sup> and also a singular privilege.<sup>17</sup> You will be fortified in your determination to live righteously as you study the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. Listen to your parents, leaders, and the prophet we have sustained today. Have faith in the Savior. He will help you.<sup>18</sup> Remember He said, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.”<sup>19</sup>

18. Please stay morally clean. The Lord will make that possible as you do your part with all your strength.<sup>20</sup> Jesus Christ lives, and He loves you. He will help you as you do your part. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. See Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, sel. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946), p. 64; see also Millennial Star, 51 (1889):657.
2. See 1 Cor. 10:13.
3. See H. Burke Peterson, Ensign, Nov. 1993, pp. 42–44.
4. See The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), pp. 278, 445–46.
5. See Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, Jan. 1974, pp. 27–28.
6. See Thomas S. Monson, Ensign, Nov. 1990, p. 47; see also Robert L. Simpson, Ensign, Jan. 1973, p. 112.
7. See Spencer W. Kimball, Ensign, May 1974, p. 7.
8. See Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, July 1972, pp. 111–13.
9. See Spencer W. Kimball, Ensign, Nov. 1980, pp. 97–98.
10. See D&C 43:9, 15–16.
11. See Spencer W. Kimball, Ensign, Nov. 1974, p. 8; Nov. 1977, p. 6; Nov. 1980, p. 97.
12. See The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, pp. 283–84.
13. See The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), pp. 65, 176–77.
14. Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, pp. 70–72.
15. See D&C 64:33–34.
16. See D&C 84:35–39. See also Spencer W. Kimball, The Miracle of Forgiveness (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), pp. 124–25.
17. See The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p. 494.
18. See Moro. 10:32.
19. D&C 82:10.
20. See 3 Ne. 18:20.

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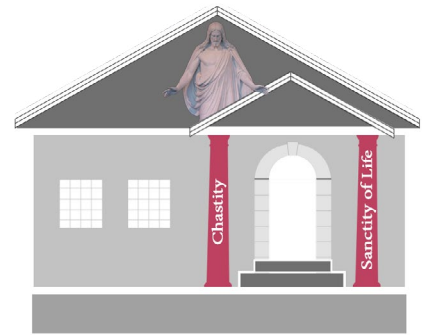






## “Things As They Really Are” (Excerpts)

Elder David A. Bednar  
CES Flreside, May 3 2009

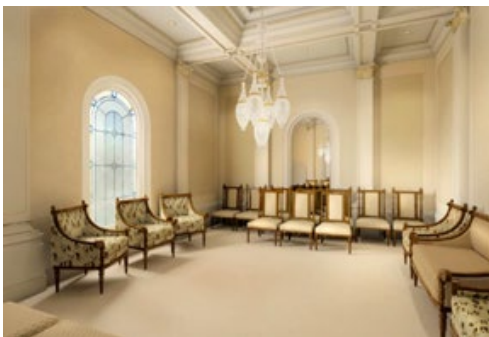


- As I have looked forward to and prepared for this opportunity to learn with you, I have come to better understand the strong feelings of Jacob, the brother of Nephi. He said, “I this day am weighed down with much ... desire and anxiety for the welfare of your souls” (Jacob 2:3). The message I want to share with you today has over time distilled upon my soul “as the dews from heaven” (D&C 121:45). I invite your earnest attention to a serious subject that has both immediate and eternal implications. I pray for the Holy Ghost to be with and teach each of us during our time together.
  - I long have been impressed with the simple and clear definition of truth set forth in the Book of Mormon: “The Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be; wherefore, these things are manifested unto us plainly, for the salvation of our souls” (Jacob 4:13; see also D&C 93:24).
  - Tonight we will focus upon the first major element of truth identified in this verse: “things as they really are.” We first will review several key elements of our Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness as the doctrinal foundation for knowing and understanding things as they really are. We then will consider methods of attack used by the adversary to distract us from or inhibit our capacity to discern things as they really are. And finally, we will discuss the responsibilities that rest upon you as the rising generation. You will need to be obedient, to honor sacred covenants, and to discern things consistently as they really are in today’s world that grows ever more confused and wicked.
- Our Divine Destiny**
- In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles declare that as spirit sons and daughters of God we “accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize [our] divine destiny as heirs of eternal life” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102; or *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49). Please note the primary importance of obtaining a physical body in the process of progressing toward our divine destiny.
  - The Prophet Joseph Smith taught with clarity the importance of our physical bodies:
  - “We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man, and when cast out by the Savior he asked to go into the herd of swine, showing that he would prefer a swine’s body to having none. All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. The devil has no power over us only as we permit him; the moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power.”<sup>1</sup>
  - Our physical bodies make possible a breadth, a depth, and an intensity of experience that simply could not be obtained in our premortal estate. President Boyd K. Packer has taught, “Our spirit and our body are combined in such a way that our body becomes an instrument of our mind and the foundation of our character.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, our relationships with other people, our capacity to recognize and act in accordance with truth, and our ability to obey the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ are amplified through our physical bodies.
  - In the classroom of mortality, we experience tenderness, love, kindness, happiness, sorrow, disappointment, pain, and even the challenges of physical limitations in ways that prepare us for eternity. Simply stated, there are lessons we must learn and experiences we must have, as the scriptures describe, “according to the flesh” (see 1 Nephi 19:6; Alma 7:12–13).
  - Apostles and prophets consistently have taught the mortal and eternal importance of our bodies. Paul declared:
  - “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”
  - “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

12. And in this dispensation the Lord revealed that “the spirit and the body are the soul of man” (D&C 88:15). A truth that really is and always will be is that the body and the spirit constitute our reality and identity. When body and spirit are inseparably connected, we can receive a fulness of joy; when they are separated, we cannot receive a fulness of joy (see D&C 93:33–34).
13. The Father’s plan is designed to provide direction for His children, to help them become happy, and to bring them safely home to Him with resurrected, exalted bodies. Lucifer labors to make the sons and daughters of God confused and unhappy and to hinder their eternal progression. The overarching intent of the father of lies is that all of us would become “miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27), and he works to distort the elements of the Father’s plan he hates the most.
14. Satan does not have a body, and his eternal progress has been halted. Just as water flowing in a riverbed is stopped by a dam, so the adversary’s eternal progress is thwarted because he does not have a physical body. Because of his rebellion, Lucifer has denied himself all of the mortal blessings and experiences made possible through a tabernacle of flesh and bones. He cannot learn the lessons that only an embodied spirit can learn. He cannot marry or enjoy the blessings of procreation and family life. He cannot abide the reality of a literal and universal resurrection of all mankind. One of the potent scriptural meanings of the word damned is illustrated in his inability to continue developing and becoming like our Heavenly Father.
15. Because a physical body is so central to the Father’s plan of happiness and our spiritual development, we should not be surprised that Lucifer seeks to frustrate our progression by tempting us to use our bodies improperly. One of the ultimate ironies of eternity is that the adversary, who is miserable precisely because he has no physical body, invites and entices us to share in his misery through the improper use of our bodies. The very tool he does not have and cannot use is thus the primary target of his attempts to lure us to physical and spiritual destruction.
16. The adversary attempts to influence us both to misuse our physical bodies and to minimize the importance of our bodies. These two methods of attack are important for us to recognize and to repel.
17. When any of Heavenly Father’s children misuse their physical tabernacles by violating the law of chastity, by using drugs and addictive substances, by disfiguring or defacing themselves, or by worshipping the false idol of body image, whether their own or that of others, Satan is delighted. To those of us who know and understand the plan of salvation, any defiling of the body is rebellion (see Mosiah 2:36–37; D&C 64:34–35) and a denial of our true identity as sons and daughters of God.
18. Now brothers and sisters, I cannot tell you all the ways whereby you may misuse your bodies, “for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them” (Mosiah 4:29). You know what is right and what is wrong, and you have the individual responsibility to learn for yourself “by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118) the things you should and should not do and the doctrinal reasons why you should and should not do those things. I testify that as you desire to so learn, as you “watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives” (Mosiah 4:30), you will be spiritually enlightened and protected. And according to your faithfulness and diligence, you will have the power to discern the deception and repel the attacks of the adversary as he tempts you to misuse your physical body.
19. Satan also strives to entice the sons and daughters of God to minimize the importance of their physical bodies. This particular type of attack is most subtle and diabolical. I want to provide several examples of how the adversary can pacify and lull us away into a sense of carnal security (see 2 Nephi 28:21) and encourage us to put at risk the earthly learning experiences that caused us to shout for joy (see Job 38:7) in the premortal existence.
20. For example, all of us can find enjoyment in a wide range of wholesome, entertaining, and engaging activities. But we diminish the importance of our bodies and jeopardize our physical well-being by going to unusual and dangerous extremes searching for an ever greater and more exhilarating adrenaline “rush.” We may rationalize that surely nothing is wrong with such seemingly innocent exploits and adventures. However, putting at risk the very instrument God has given us to receive the learning experiences of mortality—merely to pursue a thrill or some supposed fun, to bolster ego, or to gain acceptance—truly minimizes the importance of our physical bodies.
21. Sadly, some young men and women in the Church today ignore “things as they really are” and neglect eternal relationships for digital distractions, diversions, and detours that have no lasting value. My heart aches when a young couple—sealed together in the house of the Lord for time and for all eternity by the power of the holy priesthood—experiences marital difficulties because of the addicting effect of excessive video gaming or online socializing. A young man or woman may waste countless hours, postpone or forfeit vocational or academic achievement, and ultimately sacrifice cherished human relationships because of mind- and spirit-numbing video

and online games. As the Lord declared, “Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment . . . : Thou shalt not idle away thy time, neither shalt thou bury thy talent that it may not be known” (D&C 60:13).

22. You may now be asking yourself, “But Brother Bednar, you began today by talking about the importance of a physical body in our eternal progression. Are you suggesting that video gaming and various types of computer-mediated communication can play a role in minimizing the importance of our physical bodies?” That is precisely what I am declaring. Let me explain.
23. We live at a time when technology can be used to replicate reality, to augment reality, and to create virtual reality. For example, a medical doctor can use software simulation to gain valuable experience performing a complicated surgical operation without ever putting a human patient at risk. A pilot in a flight simulator repeatedly can practice emergency landing procedures that could save many lives. And architects and engineers can use innovative technologies to model sophisticated design and construction methods that decrease the loss of human life and damage to buildings caused by earthquakes and other natural disasters.
24. In each of these examples, a high degree of fidelity in the simulation or model contributes to the effectiveness of the experience. The term fidelity denotes the similarity between reality and a representation of reality. Such a simulation can be constructive if the fidelity is high and the purposes are good—for example, providing experience that saves lives or improves the quality of life.
25. The image shown below is a computer-generated rendering of a sealing room in the Newport Beach California Temple.



26. This and similar images are used as part of the planning and design process for each new temple that is constructed. The rendering portrays fabrics, furnishings, fixtures, lighting, scale, and proportion to show how each component will look and feel when finished. In essence, the entire temple and all of its elements are designed in detail before construction ever begins.

27. This picture is an actual photograph of the sealing room in the Newport Beach California Temple.



28. Please notice the fidelity between the representation of reality in the rendering (first image) and the reality of the completed room in this photograph.
29. This next image is a computer-generated rendering of a lobby area in the Copenhagen Denmark Temple.



30. The following photo shows the actual lobby in the Copenhagen Denmark Temple.



31. In each of these examples, high fidelity is employed to accomplish a most important purpose—the design and

construction of a sacred and beautiful temple. However, a simulation or model can lead to spiritual impairment and danger if the fidelity is high and the purposes are bad—such as experimenting with actions contrary to God’s commandments or enticing us to think or do things we would not otherwise think or do “because it is only a game.”

32. Today I raise an apostolic voice of warning about the potentially stifling, suffocating, suppressing, and constraining impact of some kinds of cyberspace interactions and experiences upon our souls. The concerns I raise are not new; they apply equally to other types of media, such as television, movies, and music. But in a cyber world, these challenges are more pervasive and intense. I plead with you to beware of the sense-dulling and spiritually destructive influence of cyberspace technologies that are used to produce high fidelity and that promote degrading and evil purposes.
33. If the adversary cannot entice us to misuse our physical bodies, then one of his most potent tactics is to beguile you and me as embodied spirits to disconnect gradually and physically from things as they really are. In essence, he encourages us to think and act as if we were in our premortal, unembodied state. And, if we let him, he can cunningly employ some aspects of modern technology to accomplish his purposes. Please be careful of becoming so immersed and engrossed in pixels, texting, ear buds, twittering, online social networking, and potentially addictive uses of media and the Internet that you fail to recognize the importance of your physical body and miss the richness of person-to-person communication. Beware of digital displays and data in many forms of computer-mediated interaction that can displace the full range of physical capacity and experience....
34. In contrast, we need to heed the admonition of Paul: “That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour” (1 Thessalonians 4:4).
35. Consider again the example I mentioned earlier of a young couple recently married in the house of the Lord. An immature or misguided spouse may devote an inordinate amount of time to playing video games, chatting online, or in other ways allowing the digital to dominate things as they really are. Initially the investment of time may seem relatively harmless, rationalized as a few minutes of needed relief from the demands of a hectic daily schedule. But important opportunities are missed for developing and improving interpersonal skills, for laughing and crying together, and for creating a rich and enduring bond of emotional intimacy. Progressively, seemingly innocent entertainment can become a form of pernicious enslavement.
36. To feel the warmth of a tender hug from an eternal companion or to see the sincerity in the eyes of another person as testimony is shared—all of these things experienced as they really are through the instrument of our physical body—could be sacrificed for a high fidelity fantasy that has no lasting value. If you and I are not vigilant, we can become “past feeling” (1 Nephi 17:45), as did Laman and Lemuel long ago.
37. Let me provide another example of disconnecting gradually and physically from things as they really are. Today a person can enter into a virtual world, such as Second Life, and assume a new identity. An individual can create an avatar, or a cyberspace persona, that conforms to his or her own appearance and behavior. Or a person can concoct a counterfeit identity that does not correlate in any way to things as they really are. However closely the assumed new identity approximates the individual, such behavior is the essence of things as they really are not. Earlier I defined the fidelity of a simulation or model.
38. I now emphasize the importance of personal fidelity...
39. Brothers and sisters, please understand. I am not suggesting all technology is inherently bad; it is not. Nor am I saying we should not use its many capabilities in appropriate ways to learn, to communicate, to lift and brighten lives, and to build and strengthen the Church; of course we should. But I am raising a warning voice that we should not squander and damage authentic relationships by obsessing over contrived ones. “Nearly 40% of men and 53% of women who play online games said their virtual friends were equal to or better than their real-life friends, according to a survey of 30,000 gamers conducted by ... a recent Ph.D. graduate from Stanford University. More than a quarter of gamers [who responded indicated that] the emotional highlight of the past week occurred in a computer world.”<sup>5</sup>
40. How important, how enduring, and how timely is the Lord’s definition of truth— “things as they really are.” The prophet Alma asked, “O then, is not this real?” (Alma 32:35). He was speaking of light and good so discernible they can be tasted. Indeed, “they who dwell in [the Father’s] presence ... see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fulness and of his grace” (D&C 76:94).
41. My beloved brothers and sisters, beware! To the extent personal fidelity decreases in computer-mediated communications and the purposes of such communications are distorted, perverted, and wicked, the potential for spiritual disaster is dangerously high. I implore you to turn away immediately and permanently

from such places and activities (see 2 Timothy 3:5).

42. Now I would like to address an additional characteristic of the adversary's attacks. Satan often offers an alluring illusion of anonymity. Lucifer always has sought to accomplish his work in secret (see Moses 5:30). Remember, however, that apostasy is not anonymous simply because it occurs in a blog or through a fabricated identity in a chat room or virtual world. Immoral thoughts, words, and deeds always are immoral, even in cyberspace. Deceitful acts supposedly veiled in secrecy, such as illegally downloading music from the Internet or copying CDs or DVDs for distribution to friends and families, are nonetheless deceitful. We are all accountable to God, and ultimately we will be judged of Him according to our deeds and the desires of our hearts (see Alma 41:3). "For as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).
43. The Lord knows who we really are, what we really think, what we really do, and who we really are becoming. He has warned us that "the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow; for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed" (D&C 1:3).
44. I have raised a voice of warning about only a few of the spiritual hazards in our technologically oriented and rapidly changing world. Let me say again: neither technology nor rapid change in or of itself is good or evil; the real challenge is to understand both within the context of the eternal plan of happiness. Lucifer will encourage you to misuse and to minimize the importance of your physical body. He will attempt to substitute the monotony of virtual repetition for the infinite variety of God's creations and convince us we are merely mortal things to be acted upon instead of eternal souls blessed with moral agency to act for ourselves. Deviously, he entices embodied spirits to forfeit the blessings and learning experiences "according to the flesh" that are made possible through the Father's plan of happiness and the Atonement of His Only Begotten Son.
45. For your happiness and protection, I invite you to study more diligently the doctrine of the plan of salvation—and to prayerfully ponder the truths we have reviewed. I offer two questions for consideration in your personal pondering and prayerful studying:
46. 1. Does the use of various technologies and media invite or impede the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost in your life?
47. 2. Does the time you spend using various technologies and media enlarge or restrict your capacity to live, to love, and to serve in meaningful ways?
48. You will receive answers, inspiration, and instruction

from the Holy Ghost suited to your individual circumstances and needs. I repeat and affirm the teaching of the Prophet Joseph: "All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. The devil has no power over us only as we permit him."<sup>6</sup>

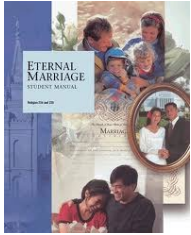
49. These eternal truths about the importance of our physical bodies will fortify you against the deception and the attacks of the adversary. One of my deepest desires for you is an ever-increasing testimony of and appreciation for the Resurrection—even your own resurrection with a celestial, exalted body "because of your faith in [the Lord Jesus Christ] according to the promise" (Moroni 7:41)....
50. As we heed that inspired counsel, we can and will be blessed to recognize and repel the attacks of the adversary—today and in the days that lie ahead. We can and will fulfill our foreordained responsibilities and contribute to the work of the Lord in all the world.
51. I testify that God lives and is our Heavenly Father. He is the Author of the plan of salvation. Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer, whose body was bruised, broken, and torn for us as He offered the atoning sacrifice. He is resurrected; He lives; and He stands at the head of His Church in these latter days. To be "encircled about eternally in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1:15) will be a real and not a virtual experience.
52. I testify we can and will be blessed with the courage and determination to face the world and all the powers of the evil one.
53. Righteousness will prevail. No unhallowed hand can stop this work from progressing. I bear witness and testify of these things as they really are and as they really will be in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

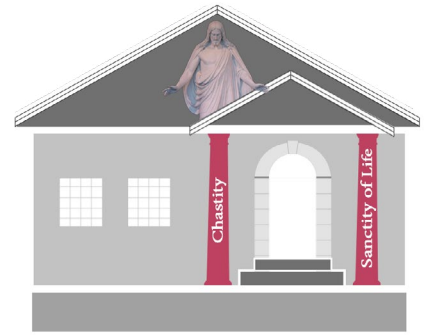
1. Quoted by William Clayton, reporting an undated discourse given by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois; in L. John Nuttall, "Extracts from William Clayton's Private Book," 7–8, Journals of L. John Nuttall, 1857–1904, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; copy in Church History Library; spelling and capitalization standardized; see also Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007), 211, 214.
  2. Boyd K. Packer, The Instrument of Your Mind and the Foundation of Your Character (Church Educational System fireside for young adults, Feb. 2, 2003), 2.
  3. Meghan Daum, "Virtual Love," The New Yorker, Aug. 25 and Sept. 1, 1997, 82; or Meghan Daum, My Misspent Youth (2001), 19.
  4. Alexandra Alter, "Is This Man Cheating on His Wife?" Wall Street Journal, Aug. 10, 2007, W8, W1.
  5. Alexandra Alter, Wall Street Journal, Aug. 10, 2007, W8.
  6. Quoted by William Clayton; in L. John Nuttall, "Extracts from William Clayton's Private Book," 8.
  7. George Q. Cannon, in Journal of Discourses, 11:230
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Things As They Really Are  
(QR Code)





## Statements on Intimacy in Marriage



### Selected Teachings

#### Related Scripture

##### 1 Corinthians 7:2–5

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

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

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

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

#### Physical Intimacy Ordained of God

##### President John Taylor

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

##### President Joseph F. Smith

“The lawful association of the sexes is ordained of God, not only as the sole means of race perpetuation, but for the development of the higher faculties and nobler traits of human nature, which the love-inspired companionship of man and woman alone can insure” (“Unchastity the Dominant Evil of the Age,” Improvement Era, June 1917)

##### President Spencer W. Kimball

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

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

##### Elder Parley P. Pratt

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

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

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

#### Physical Intimacy Only in Marriage

##### Elder Dallin H. Oaks

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

##### Elder Richard G. Scott

“Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage — I

mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another's body, with or without clothing — is a sin and is forbidden by God" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 51; or Ensign, Nov. 1994, 38).

### **Purposes of Intimacy**

#### **President Lorenzo Snow**

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

#### **President Spencer W. Kimball**

"Your love, like a flower, must be nourished. There will come a great love and interdependence between you, for your love is a divine one. It is deep, inclusive, comprehensive. It is not like that association of the world which is misnamed love, but which is mostly physical attraction. When marriage is based on this only, the parties soon tire of each other. There is a break and a divorce, and a new, fresher physical attraction comes with another marriage which in turn may last only until it, too, becomes stale. The love of which the Lord speaks is not only physical attraction, but spiritual attraction as well. It is faith and confidence in, and understanding of, one another. It is a total partnership. It is companionship with common ideals and standards. It is unselfishness toward and sacrifice for one another. It is cleanliness of thought and action and faith in God and his program. It is parenthood in mortality ever looking toward godhood and creationship, and parenthood of spirits. It is vast, all-inclusive, and limitless. This kind of love never tires or wanes. It lives on through sickness and sorrow, through prosperity and privation, through accomplishment and disappointment, through time and eternity" (Faith Precedes the Miracle, 130–31).

### **Misused Physical Intimacy**

#### **President David O. McKay**

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

#### **President Spencer W. Kimball**

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

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

#### **President Howard W. Hunter**

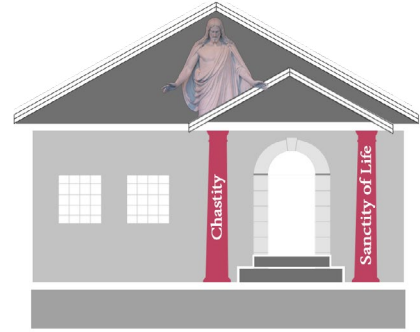
"Keep yourselves above any domineering or unworthy behavior in the tender, intimate relationship between husband and wife. Because marriage is ordained of God, the intimate relationship between husbands and wives is good and honorable in the eyes of God. He has commanded that they be one flesh and that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

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

#### **Elder Spencer W. Kimball**

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





# Statements on Birth Control

Handbook 2 & True to the Faith, 26

## **Handbook 2: Administering the Church, Section 21.4.4 Birth Control**

It is the privilege of married couples who are able to bear children to provide mortal bodies for the spirit children of God, whom they are then responsible to nurture and rear. The decision as to how many children to have and when to have them is extremely intimate and private and should be left between the couple and the Lord. Church members should not judge one another in this matter.

Married couples should also understand that sexual relations within marriage are divinely approved not only for the purpose of procreation, but also as a way of expressing love and strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife.

### **“Birth Control,” True to the Faith, (2004), 26**

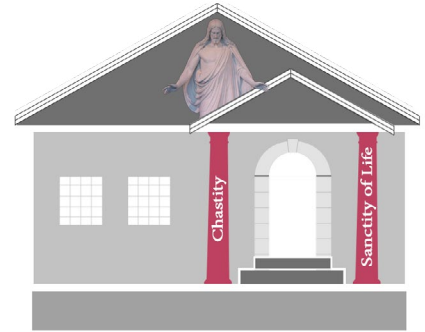
When married couples are physically able, they have the privilege of providing mortal bodies for Heavenly Father’s spirit children. They play a part in the great plan of happiness, which permits God’s children to receive physical bodies and experience mortality.

If you are married, you and your spouse should discuss your sacred responsibility to bring children into the world and nurture them in righteousness. As you do so, consider the sanctity and meaning of life. Ponder the joy that comes when children are in the home. Consider the eternal blessings that come from having a good posterity. With a testimony of these principles, you and your spouse will be prepared to prayerfully decide how many children to have and when to have them. Such decisions are between the two of you and the Lord.

As you discuss this sacred matter, remember that sexual relations within marriage are divinely approved. While one purpose of these relations is to provide physical bodies for God’s children, another purpose is to express love for one another—to bind husband and wife together in loyalty, fidelity, consideration, and common purpose.

# Unit 4 Additional Readings

Links and QR Codes



[Elder Boyd K. Packer, “The Fountain of Life”](#)



The Fountain of Life

[Sister Linda S. Reeves, “Protection from Pornography”](#)



Protection From Pornography

[Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “He Heals the Heavy Laden”](#)



He Heals the Heavy Laden





## FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY

### Unit 5 Scriptures

#### **D&C 93:36-40**

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

37 Light and truth forsake that evil one.

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

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

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

#### **D&C 50:23-26**

23 And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness.

24 That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

25 And again, verily I say unto you, and I say it that you may know the truth, that you may chase darkness from among you;

26 He that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all.

#### **D&C 68:25-31**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Alma 19:6**

6 Now, this was what Ammon desired, for he knew that king Lamoni was under the power of God; he knew that the dark veil of unbelief was being cast away from his mind, and the light which did light up his mind, which was the light of the glory of God, which was a marvelous light of his goodness—yea, this light had infused such joy into his soul, the cloud of darkness having been dispelled, and that the light of everlasting life was lit up in his soul, yea, he knew that this had overcome his natural frame, and he was carried away in God—

#### **Mosiah 4:14-15**

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

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

#### **D&C 93:41-50 – Set your houses in Order**

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

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

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

44 Verily, I say unto my servant Sidney Rigdon, that in some things he hath not kept the commandments concerning his children; therefore, first set in order thy house.

45 Verily, I say unto my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., or in other words, I will call you friends, for you are my friends, and ye shall have an inheritance with me—

46 I called you servants for the world's sake, and ye are their servants for my sake—

47 And now, verily I say unto Joseph Smith, Jun.—You have not kept the commandments, and must needs stand rebuked before the Lord;

48 Your family must needs repent and forsake some things, and give more earnest heed unto your sayings, or be removed out of their place.

49 What I say unto one I say unto all; pray always lest that wicked one have power in you, and remove you out of your place.

50 My servant Newel K. Whitney also, a bishop of my church, hath need to be chastened, and set in order his

family, and see that they are more diligent and concerned at home, and pray always, or they shall be removed out of their place.

# To the Mothers in Zion (Selected Teachings)

Elder Quentin L. Cook, General Conference April 2011  
President Gordon B. Hinckley General Conference October 1996  
President Ezra Taft Benson, Feb 22, 1987 Fireside Address  
President James E. Faust, Ensign May 1998



## **“LDS Women Are Incredible!” (excerpts)** **Elder Quentin L. Cook**

1. We recognize that there are enormous forces arrayed against women and families. Recent studies find there is deterioration in devotion to marriage, with a decrease in the number of adults being married.<sup>18</sup> For some, marriage and family are becoming “a menu choice rather than the central organizing principle of our society.”<sup>19</sup> Women are confronted with many options and need to prayerfully consider the choices they make and how those choices affect the family.
2. When I was in New Zealand last year, I read in an Auckland newspaper of women, not of our faith, struggling with these issues. One mother said she realized that in her case, her choice about whether to work or stay home was about a new carpet and a second car that she didn’t really need. Another woman, however, felt “the biggest enemy of a happy family life was not paid work—it was television.” She said that families are TV rich and family-time poor.<sup>20</sup>
3. These are very emotional, personal decisions, but there are two principles that we should always keep in mind. First, no woman should ever feel the need to apologize or feel that her contribution is less significant because she is devoting her primary efforts to raising and nurturing children. Nothing could be more significant in our Father in Heaven’s plan. Second, we should all be careful not to be judgmental or assume that sisters are less valiant if the decision is made to work outside the home. We rarely understand or fully appreciate people’s circumstances. Husbands and wives should prayerfully counsel together, understanding they are accountable to God for their decisions.

### Notes

18. See D’Vera Cohn and Richard Fry, “Women, Men, and the New Economics of Marriage,” Pew Research Center, Social and Demographic Trends, [pewsocialtrends.org](http://pewsocialtrends.org). The number of children being born has also decreased

significantly in many countries. This has been called the demographic winter.

19. “A Troubling Marriage Trend,” Deseret News, Nov. 22, 2010, A14, quoting a report on msnbc.com.

20. See Simon Collins, “Put Family before Moneymaking Is Message from Festival,” New Zealand Herald, Feb. 1, 2010, A2.



## **“Women of the Church” (excerpts)** **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

4. Some years ago President Benson delivered a message to the women of the Church. He encouraged them to leave their employment and give their individual time to their children. I sustain the position which he took.
5. Nevertheless, I recognize, as he recognized, that there are some women (it has become very many in fact) who have to work to provide for the needs of their families. To you I say, do the very best you can. I hope that if you are employed full-time you are doing it to ensure that basic needs are met and not simply to indulge a taste for an elaborate home, fancy cars, and other luxuries. The greatest job that any mother will ever do will be in nurturing, teaching, lifting, encouraging, and rearing her children in righteousness and truth. None other can adequately take her place.
6. It is well-nigh impossible to be a full-time homemaker and a full-time employee. I know how some of you struggle with decisions concerning this matter. I repeat, do the very best you can. You know your circumstances, and I know that you are deeply concerned for the welfare of your children....

To the mothers of this Church, every mother who is here today, I want to say that as the years pass, you will become increasingly grateful for that which you did in molding the lives of your children in the direction of righteousness and goodness, integrity and faith. That is most likely to happen if you can spend adequate time with them.



**To The Mothers In Zion**  
**President Ezra Taft Benson**

7. There is no theme I would rather speak to than home and family, for they are at the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church, in large part, exists for the salvation and exaltation of the family.
8. At a recent general priesthood meeting, I spoke directly to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood regarding their duties and responsibilities. Shortly thereafter, at a general women's conference, I spoke to the young women of the Church, discussing their opportunities and their sacred callings.
9. Tonight, at this fireside for parents, seeking the sweet inspiration of heaven, I would like to speak directly to the mothers assembled here and throughout the Church, for you are, or should be, the very heart and soul of the family.
10. No more sacred word exists in secular or holy writ than that of mother. There is no more noble work than that of a good and God-fearing mother. This evening I pay tribute to the mothers in Zion and pray with all my heart that what I have to say to you will be understood by the Spirit and will lift and bless your lives in your sacred callings as mothers.
11. President David O. McKay declared: "Motherhood is the greatest potential influence either for good or ill in human life. The mother's image is the first that stamps itself on the unwritten page of the young child's mind. It is her caress that first awakens a sense of security; her kiss, the first realization of affection; her sympathy and tenderness, the first assurance that there is love in the world."
12. President McKay continues: "Motherhood consists of three principal attributes or qualities: namely, (1) the power to bear, (2) the ability to rear, (3) the gift to love. . . ."
13. "This ability and willingness properly to rear children, the gift to love, and eagerness, yes, longing to express it in soul development, make motherhood the noblest office or calling in the world. She who can paint a masterpiece or write a book that will influence millions deserves the admiration and the plaudits of mankind; but she who rears successfully a family of healthy, beautiful sons and daughters, whose influence will be felt through generations to come, . . . deserves the highest honor that man can give, and the choicest blessings of God" (Gospel Ideals, 452–54). With all my heart I endorse the words of President McKay.
14. In the eternal family, God established that fathers are to preside in the home. Fathers are to provide, to love, to teach, and to direct.
15. But a mother's role is also God-ordained. Mothers are to conceive, to bear, to nourish, to love, and to train. So declare the revelations.
16. In section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord states that the opportunity and responsibility of wives is "to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfil the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified" ( D&C 132:63 ).
17. With this divine injunction, husbands and wives, as co-creators, should eagerly and prayerfully invite children into their homes. Then, as each child joins their family circle, they can gratefully exclaim, as did Hannah, "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord: as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord" ( 1 Samuel 1:27–28 ). Isn't that beautiful? A mother praying to bear a child and then giving him to the Lord.
18. I have always loved the words of Solomon: "Children are an heritage of the Lord: and...happy is the man [and woman] that hath [their] quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:3–5 ). I know the special blessings of a large and happy family, for my dear parents had a quiver full of children. Being the oldest of eleven children, I saw the principles of unselfishness, mutual consideration, loyalty to each other, and a host of other virtues developed in a large and wonderful family with my noble mother as the queen of that home.
19. Young mothers and fathers, with all my heart I counsel you not to postpone having your children, being co-creators with our Father in Heaven.
20. Do not use the reasoning of the world, such as, "We'll wait until we can better afford having children, until we are more secure, until John has completed his education, until he has a better-paying job, until we have a larger home, until we've obtained a few of the material conveniences," and on and on.
21. This is the reasoning of the world, and is not pleasing in the sight of God. Mothers who enjoy good health, have your children and have them early. And, husbands, always be considerate of your wives in the bearing of children.
22. Do not curtail the number of your children for personal or selfish reasons. Material possessions, social convenience, and so-called professional advantages are nothing compared to a righteous posterity. In the eternal perspective, children—not possessions, not position, not prestige—are our greatest jewels.
23. Brigham Young emphasized: "There are multitudes of



pure and holy spirits waiting to take tabernacles, now what is our duty?—To prepare tabernacles for them; to take a course that will not tend to drive those spirits into the families of the wicked, where they will be trained in wickedness, debauchery, and every species of crime. It is the duty of every righteous man and woman to prepare tabernacles for all the spirits they can” ( Discourses of Brigham Young, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954], p. 197).

24. Yes, blessed is the husband and wife who have a family of children. The deepest joys and blessings in life are associated with family, parenthood, and sacrifice. To have those sweet spirits come into the home is worth practically any sacrifice.
25. We realize that some women, through no fault of their own, are not able to bear children. To these lovely sisters, every prophet of God has promised that they will be blessed with children in the eternities and that posterity will not be denied them.
26. Through pure faith, pleading prayers, fasting, and special priesthood blessings, many of these same lovely sisters, with their noble companions at their sides, have had miracles take place in their lives and have been blessed with children. Others have prayerfully chosen to adopt children, and to these wonderful couples we salute you for the sacrifices and love you have given to those children you have chosen to be your own.
27. Now, my dear mothers, knowing of your divine role to bear and rear children and bring them back to Him, how will you accomplish this in the Lord’s way? I say the “Lord’s way,” because it is different from the world’s way.
28. The Lord clearly defined the roles of mothers and fathers in providing for and rearing a righteous posterity. In the beginning, Adam—not Eve—was instructed to earn the bread by the sweat of his brow. Contrary to conventional wisdom, a mother’s calling is in the home, not in the marketplace.
29. Again, in the Doctrine and Covenants, we read: “Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken” ( D&C 83:2 ). This is the divine right of a wife and mother. She cares for and nourishes her children at home. Her husband earns the living for the family, which makes this nourishing possible. With that claim on their husbands for their financial support, the counsel of the Church has always been for mothers to spend their full time in the home in rearing and caring for their children.
30. We realize also that some of our choice sisters are widowed and divorced and that others find themselves in unusual circumstances where, out of necessity, they are required to work for a period of time. But these instances are the exception, not the rule.
31. In a home where there is an able-bodied husband, he is expected to be the breadwinner. Sometimes we hear of husbands who, because of economic conditions, have lost their jobs and expect their wives to go out of the home and work even though the husband is still capable of providing for his family. In these cases, we urge the husband to do all in his power to allow his wife to remain in the home caring for the children while he continues to provide for his family the best he can, even though the job he is able to secure may not be ideal and family budgeting will have to be tighter.
32. Our beloved prophet Spencer W. Kimball had much to say about the role of mothers in the home and their callings and responsibilities. I am impressed tonight to share with you some of his inspired pronouncements. I fear that much of his counsel has gone unheeded, and families have suffered because of it. But I stand this evening as a second witness to the truthfulness of what President Spencer W. Kimball said. He spoke as a true prophet of God.
33. President Kimball declared: “Women are to take care of the family—the Lord has so stated—to be an assistant to the husband, to work with him, but not to earn the living, except in unusual circumstances. Men ought to be men indeed and earn the living under normal circumstances” ( The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, . . . p. 318).
34. President Kimball continues: “Too many mothers work away from home to furnish sweaters and music lessons and trips and fun for their children. Too many women spend their time in socializing, in politicking, in public services when they should be home to teach and train and receive and love their children into security” ( The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p. 319).
35. Remember the counsel of President Kimball to John and Mary: “Mary, you are to become a career woman in the greatest career on earth—that of homemaker, wife, and mother. It was never intended by the Lord that married women should compete with men in employment. They have a far greater and more important service to render” (Faith Precedes the Miracle, p. 128).
36. Again President Kimball speaks: “The husband is expected to support his family and only in an emergency should a wife secure outside employment. Her place is in the home, to build the home into a heaven of delight. Numerous divorces can be traced directly to the day when the wife left the home and went out into the world into employment. Two incomes raise the standard of living beyond its norm. Two spouses working prevent the complete and proper home life, break into the family prayers, create an independence which is not cooperative, causes distortion, limits the family, and frustrates the children already born” (fireside address, San Antonio, Texas, 3 Dec. 1977).
37. Finally, President Kimball counsels: “I beg of you, you who could and should be bearing and rearing a family: wives, come home from the typewriter, the

- laundry, the nursing, come home from the factory, the café. No career approaches in importance that of wife, homemaker, mother—cooking meals, washing dishes, making beds for one’s precious husband and children. Come home, wives, to your husbands. Make home a heaven for them. Come home, wives, to your children, born and unborn. Wrap the motherly cloak about you and, unembarrassed, help in a major role to create the bodies for the immortal souls who anxiously await.
38. “When you have fully complemented your husband in home life and borne the children, growing up full of faith, integrity, responsibility, and goodness, then you have achieved your accomplishment supreme, without peer, and you will be the envy [of all] through time and eternity” (fireside address, San Antonio, Texas).
39. President Kimball spoke the truth. His words are prophetic.
40. Mothers in Zion, your God-given roles are so vital to your own exaltation and to the salvation and exaltation of your family. A child needs a mother more than all the things money can buy. Spending time with your children is the greatest gift of all.
41. With love in my heart for the mothers in Zion, I would now like to suggest ten specific ways our mothers may spend effective time with their children.
42. *Be at the Crossroads*. First, take time to always be at the crossroads when your children are either coming or going—when they leave and return from school, when they leave and return from dates, when they bring friends home. Be there at the crossroads whether your children are six or sixteen. In Proverbs we read, “A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” ( Proverbs 29:15 ). Among the greatest concerns in our society are the millions of latchkey children who come home daily to empty houses, unsupervised by working parents.
43. *Be a Real Friend*. Second, mothers, take time to be a real friend to your children. Listen to your children, really listen. Talk with them, laugh and joke with them, sing with them, play with them, cry with them, hug them, honestly praise them. Yes, regularly spend unrushed one-on-one time with each child. Be a real friend to your children.
44. *Read to Your Children*. Third, mothers, take time to read to your children. Starting from the cradle, read to your sons and daughters. Remember what the poet said:
- You may have tangible wealth untold;  
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.  
Richer than I you can never be—  
I had a mother who read to me.
- (Strickland Gillilan, “The Reading Mother.”)
45. You will plant a love for good literature and a real love for the scriptures if you will read to your children regularly.
46. *Pray with Your Children*. Fourth, take time to pray with your children. Family prayers, under the direction of the father, should be held morning and night. Have your children feel of your faith as you call down the blessings of heaven upon them. Paraphrasing the words of James, “The . . . fervent prayer of a righteous [mother] availeth much” ( James 5:16 ). Have your children participate in family and personal prayers, and rejoice in their sweet utterances to their Father in Heaven.
47. *Have Weekly Home Evenings*. Fifth, take time to have a meaningful weekly home evening. With your husband presiding, participate in a spiritual and an uplifting home evening each week. Have your children actively involved. Teach them correct principles. Make this one of your great family traditions. Remember the marvelous promise made by President Joseph F. Smith when home evenings were first introduced to the Church: “If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influence and temptations which beset them” (James R. Clark, comp., Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 vols., 4:339). This wonderful promise is still in effect today.
48. *Be Together at Mealtimes*. Sixth, take time to be together at mealtimes as often as possible. This is a challenge as the children get older and lives get busier. But happy conversation, sharing of the day’s plans and activities, and special teaching moments occur at mealtime because mothers and fathers and children work at it.
49. *Read Scriptures Daily*. Seventh, take time daily to read the scriptures together as a family. Individual scripture reading is important, but family scripture reading is vital. Reading the Book of Mormon together as a family will especially bring increased spirituality into your home and will give both parents and children the power to resist temptation and to have the Holy Ghost as their constant companion. I promise you that the Book of Mormon will change the lives of your family.
50. *Do Things as a Family*. Eighth, take time to do things together as a family. Make family outings and picnics and birthday celebrations and trips special times and memory builders. Whenever possible, attend, as a family, events where one of the family members is involved, such as a school play, a ball game, a talk, a recital. Attend church meetings together and sit together as a family when you can. Mothers who help families pray and play together will stay together and will bless children’s lives forever.
51. *Teach Your Children*. Ninth, mothers, take time to teach your children. Catch the teaching moments. This can be done anytime during the day—at mealtime, in casual settings, or at special sit-down times together, at the foot of the bed at the end of the day, or during an early

- morning walk together. Mothers, you are your children's best teacher. Don't shift this precious responsibility to day-care centers or baby-sitters. A mother's love and prayerful concern for the children are her most important ingredients in teaching her own.
52. Teach children gospel principles. Teach them it pays to be good. Teach them there is no safety in sin. Teach them a love for the gospel of Jesus Christ and a testimony of its divinity.
  53. Teach your sons and daughters modesty, and teach them to respect manhood and womanhood. Teach your children sexual purity, proper dating standards, temple marriage, missionary service, and the importance of accepting and magnifying Church callings. Teach them a love for work and the value of a good education.
  54. Teach them the importance of the right kind of entertainment, including appropriate movies and videos and music and books and magazines. Discuss the evils of pornography and drugs, and teach them the value of living the clean life.
  55. Yes, mothers, teach your children the gospel in your own home, at your own fireside. This is the most effective teaching that your children will ever receive. This is the Lord's way of teaching. The Church cannot teach like you can. The school cannot. The day-care center cannot. But you can, and the Lord will sustain you. Your children will remember your teachings forever, and when they are old, they will not depart from them. They will call you blessed—their truly angel mother.
  56. Mothers, this kind of heavenly, motherly teaching takes time—lots of time. It cannot be done effectively part-time. It must be done all the time in order to save and exalt your children. This is your divine calling.
  57. *Truly Love Your Children.* Tenth and finally, mothers, take the time to truly love your children. A mother's unqualified love approaches Christlike love.
  58. Here is a beautiful tribute by a son to his mother: "I don't remember much about her views of voting nor her social prestige; and what her ideas on child training, diet, and eugenics were, I cannot recall. The main thing that sifts back to me now through the thick undergrowth of years is that she loved me. She liked to lie on the grass with me and tell stories, or to run and hide with us children. She was always hugging me. And I liked it. She had a sunny face. To me it was like God, and all the beatitudes saints tell of Him. And Sing! Of all the sensations pleasurable to my life nothing can compare with the rapture of crawling up into her lap and going to sleep while she swung to and fro in her rocking chair and sang. Thinking of this, I wonder if the woman of today, with all her tremendous notions and plans, realizes what an almighty factor she is in shaping of her child for weal or woe. I wonder if she realizes how much sheer love and attention count for in a child's life."
  59. Mothers, your teenage children also need that same kind of love and attention. It seems easier for many mothers and fathers to express and show their love to their children when they are young, but more difficult when they are older. Work at this prayerfully. There need be no generation gap. And the key is love. Our young people need love and attention, not indulgence. They need empathy and understanding, not indifference from mothers and fathers. They need the parents' time. A mother's kindly teachings and her love for and confidence in a teenage son or daughter can literally save them from a wicked world.
  60. Now God bless our wonderful mothers. We pray for you. We sustain you. We honor you as you bear, nourish, train, teach, and love for eternity. I promise you the blessings of heaven and "all that [the] Father hath" (see D&C 84:38 ) as you magnify the noblest calling of all—a mother in Zion. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



**"How Near To The Angels"**

**President James E. Faust**

61. Women today are encouraged by some to have it all: money, travel, marriage, motherhood, and separate careers in the world. For women, the important ingredients for happiness are to forge an identity, serve the Lord, get an education, develop your talents, serve your family, and if possible to have a family of your own.
62. However, you cannot do all these things well at the same time.... You cannot be a 100-percent wife, a 100-percent mother, a 100-percent Church worker, a 100-percent career person, and a 100-percent public-service person at the same time.
63. How can all of these roles be coordinated? I suggest that you can have it sequentially. Sequentially [means] to do things one at a time at different times.... Fortunately, most women do not have to track a career like a man does. They may fit more than one interest into the various seasons of life.





## To The Fathers In Israel

President Ezra Taft Benson  
General Conference, October 1987



1. My dear brethren, I am grateful to be here with you in this glorious assembly of the priesthood of God. I pray that the Spirit of the Lord will be with me and with you as I address you on a most vital subject. This evening I would like to speak to the fathers assembled here and throughout the Church about their sacred callings.

2. I hope you young men will also listen carefully, inasmuch as you are now preparing to become the future fathers of the Church.

3. Fathers, yours is an eternal calling from which you are never released. Callings in the Church, as important as they are, by their very nature are only for a period of time, and then an appropriate release takes place. But a father's calling is eternal, and its importance transcends time. It is a calling for both time and eternity.

4. President Harold B. Lee truly stated that "the most important of the Lord's work that you [fathers] will ever do will be the work you do within the walls of your own home. Home teaching, bishopric's work, and other Church duties are all important, but the most important work is within the walls of your home" (Strengthening the Home, pamphlet, 1973, p. 7).

5. What, then, is a father's specific responsibility within the sacred walls of his home? May I suggest two basic responsibilities of every father in Israel.

6. First, you have a sacred responsibility to provide for the material needs of your family.

7. The Lord clearly defined the roles of providing for and rearing a righteous posterity. In the beginning, Adam, not Eve, was instructed to earn the bread by the sweat of his brow.

8. The Apostle Paul counsels husbands and fathers, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8).

9. Early in the history of the restored Church, the Lord specifically charged men with the obligation to provide for

their wives and family. In January of 1832 He said, "Verily I say unto you, that every man who is obliged to provide for his own family, let him provide, and he shall in nowise lose his crown" (D&C 75:28). Three months later the Lord said again, "Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken" (D&C 83:2). This is the divine right of a wife and mother. While she cares for and nourishes her children at home, her husband earns the living for the family, which makes this nourishing possible.

10. In a home where there is an able-bodied husband, he is expected to be the breadwinner. Sometimes we hear of husbands who, because of economic conditions, have lost their jobs and expect the wives to go out of the home and work, even though the husband is still capable of providing for his family. In these cases, we urge the husband to do all in his power to allow his wife to remain in the home caring for the children while he continues to provide for his family the best he can, even though the job he is able to secure may not be ideal and family budgeting may have to be tighter.

11. Also, the need for education or material things does not justify the postponing of children in order to keep the wife working as the breadwinner of the family.

12. I remember the counsel of our beloved prophet Spencer W. Kimball to married students. He said: "I have told tens of thousands of young folks that when they marry they should not wait for children until they have finished their schooling and financial desires. ... They should live together normally and let the children come. ..."

13. "I know of no scriptures," President Kimball continued, "where an authorization is given to young wives to withhold their families and go to work to put their husbands through school. There are thousands of husbands who have worked their own way through school and have reared families at the same time" ("Marriage Is Honorable," in Speeches of the Year, 1973, Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1974, p. 263).

14. Brethren of the priesthood, I continue to emphasize the importance of mothers staying home to nurture, care for, and train their children in the principles of righteousness.

15. As I travel throughout the Church, I feel that the great majority of Latter-day Saint mothers earnestly want to follow this counsel. But we know that sometimes the mother works outside of the home at the encouragement, or even insistence, of her husband. It is he who wants the items of convenience that the extra income can buy. Not only will the family suffer in such instances, brethren, but your own spiritual growth and progression will be hampered. I say to all of you, the Lord has charged men with the responsibility to provide for their families in such a way that the wife is allowed to fulfill her role as mother in the home.

16. Fathers, another vital aspect of providing for the material needs of your family is the provision you should be making for your family in case of an emergency. Family preparedness has been a long-established welfare principle. It is even more urgent today.

17. I ask you earnestly, have you provided for your family a year's supply of food, clothing, and, where possible, fuel? The revelation to produce and store food may be as essential to our temporal welfare today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah.

18. Also, are you living within your income and saving a little?

19. Are you honest with the Lord in the payment of your tithes? Living this divine law will bring both spiritual and material blessings.

20. Yes, brethren, as fathers in Israel you have a great responsibility to provide for the material needs of your family and to have the necessary provisions in case of emergency.

21. Second, you have a sacred responsibility to provide spiritual leadership in your family.

22. In a pamphlet published some years ago by the Council of the Twelve, we said the following: "Fatherhood is leadership, the most important kind of leadership. It has always been so; it always will be so. Father, with the assistance and counsel and encouragement of your eternal companion, you preside in the home" (Father, Consider Your Ways, pamphlet, 1973, pp. 4–5).

23. However, along with that presiding position come important obligations. We sometimes hear accounts of men, even in the Church, who think that being head of the home somehow puts them in a superior role and allows them to dictate and make demands upon their family.

24. The Apostle Paul points out that "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Eph. 5:23; italics added). That is the model we are to follow in our role of presiding in the home. We do not find the

Savior leading the Church with a harsh or unkind hand. We do not find the Savior treating His Church with disrespect or neglect. We do not find the Savior using force or coercion to accomplish His purposes. Nowhere do we find the Savior doing anything but that which edifies, uplifts, comforts, and exalts the Church. Brethren, I say to you with all soberness, He is the model we must follow as we take the spiritual lead in our families.

25. Particularly is this true in your relationship with your wife.

26. Here again the counsel from the Apostle Paul is most beautiful and to the point. He said simply, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church" (Eph. 5:25).

27. In latter-day revelation the Lord speaks again of this obligation. He said, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22). To my knowledge there is only one other thing in all scripture that we are commanded to love with all our hearts, and that is God Himself. Think what that means!

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

29. What does it mean to love someone with all your heart? It means to love with all your emotional feelings and with all your devotion. Surely when you love your wife with all your heart, you cannot demean her, criticize her, find fault with her, or abuse her by words, sullen behavior, or actions.

30. 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.

31. Love means being sensitive to her feelings and needs. She wants to be noticed and treasured. She wants to be told that you view her as lovely and attractive and important to you. Love means putting her welfare and self-esteem as a high priority in your life.

32. You should be grateful that she is the mother of your children and the queen of your home, grateful that she has chosen homemaking and motherhood—to bear, to nourish, to love, and to train your children—as the noblest calling of all.

33. Husbands, recognize your wife's intelligence and her ability to counsel with you as a real partner regarding family plans, family activities, and family budgeting. Don't be stingy with your time or with your means.

34. Give her the opportunity to grow intellectually,

emotionally, and socially as well as spiritually.

35. 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.

36. This kind of loving priesthood leadership applies to your children as well as to your wife.

37. Mothers play an important role as the heart of the home, but this in no way lessens the equally important role fathers should play, as head of the home, in nurturing, training, and loving their children.

38. As the patriarch in your home, you have a serious responsibility to assume leadership in working with your children. You must help create a home where the Spirit of the Lord can abide. Your place is to give direction to all family life. You should take an active part in establishing family rules and discipline.

39. Your homes should be havens of peace and joy for your family. Surely no child should fear his own father—especially a priesthood father. A father’s duty is to make his home a place of happiness and joy. He cannot do this when there is bickering, quarreling, contention, or unrighteous behavior. The powerful effect of righteous fathers in setting an example, disciplining and training, nurturing and loving is vital to the spiritual welfare of his children.

40. With love in my heart for the fathers in Israel, may I suggest ten specific ways that fathers can give spiritual leadership to their children:

1. Give father’s blessings to your children. Baptize and confirm your children. Ordain your sons to the priesthood. These will become spiritual highlights in the lives of your children.
2. Personally direct family prayers, daily scripture reading, and weekly family home evenings. Your personal involvement will show your children how important these activities really are.
3. Whenever possible, attend Church meetings together as a family. Family worship under your leadership is vital to your children’s spiritual welfare.
4. Go on daddy-daughter dates and father-and-sons’ outings with your children. As a family, go on campouts and picnics, to ball games and recitals, to school programs, and so forth. Having Dad there makes all the difference.

5. Build traditions of family vacations and trips and outings. These memories will never be forgotten by your children.

6. Have regular one-on-one visits with your children. Let them talk about what they would like to. Teach them gospel principles. Teach them true values. Tell them you love them. Personal time with your children tells them where Dad puts his priorities.

7. Teach your children to work, and show them the value of working toward a worthy goal. Establishing mission funds and education funds for your children shows them what Dad considers to be important.

8. Encourage good music and art and literature in your homes. Homes that have a spirit of refinement and beauty will bless the lives of your children forever.

9. As distances allow, regularly attend the temple with your wife. Your children will then better understand the importance of temple marriage and temple vows and the eternal family unit.

10. Have your children see your joy and satisfaction in service to the Church. This can become contagious to them, so they, too, will want to serve in the Church and will love the kingdom.

41. Oh, husbands and fathers in Israel, you can do so much for the salvation and exaltation of your families! Your responsibilities are so important.

42. Remember your sacred calling as a father in Israel—your most important calling in time and eternity—a calling from which you will never be released.

43. May you always provide for the material needs of your family and, with your eternal companion at your side, may you fulfill your sacred responsibility to provide the spiritual leadership in your home.

44. To this end I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

To The Fathers In Israel  
(QR Code)





## Priesthood Authority in the Family and the Church

Elder Dallin H. Oaks  
General Conference, October 2005



### **My subject is priesthood authority in the family and in the Church.**

1. My father died when I was seven. I was the oldest of three small children our widowed mother struggled to raise. When I was ordained a deacon, she said how pleased she was to have a priesthood holder in the home. But Mother continued to direct the family, including calling on which one of us would pray when we knelt together each morning. I was puzzled. I had been taught that the priesthood presided in the family. There must be something I didn't know about how that principle worked.
2. About this same time, we had a neighbor who dominated and sometimes abused his wife. He roared like a lion, and she cowered like a lamb. When they walked to church, she always walked a few steps behind him. That made my mother mad. She was a strong woman who would not accept such domination, and she was angry to see another woman abused in that way. I think of her reaction whenever I see men misusing their authority to gratify their pride or exercise control or compulsion upon their wives in any degree of unrighteousness (see D&C 121:37).
3. I have also seen some faithful women who misunderstand how priesthood authority functions. Mindful of their partnership relationship with their husband in the family, some wives have sought to extend that relationship to their husband's priesthood calling, such as bishop or mission president. In contrast, some single women who have been abused by men (such as in a divorce) mistakenly confuse the priesthood with male abuse and become suspicious of any priesthood authority. A person who has had a bad experience with a particular electrical appliance should not forego using the power of electricity.
4. Each of the circumstances I have described results from misunderstanding priesthood authority and the great principle that while this authority presides in both the family and the Church, the priesthood functions in a different way in each of them. This principle is understood and applied by the great Church and family leaders I have known, but it is rarely explained. Even the scriptures, which record various exercises of priesthood authority, seldom state expressly which principles only apply to the exercise of priesthood authority in the family or in the Church or which apply in both of them.
5. In our theology and in our practice, the family and the Church have a mutually reinforcing relationship. The family is dependent upon the Church for doctrine, ordinances, and priesthood keys. The Church provides the teachings, authority, and ordinances necessary to perpetuate family relationships to the eternities.
6. We have programs and activities in both the family and the Church. Each is so interrelated that service to one is service to the other. When children see their parents faithfully perform Church callings, it strengthens their family relationships. When families are strong, the Church is strong. The two run in parallel. Each is important and necessary, and each must be conducted with careful concern for the other. Church programs and activities should not be so all-encompassing that families cannot have everyone present for family time. And family activities should not be scheduled in conflict with sacrament meeting or other vital Church meetings.
7. We need both Church activities and family activities. If all families were complete and perfect, the Church could sponsor fewer activities. But in a world where many of our youth grow up in homes where one parent is missing, not a member, or otherwise inactive in gospel leadership, there is a special need for Church activities to fill in the gaps. Our widowed mother wisely saw that Church activities would provide her sons with experiences she could not provide because we had no male role model in the home. I remember her urging me to watch and try to be like the good men in our ward. She pushed me to participate in Scouting and other Church activities that would provide this opportunity.
8. In a church where there are many single members, who do not presently have the companionship the Lord intends for all of his sons and daughters, the Church and its families should also have special concern for the needs of single adults.
9. Priesthood authority functions in both the family and the Church. The priesthood is the power of God used to bless all of His children, male and female. Some of



our abbreviated expressions, like “the women and the priesthood,” convey an erroneous idea. Men are not “the priesthood.” Priesthood meeting is a meeting of those who hold and exercise the priesthood. The blessings of the priesthood, such as baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, the temple endowment, and eternal marriage, are available to men and women alike. The authority of the priesthood functions in the family and in the Church, according to the principles the Lord has established.

10. When my father died, my mother presided over our family. She had no priesthood office, but as the surviving parent in her marriage she had become the governing officer in her family. At the same time, she was always totally respectful of the priesthood authority of our bishop and other Church leaders. She presided over her family, but they presided over the Church.
11. There are many similarities and some differences in the way priesthood authority functions in the family and in the Church. If we fail to recognize and honor the differences, we encounter difficulties.
12. Keys. One important difference between its function in the Church and in the family is the fact that all priesthood authority in the Church functions under the direction of the one who holds the appropriate priesthood keys. In contrast, the authority that presides in the family—whether father or single-parent mother—functions in family matters without the need to get authorization from anyone holding priesthood keys. This family authority includes directing the activities of the family, family meetings like family home evenings, family prayer, teaching the gospel, and counseling and disciplining family members. It also includes ordained fathers giving priesthood blessings.
13. However, priesthood keys are necessary to authorize the ordaining or setting apart of family members. This is because the organization the Lord has made responsible for the performance and recording of priesthood ordinances is the Church, not the family.
14. Boundaries. Church organizations like wards, quorums, or auxiliaries always have geographic boundaries that limit the responsibility and authority of the callings associated with them. In contrast, family relationships and responsibilities are not dependent upon where different family members reside.
15. Duration. Church callings are always temporary, but family relationships are permanent.
16. Call and release. Another contrast concerns the initiation and termination of positions. In the Church, a priesthood leader who holds the necessary keys has the authority to call or release persons serving under his direction. He can even cause that they lose their membership and have their names “blotted out” (see Mosiah 26:34–38; Alma 5:56–62). In contrast, family relationships are so important that the head of the family lacks the authority to make changes in family membership. That can only be done by someone authorized to adjust family relationships under the laws of man or the laws of God. Thus, while a bishop can release a Relief Society president, he cannot sever his relationship with his wife without a divorce under the laws of man. Again, his sealing for eternity cannot be ended without a cancellation procedure under the laws of God. Similarly, a youth serving in a class or quorum presidency can be released by priesthood authority in the ward, but parents cannot divorce a child whose life choices are offensive to them. Family relationships are more enduring than Church relationships.
17. Partnership. A most important difference in the functioning of priesthood authority in the family and in the Church results from the fact that the government of the family is patriarchal, whereas the government of the Church is hierarchical. The concept of partnership functions differently in the family than in the Church.
18. The family proclamation gives this beautiful explanation of the relationship between a husband and a wife: While they have separate responsibilities, “in these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Liahona, Oct. 2004, 49; Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102; emphasis added).
19. President Spencer W. Kimball said this: “When we speak of marriage as a partnership, let us speak of marriage as a full partnership. We do not want our LDS women to be silent partners or limited partners in that eternal assignment! Please be a contributing and full partner” (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 315).
20. President Kimball also declared, “We have heard of men who have said to their wives, ‘I hold the priesthood and you’ve got to do what I say.’” He decisively rejected that abuse of priesthood authority in a marriage, declaring that such a man “should not be honored in his priesthood” (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, 316).
21. There are cultures or traditions in some parts of the world that allow men to oppress women, but those abuses must not be carried into the families of the Church of Jesus Christ. Remember how Jesus taught: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, . . . but I say unto you . . .” (Matt. 5:27–28). For example, the Savior contradicted the prevailing culture in His considerate treatment of women. Our guide must be the gospel culture He taught.
22. If men desire the Lord’s blessings in their family leadership, they must exercise their priesthood authority according to the Lord’s principles for its use:
23. “No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by

long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge” (D&C 121:41–42).

24. When priesthood authority is exercised in that way in the patriarchal family, we achieve the “full partnership” President Kimball taught. As declared in the family proclamation:
25. “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, [and] compassion” (Liahona, Oct. 2004, 49; Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102).
26. Church callings are performed according to the principles that govern all of us in working under priesthood authority in the Church. These principles include the persuasion and gentleness taught in the 121st section, which are especially necessary in the hierarchal organization of the Church.
27. The principles I have identified for the exercise of priesthood authority are more understandable and more comfortable for a married woman than for a single woman, especially a single woman who has never been married. She does not now experience priesthood authority in the partnership relationship of marriage. Her experiences with priesthood authority are in the hierarchical relationships of the Church, and some single women feel they have no voice in those relationships. It is, therefore, imperative to have an effective ward council, where male and female ward officers sit down together regularly to counsel under the presiding authority of the bishop.
28. I conclude with some general comments and a personal experience.
29. The theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints centers on the family. Our relationship to God and the purpose of earth life are explained in terms of the family. We are the spirit children of heavenly parents. The gospel plan is implemented through earthly families, and our highest aspiration is to perpetuate those family relationships throughout eternity. The ultimate mission of our Savior’s Church is to help us achieve exaltation in the celestial kingdom, and that can only be accomplished in a family relationship.
30. No wonder our Church is known as a family-centered church. No wonder we are distressed at the current legal and cultural deteriorations in the position of marriage and childbearing. At a time when the world seems to be losing its understanding of the purpose of marriage and the value of childbearing, it is vital that Latter-day Saints have no confusion about these matters.
31. The faithful widowed mother who raised us had no confusion about the eternal nature of the family. She

always honored the position of our deceased father. She made him a presence in our home. She spoke of the eternal duration of their temple marriage. She often reminded us of what our father would like us to do so we could realize the Savior’s promise that we could be a family forever.

32. I recall an experience that shows the effect of her teachings. Just before Christmas one year, our bishop asked me, as a deacon, to help him deliver Christmas baskets to the widows of the ward. I carried a basket to each door with his greetings. When he drove me home, there was one basket remaining. He handed it to me and said it was for my mother. As he drove away, I stood in the falling snow wondering why there was a basket for my mother. She never referred to herself as a widow, and it had never occurred to me that she was. To a 12-year-old boy, she wasn’t a widow. She had a husband, and we had a father. He was just away for a while.
33. I anticipate that glorious future day when the separated will be reunited and all of us will be made complete as the Lord has promised. I testify of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father, whose priesthood authority and whose Atonement and Resurrection make it all possible, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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Priesthood Authority in the Family  
and the Church  
(QR Code)





## Keys and Authority of the Priesthood

Elder Dallin H. Oaks  
General Conference, April 2014



1. At this conference we have seen the release of some faithful brothers, and we have sustained the callings of others. In this rotation—so familiar in the Church—we do not “step down” when we are released, and we do not “step up” when we are called. There is no “up or down” in the service of the Lord. There is only “forward or backward,” and that difference depends on how we accept and act upon our releases and our callings. I once presided at the release of a young stake president who had given fine service for nine years and was now rejoicing in his release and in the new calling he and his wife had just received. They were called to be the nursery leaders in their ward. Only in this Church would that be seen as equally honorable!
2. While addressing a women’s conference, Relief Society general president Linda K. Burton said, “We hope to instill within each of us a greater desire to better understand the priesthood.”<sup>1</sup> That need applies to all of us, and I will pursue it by speaking of the keys and authority of the priesthood. Since these subjects are of equal concern to men and to women, I am pleased that these proceedings are broadcast and published for all members of the Church. Priesthood power blesses all of us. Priesthood keys direct women as well as men, and priesthood ordinances and priesthood authority pertain to women as well as men.
3. President Joseph F. Smith described the priesthood as “the power of God delegated to man by which man can act in the earth for the salvation of the human family.”<sup>2</sup> Other leaders have taught us that the priesthood “is the consummate power on this earth. It is the power by which the earth was created.”<sup>3</sup> The scriptures teach that “this same Priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also” (Moses 6:7). Thus, the priesthood is the power by which we will be resurrected and proceed to eternal life.
4. The understanding we seek begins with an understanding of the keys of the priesthood. “Priesthood keys are the authority God has given to priesthood [holders] to direct, control, and govern the use of His priesthood on earth.”<sup>4</sup> Every act or ordinance performed in the Church is done under the direct or indirect authorization of one holding the keys for that function. As Elder M. Russell Ballard has explained,
 

“Those who have priesthood keys ... literally make it possible for all who serve faithfully under their direction to exercise priesthood authority and have access to priesthood power.”<sup>5</sup>
5. In the controlling of the exercise of priesthood authority, the function of priesthood keys both enlarges and limits. It enlarges by making it possible for priesthood authority and blessings to be available for all of God’s children. It limits by directing who will be given the authority of the priesthood, who will hold its offices, and how its rights and powers will be conferred. For example, a person who holds the priesthood is not able to confer his office or authority on another unless authorized by one who holds the keys. Without that authorization, the ordination would be invalid. This explains why a priesthood holder—regardless of office—cannot ordain a member of his family or administer the sacrament in his own home without authorization from the one who holds the appropriate keys.
6. With the exception of the sacred work that sisters do in the temple under the keys held by the temple president, which I will describe hereafter, only one who holds a priesthood office can officiate in a priesthood ordinance. And all authorized priesthood ordinances are recorded on the records of the Church.
7. Ultimately, all keys of the priesthood are held by the Lord Jesus Christ, whose priesthood it is. He is the one who determines what keys are delegated to mortals and how those keys will be used. We are accustomed to thinking that all keys of the priesthood were conferred on Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple, but the scripture states that all that was conferred there were “the keys of this dispensation” (D&C 110:16). At general conference many years ago, President Spencer W. Kimball reminded us that there are other priesthood keys that have not been given to man on the earth, including the keys of creation and resurrection.<sup>6</sup>
8. The divine nature of the limitations put upon the exercise of priesthood keys explains an essential contrast between decisions on matters of Church administration and decisions affecting the priesthood. The First Presidency and the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, who preside over the Church,

are empowered to make many decisions affecting Church policies and procedures—matters such as the location of Church buildings and the ages for missionary service. But even though these presiding authorities hold and exercise all of the keys delegated to men in this dispensation, they are not free to alter the divinely decreed pattern that only men will hold offices in the priesthood.

9. I come now to the subject of priesthood authority. I begin with the three principles just discussed: (1) priesthood is the power of God delegated to man to act for the salvation of the human family, (2) priesthood authority is governed by priesthood holders who hold priesthood keys, and (3) since the scriptures state that “all other authorities [and] offices in the church are appendages to this [Melchizedek] priesthood” (D&C 107:5), all that is done under the direction of those priesthood keys is done with priesthood authority.
10. How does this apply to women? In an address to the Relief Society, President Joseph Fielding Smith, then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said this: “While the sisters have not been given the Priesthood, it has not been conferred upon them, that does not mean that the Lord has not given unto them authority. . . . A person may have authority given to him, or a sister to her, to do certain things in the Church that are binding and absolutely necessary for our salvation, such as the work that our sisters do in the House of the Lord. They have authority given unto them to do some great and wonderful things, sacred unto the Lord, and binding just as thoroughly as are the blessings that are given by the men who hold the Priesthood.”<sup>7</sup>
11. In that notable address, President Smith said again and again that women have been given authority. To the women he said, “You can speak with authority, because the Lord has placed authority upon you.” He also said that the Relief Society “[has] been given power and authority to do a great many things. The work which they do is done by divine authority.” And, of course, the Church work done by women or men, whether in the temple or in the wards or branches, is done under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys. Thus, speaking of the Relief Society, President Smith explained, “[The Lord] has given to them this great organization where they have authority to serve under the directions of the bishops of the wards . . . , looking after the interest of our people both spiritually and temporally.”<sup>8</sup>
12. Thus, it is truly said that Relief Society is not just a class for women but something they belong to—a divinely established appendage to the priesthood.<sup>9</sup>
13. We are not accustomed to speaking of women having the authority of the priesthood in their Church callings, but what other authority can it be? When a woman— young or old—is set apart to preach the gospel as a full-time missionary, she is given priesthood authority to perform a priesthood function. The same is true when a woman is set apart to function as an officer or teacher in a Church organization under the direction of one who holds the keys of the priesthood. Whoever functions in an office or calling received from one who holds priesthood keys exercises priesthood authority in performing her or his assigned duties.
14. Whoever exercises priesthood authority should forget about their rights and concentrate on their responsibilities. That is a principle needed in society at large. The famous Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is quoted as saying, “It is time . . . to defend not so much human rights as human obligations.”<sup>10</sup> Latter-day Saints surely recognize that qualifying for exaltation is not a matter of asserting rights but a matter of fulfilling responsibilities.
15. The Lord has directed that only men will be ordained to offices in the priesthood. But, as various Church leaders have emphasized, men are not “the priesthood.”<sup>11</sup> Men hold the priesthood, with a sacred duty to use it for the blessing of all of the children of God.
16. The greatest power God has given to His sons cannot be exercised without the companionship of one of His daughters, because only to His daughters has God given the power “to be a creator of bodies . . . so that God’s design and the Great Plan might meet fruition.”<sup>12</sup> Those are the words of President J. Reuben Clark.
17. He continued: “This is the place of our wives and of our mothers in the Eternal Plan. They are not bearers of the Priesthood; they are not charged with carrying out the duties and functions of the Priesthood; nor are they laden with its responsibilities; they are builders and organizers under its power, and partakers of its blessings, possessing the complement of the Priesthood powers and possessing a function as divinely called, as eternally important in its place as the Priesthood itself.”<sup>13</sup>
18. In those inspired words, President Clark was speaking of the family. As stated in the family proclamation, the father presides in the family and he and the mother have separate responsibilities, but they are “obligated to help one another as equal partners.”<sup>14</sup> Some years before the family proclamation, President Spencer W. Kimball gave this inspired explanation: “When we speak of marriage as a partnership, let us speak of marriage as a full partnership. We do not want our LDS women to be silent partners or limited partners in that eternal assignment! Please be a contributing and full partner.”<sup>15</sup>
19. In the eyes of God, whether in the Church or in the family, women and men are equal, with different responsibilities.
20. I close with some truths about the blessings of the priesthood. Unlike priesthood keys and priesthood

ordinations, the blessings of the priesthood are available to women and to men on the same terms. The gift of the Holy Ghost and the blessings of the temple are familiar illustrations of this truth.

21. In his insightful talk at BYU Education Week last summer, Elder M. Russell Ballard gave these teachings:
22. “Our Church doctrine places women equal to and yet different from men. God does not regard either gender as better or more important than the other. ...
23. “When men and women go to the temple, they are both endowed with the same power, which is priesthood power. ... Access to the power and the blessings of the priesthood is available to all of God’s children.”<sup>16</sup>
24. I testify of the power and blessings of the priesthood of God, available for His sons and daughters alike. I testify of the authority of the priesthood, which functions throughout all of the offices and activities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I testify of the divinely directed function of the keys of the priesthood, held and exercised in their fulness by our prophet/president, Thomas S. Monson. Finally and most important, I testify of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, whose priesthood this is and whose servants we are, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

women of the Church are “partners with the holders of the priesthood.”

12. J. Reuben Clark Jr., “Our Wives and Our Mothers in the Eternal Plan,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Dec. 1946, 800.
13. J. Reuben Clark Jr., “Our Wives and Our Mothers,” 801.
14. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
15. Spencer W. Kimball, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 106.
16. M. Russell Ballard, *New Era*, Apr. 2014, 4; *Liahona*, Apr. 2014, 48; see also Sheri L. Dew, *Women and the Priesthood* (2013), especially chapter 6, for a valuable elaboration of the doctrines stated here.

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## Notes

1. Linda K. Burton, “Priesthood: ‘A Sacred Trust to Be Used for the Benefit of Men, Women, and Children’” (Brigham Young University Women’s Conference address, May 3, 2013), 1; [ce.byu.edu/cw/womensconference/transcripts.php](http://ce.byu.edu/cw/womensconference/transcripts.php).
2. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 139.
3. Boyd K. Packer, “Priesthood Power in the Home” (worldwide leadership training meeting, Feb. 2012); [lds.org/broadcasts](http://lds.org/broadcasts); see also James E. Faust, “Power of the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 41–43.
4. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.1.1.
5. M. Russell Ballard, “Men and Women in the Work of the Lord,” *New Era*, Apr. 2014, 4; *Liahona*, Apr. 2014, 48; see also *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 138.
6. See Spencer W. Kimball, “Our Great Potential,” *Ensign*, May 1977, 49.
7. Joseph Fielding Smith, “Relief Society—an Aid to the Priesthood,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Jan. 1959, 4.
8. Joseph Fielding Smith, “Relief Society—an Aid to the Priesthood,” 4, 5; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Fielding Smith* (2013), 302.
9. See Boyd K. Packer, “The Relief Society,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 72; see also *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 138.
10. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, “A World Split Apart” (commencement address delivered at Harvard University, June 8, 1978); see also Patricia T. Holland, “A Woman’s Perspective on the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, July 1980, 25; Tambuli, June 1982, 23; Dallin H. Oaks, “Rights and Responsibilities,” *Mercer Law Review*, vol. 36, no. 2 (winter 1985), 427–42.
11. See James E. Faust, “You Are All Heaven Sent,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2002, 113; M. Russell Ballard, “This Is My Work and Glory,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 19; Dallin H. Oaks, “Priesthood Authority in the Family and the Church,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 26. We sometimes say that the Relief Society is a “partner with the priesthood.” It would be more accurate to say that in the work of the Lord the Relief Society and the

## Keys and Authority of the Priesthood (QR Code)





## Mothers Who Know

Sister Julie B. Beck

General Conference, October 2007



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

### Mothers Who Know Bear Children

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

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

### Mothers Who Know Honor Sacred Ordinances and Covenants

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

### Mothers Who Know Are Nurturers

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

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

### Mothers Who Know Are Leaders

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

### Mothers Who Know Are Teachers

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

### Mothers Who Know Do Less

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

### Mothers Who Know Stand Strong and Immovable

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

#### Notes

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





## Love and Law

Elder Dallin H. Oaks  
General Conference, October 2009



1. I have been impressed to speak about God’s love and God’s commandments. My message is that God’s universal and perfect love is shown in all the blessings of His gospel plan, including the fact that His choicest blessings are reserved for those who obey His laws.<sup>1</sup>These are eternal principles that should guide parents in their love and teaching of their children.
2. I begin with four examples which illustrate some mortal confusion between love and law.
3. A young adult in a cohabitation relationship tells grieving parents, “If you really loved me, you would accept me and my partner just like you accept your married children.”
4. A youth reacts to parental commands or pressure by declaring, “If you really loved me, you wouldn’t force me.”
5. In these examples a person violating commandments asserts that parental love should override the commandments of divine law and the teachings of parents.
6. The next two examples show mortal confusion about the effect of God’s love.
7. A person rejects the doctrine that a couple must be married for eternity to enjoy family relationships in the next life, declaring, “If God really loved us, I can’t believe He would separate husbands and wives in this way.”
8. Another person says his faith has been destroyed by the suffering God allows to be inflicted on a person or a race, concluding, “If there was a God who loved us, He wouldn’t let this happen.”
9. These persons disbelieve eternal laws which they consider contrary to their concept of the effect of God’s love. Persons who take this position do not understand the nature of God’s love or the purpose of His laws and commandments. The love of God does not supersede His laws and His commandments, and the effect of God’s laws and commandments does not diminish the purpose and effect of His love. The same should be true of parental love and rules.
10. First, consider the love of God, described so meaningfully this morning by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” the Apostle Paul asked. Not tribulation, not persecution, not peril or the sword (see Romans 8:35). “For I am persuaded,” he concluded, “that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God” (verses 38–39).
11. There is no greater evidence of the infinite power and perfection of God’s love than is declared by the Apostle John: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Another Apostle wrote that God “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all” (Romans 8:32). Think how it must have grieved our Heavenly Father to send His Son to endure incomprehensible suffering for our sins. That is the greatest evidence of His love for each of us!
12. God’s love for His children is an eternal reality, but why does He love us so much, and why do we desire that love? The answer is found in the relationship between God’s love and His laws.
13. Some seem to value God’s love because of their hope that His love is so great and so unconditional that it will mercifully excuse them from obeying His laws. In contrast, those who understand God’s plan for His children know that God’s laws are invariable, which is another great evidence of His love for His children. Mercy cannot rob justice,<sup>2</sup> and those who obtain mercy are “they who have kept the covenant and observed the commandment” (D&C 54:6).
14. We read again and again in the Bible and in modern scriptures of God’s anger with the wicked<sup>3</sup> and of His acting in His wrath<sup>4</sup> against those who violate His laws. How are anger and wrath evidence of His love? Joseph Smith taught that God “institute[d] laws whereby [the spirits that He would send into the world] could



have a privilege to advance like himself.”<sup>5</sup> God’s love is so perfect that He lovingly requires us to obey His commandments because He knows that only through obedience to His laws can we become perfect, as He is. For this reason, God’s anger and His wrath are not a contradiction of His love but an evidence of His love. Every parent knows that you can love a child totally and completely while still being creatively angry and disappointed at that child’s self-defeating behavior.

15. The love of God is so universal that His perfect plan bestows many gifts on all of His children, even those who disobey His laws. Mortality is one such gift, bestowed on all who qualified in the War in Heaven.<sup>6</sup> Another unconditional gift is the universal resurrection: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Many other mortal gifts are not tied to our personal obedience to law. As Jesus taught, our Heavenly Father “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45).
16. If only we will listen, we can know of God’s love and feel it, even when we are disobedient. A woman recently returned to Church activity gave this description in a sacrament meeting talk: “He has always been there for me, even when I rejected Him. He has always guided me and comforted me with His tender mercies all around me, but I [was] too angry to see and accept incidents and feelings as such.”<sup>7</sup>
17. God’s choicest blessings are clearly contingent upon obedience to God’s laws and commandments. The key teaching is from modern revelation:
18. “There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—
19. “And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:20–21).
20. This great principle helps us understand the why of many things, like justice and mercy balanced by the Atonement. It also explains why God will not forestall the exercise of agency by His children. Agency—our power to choose—is fundamental to the gospel plan that brings us to earth. God does not intervene to forestall the consequences of some persons’ choices in order to protect the well-being of other persons—even when they kill, injure, or oppress one another—for this would destroy His plan for our eternal progress.<sup>8</sup> He will bless us to endure the consequences of others’ choices, but He will not prevent those choices.<sup>9</sup>
21. If a person understands the teachings of Jesus, he or she cannot reasonably conclude that our loving Heavenly Father or His divine Son believes that Their love supersedes Their commandments. Consider these examples.
22. When Jesus began His ministry, His first message was repentance.<sup>10</sup>
23. When He exercised loving mercy by not condemning the woman taken in adultery, He nevertheless told her, “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11).
24. Jesus taught, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).
25. The effect of God’s commandments and laws is not changed to accommodate popular behavior or desires. If anyone thinks that godly or parental love for an individual grants the loved one license to disobey the law, he or she does not understand either love or law. The Lord declared: “That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willeth to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still” (D&C 88:35).
26. We read in modern revelation, “All kingdoms have a law given” (D&C 88:36). For example:
27. “He who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.
28. “And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory.
29. “And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory” (D&C 88:22–24).
30. In other words, the kingdom of glory to which the Final Judgment assigns us is not determined by love but by the law that God has invoked in His plan to qualify us for eternal life, “the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7).
31. In teaching and reacting to their children, parents have many opportunities to apply these principles. One such opportunity has to do with the gifts parents bestow on their children. Just as God has bestowed some gifts on all of His mortal children without requiring their personal obedience to His laws, parents provide many benefits like housing and food even if their children are not in total harmony with all parental requirements. But, following the example of an all-wise and loving Heavenly Father who has given laws and

commandments for the benefit of His children, wise parents condition some parental gifts on obedience.

32. If parents have a wayward child—such as a teenager indulging in alcohol or drugs—they face a serious question.
33. Does parental love require that these substances or their consumption be allowed in the home, or do the requirements of civil law or the seriousness of the conduct or the interests of other children in the home require that this be forbidden?
34. To pose an even more serious question, if an adult child is living in cohabitation, does the seriousness of sexual relations outside the bonds of marriage require that this child feel the full weight of family disapproval by being excluded from any family contacts, or does parental love require that the fact of cohabitation be ignored? I have seen both of these extremes, and I believe that both are inappropriate.
35. Where do parents draw the line? That is a matter for parental wisdom, guided by the inspiration of the Lord. There is no area of parental action that is more needful of heavenly guidance or more likely to receive it than the decisions of parents in raising their children and governing their families. This is the work of eternity.
36. As parents grapple with these problems, they should remember the Lord's teaching that we leave the ninety and nine and go out into the wilderness to rescue the lost sheep.<sup>11</sup> President Thomas S. Monson has called for a loving crusade to rescue our brothers and sisters who are wandering in the wilderness of apathy or ignorance.<sup>12</sup> These teachings require continued loving concern, which surely requires continued loving associations.
37. Parents should also remember the Lord's frequent teaching that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6).<sup>13</sup> In his conference talk on tolerance and love, Elder Russell M. Nelson taught that "real love for the sinner may compel courageous confrontation—not acquiescence! Real love does not support self-destructing behavior."<sup>14</sup>
38. Wherever the line is drawn between the power of love and the force of law, the breaking of commandments is certain to impact loving family relationships. Jesus taught:
39. "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:
40. "For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

41. "The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother" (Luke 12:51–53).
42. This sobering teaching reminds us that when family members are not united in striving to keep the commandments of God, there will be divisions. We do all that we can to avoid impairing loving relationships, but sometimes it happens after all we can do.
43. In the midst of such stress, we must endure the reality that the straying of our loved ones will detract from our happiness, but it should not detract from our love for one another or our patient efforts to be united in understanding God's love and God's laws.
44. I testify of the truth of these things, which are part of the plan of salvation and the doctrine of Christ, of whom I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. See Russell M. Nelson, "Divine Love," *Liahona*, Feb. 2003, 12; *Ensign*, Feb. 2003, 20.
2. See Alma 42:25.
3. See, for example, Judges 2:12–14; Psalm 7:11; D&C 5:8; 63:32.
4. See, for example, 2 Kings 23:26–27; Ephesians 5:6; 1 Nephi 22:16–17; Alma 12:35–36; D&C 84:24.
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007)*, 210.
6. See Revelation 12:7–8.
7. Letter of Dec. 6, 2005, in author's possession.
8. Compare Alma 42:8.
9. Compare Mosiah 24:14–15.
10. See Matthew 4:17.
11. See Luke 15:3–7.
12. See Thomas S. Monson, "Lost Battalions," *Liahona*, Sept. 1987, 3; *Ensign*, Apr. 1987, 3.
13. See also Proverbs 3:12; Revelation 3:19; D&C 95:1.
14. Russell M. Nelson, "Teach Us Tolerance and Love," *Ensign*, May 1994, 71.

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## Good, Better, Best

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



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

priorities through what they do with their children.

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

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

#### Notes

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

1999, 3.

7. "The Doctrinal Foundation of the Auxiliaries," Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, Jan. 10, 2004, 5, 7–8; see also *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 62, 67.
8. "O Be Wise," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 18–20.
9. "America the Beautiful," Hymns, no. 338.

Good, Better, Best  
(QR Code)



# Unit 5 Additional Readings

Links and QR Codes



[Elder Robert D. Hales, “Strengthening Families”](#)



Strengthening Families

[Elder David A Bednar, “More Diligent and Concerned at Home”](#)



More Diligent and Concerned at Home







## FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY

### Unit 6 Scriptures

#### **Alma 46:12**

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

#### **Ephesians 6:10-18 (12)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Romans 1:16**

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

#### **D&C 134:1-5**

1 We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society.

2 We believe that no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life.

3 We believe that all governments necessarily require civil officers and magistrates to enforce the laws of the same; and that such as will administer the law in equity and justice should be sought for and upheld by the voice of the people if a republic, or the will of the sovereign.

4 We believe that religion is instituted of God; and that men are amenable to him, and to him only, for the exercise of it, unless their religious opinions prompt them to infringe upon

the rights and liberties of others; but we do not believe that human law has a right to interfere in prescribing rules of worship to bind the consciences of men, nor dictate forms for public or private devotion; that the civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control conscience; should punish guilt, but never suppress the freedom of the soul.

5 We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights by the laws of such governments; and that sedition and rebellion are unbecoming every citizen thus protected, and should be punished accordingly; and that all governments have a right to enact such laws as in their own judgments are best calculated to secure the public interest; at the same time, however, holding sacred the freedom of conscience.

#### **D&C 101:44-64 – Watchman on the Tower**

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

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

46 Now, the servants of the nobleman went and did as their lord commanded them, and planted the olive trees, and built a hedge round about, and set watchmen, and began to build a tower.

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

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

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

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

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

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

53 Ought ye not to have done even as I commanded you, and—after ye had planted the vineyard, and built the hedge round about, and set watchmen upon the walls thereof—built the tower also, and set a watchman upon the tower, and

watched for my vineyard, and not have fallen asleep, lest the enemy should come upon you?

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

55 And the lord of the vineyard said unto one of his servants: Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house, save those only whom I have appointed to tarry;

56 And go ye straightway unto the land of my vineyard, and redeem my vineyard; for it is mine; I have bought it with money.

57 Therefore, get ye straightway unto my land; break down the walls of mine enemies; throw down their tower, and scatter their watchmen.

58 And inasmuch as they gather together against you, avenge me of mine enemies, that by and by I may come with the residue of mine house and possess the land.

59 And the servant said unto his lord: When shall these things be?

60 And he said unto his servant: When I will; go ye straightway, and do all things whatsoever I have commanded you;

61 And this shall be my seal and blessing upon you—a faithful and wise steward in the midst of mine house, a ruler in my kingdom.

62 And his servant went straightway, and did all things whatsoever his lord commanded him; and after many days all things were fulfilled.

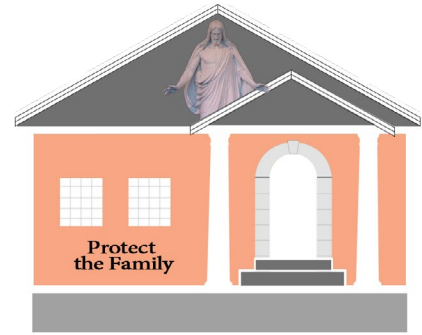
63 Again, verily I say unto you, I will show unto you wisdom in me concerning all the churches, inasmuch as they are willing to be guided in a right and proper way for their salvation—

64 That the work of the gathering together of my saints may continue, that I may build them up unto my name upon holy places; for the time of harvest is come, and my word must needs be fulfilled.



## Christian Courage: The Price of Discipleship

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



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

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

12. As we respond to others, each circumstance will be different. Fortunately, the Lord knows the hearts of our accusers and how we can most effectively respond to them. As true disciples seek guidance from the Spirit, they receive inspiration tailored to each encounter. And in every encounter, true disciples respond in ways that invite the Spirit of the Lord.
13. Paul reminded the Corinthians that his preaching was “not with the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4). Because that power resides in the Spirit of the Lord, we must never become contentious when we are discussing our faith. As almost every missionary learns, Bible bashing always drives the Spirit away. The Savior has said, “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me” (3 Nephi 11:29). More regrettable than the Church being accused of not being Christian is when Church members react to such accusations in an un-Christlike way! May our conversations with others always be marked by the fruits of the Spirit—“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23). To be meek, as defined in Webster’s dictionary, is “manifesting patience and longsuffering: enduring injury without resentment.”<sup>2</sup> Meekness is not weakness. It is a badge of Christian courage.
14. This is especially important in our interactions with members of other Christian denominations. Surely our Heavenly Father is saddened—and the devil laughs—when we contentiously debate doctrinal differences with our Christian neighbors.
15. This is not to suggest that we compromise our principles or dilute our beliefs. We cannot change the doctrines of the restored gospel, even if teaching and obeying them makes us unpopular in the eyes of the world. Yet even as we feel to speak the word of God with boldness, we must pray to be filled with the Holy Ghost (see Acts 4:29, 31). We should never confuse boldness with Satan’s counterfeit: overbearance (see Alma 38:12). True disciples speak with quiet confidence, not boastful pride.
16. As true disciples, our primary concern must be others’ welfare, not personal vindication. Questions and criticisms give us an opportunity to reach out to others and demonstrate that they matter to our Heavenly Father and to us. Our aim should be to help them understand the truth, not defend our egos or score points in a theological debate. Our heartfelt testimonies are the most powerful answer we can give our accusers. And such testimonies can only be borne in love and meekness. We should be like Edward Partridge, of whom the Lord said, “His heart is pure before me, for he is like unto Nathanael of old, in whom there is no guile” (D&C 41:11). To be guileless is to have a childlike innocence, to be slow to take offense and quick to forgive.
17. These qualities are first learned in the home and family and can be practiced in all our relationships. To be guileless is to look for our own fault first. When accused, we should ask as the Savior’s Apostles did, “Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26:22). If we listen to the answer given by the Spirit, we can, if needed, make corrections, apologize, seek forgiveness, and do better.
18. Without guile, true disciples avoid being unduly judgmental of others’ views. Many of us have cultivated strong friendships with those who are not members of our Church—schoolmates, colleagues at work, and friends and neighbors throughout the world. We need them, and they need us. As President Thomas S. Monson has taught, “Let us learn respect for others. . . . None of us lives alone—in our city, our nation, or our world.”<sup>3</sup>
19. As the Savior demonstrated with Herod, sometimes true disciples must show Christian courage by saying nothing at all. Once when I was golfing, I barely brushed up against a large cholla cactus, which seems to shoot needles like a porcupine. Thorns from that plant stuck all over my clothing, even though I had barely touched the cactus plant. Some situations are like that plant: they can only injure us. In such instances, we are better off to keep our distance and simply walk away. As we do, some may try to provoke us and engage us in argument. In the Book of Mormon, we read about Lehonti and his men camped upon a mount. The traitorous Amalickiah urged Lehonti to “come down” and meet him in the valley. But when Lehonti left the high ground, he was poisoned “by degrees” until he died, and his army fell into Amalickiah’s hands (see Alma 47). By arguments and accusations, some people bait us to leave the high ground. The high ground is where the light is. It’s where we see the first light of morning and the last light in the evening. It is the safe ground. It is true and where knowledge is. Sometimes others want us to come down off the high ground and join them in a theological scrum in the mud. These few contentious individuals are set on picking religious fights, online or in person. We are always better staying on the higher ground of mutual respect and love.

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

#### Notes

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

Christian Courage: The Price  
of Discipleship  
(QR Code)





## Defenders of the Family

### Proclamation

Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson

General Conference, April 2015



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



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

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

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

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

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

in Heavenly Father's plan.

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



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

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

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

#### Notes

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

2. 1 Corinthians 11:11.

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

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Defenders of the Family Proclamation  
(QR Code)







# Israel, Israel, God Is Calling

Elder Jeffery R. Holland  
CES Devotional, September 2012



1. Welcome to this devotional broadcast, wherever you are in this big, wide, wonderful Church. Thank you all for caring enough to be in attendance, including those of you who are here on the Dixie State College campus in my hometown.

## **There Have Been Many Calls to Leave Babylon**

2. To invite the Spirit of the Lord to be with us, I requested the hymn we began this meeting with: “Israel, Israel, God Is Calling.” It is one of the great classics of the Restoration and provides the framework for much of what I want to say to you tonight. We could have added “Ye Elders of Israel” for the same purpose. I love hearing the missionaries around the world cry out, “O Babylon, O Babylon, we bid thee farewell; we’re going to the mountains of Ephraim to dwell.”<sup>1</sup> The message of those two hymns is essentially the same—that God is always calling to the children of Israel to a place where, ultimately, all will be well.

Israel, Israel, God is calling,  
 Calling thee from lands of woe.  
 Babylon the great is falling;  
 God shall all her tow’rs oerthrow. ...  
 Come to Zion, come to Zion,  
 And within her walls rejoice. ...  
 Come to Zion, come to Zion!  
 Zion’s walls shall ring with praise.<sup>2</sup>

3. In effect, this has been Israel’s history down through the ages. When things got too sinful, or there was too much secularization in society, or life with the Gentiles was destroying the moral code and commandments God had given, the children of the covenant would be sent fleeing into the wilderness to reestablish Zion and start all over again.
4. In Old Testament times Abraham, the father of this kind of covenant, had to flee for his life from Chaldea—literally Babylonia—in his quest for a consecrated life in Canaan (what we would now call the Holy Land).<sup>3</sup> It wasn’t many generations before the descendants of Abraham (and then Isaac and Jacob)—by then

full-fledged Israelites—lost their Zion and were in bondage in far-off, pagan Egypt.<sup>4</sup> So Moses had to be raised up to lead the children of promise into the wilderness again—this time in the middle of the night, without even time for their bread dough to rise! “Israel, Israel, God is speaking,” they undoubtedly sang in their own way. “Hear your great Deliv’rer’s voice!”<sup>5</sup>

5. Not many centuries later, a story of special interest to us unfolded when one of those Israelite families, headed by a prophet named Lehi, was commanded to flee even beloved Jerusalem because, alas, Babylon was again at the door.<sup>6</sup> Here we go again! Little did they know that they were going to an entirely new continent to establish a whole new concept of Zion,<sup>7</sup> but so it would be. And little did they know that it had already happened just like this once before with a group of their forefathers called the Jaredites.<sup>8</sup>
6. As noted, this is a worldwide broadcast to an increasingly international Church, but it is of interest to all who celebrate the Restoration of the gospel that the colonization of America was born of a group fleeing from their former homelands in order to worship as they wished. A distinguished scholar of the Puritan settlement in America described this experience as Christianity’s “errand into the wilderness,” the effort of modern Israelites to free themselves of Old World godlessness and once again seek the ways of heaven in a new land.<sup>9</sup>
7. For tonight’s purpose I remind you of one last flight, the flight for which our hymn tonight was actually written. It was our own Church, led by our own prophets, leading our own religious ancestors. With Joseph Smith being hounded through the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Missouri, and finally being murdered in Illinois, we were to see the latter-day reenactment of Israel’s children again seeking for a place of seclusion. Brigham Young, the American Moses, as he has been admirably called, led the Saints to the valleys of the mountains as those foot-weary Saints sang:

We’ll find the place which God for us prepared,  
 Far away in the West,

Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid;  
There the Saints will be blessed.<sup>10</sup>

8. Zion. The promised land. The New Jerusalem. Where is it? Well, we are not sure, but we will find it. For more than 4,000 years of covenantal history, this has been the pattern: Flee and seek. Run and settle. Escape Babylon. Build Zion's protective walls.
9. Until now. Until tonight. Until this our day.

### **Our Call Is to Build Zion Where We Are**

10. One of the many unique characteristics of our dispensation, this the dispensation of the fulness of times—the last and greatest of all dispensations—is the changing nature of how we establish the kingdom of God on earth. You see, one of the truly exciting things about this dispensation is that it is a time of mighty, accelerated change. And one thing that has changed is that the Church of God will never again flee. It will never again leave Ur in order to leave Haran, in order to leave Canaan, in order to leave Jerusalem, in order to leave England, in order to leave Kirtland, in order to leave Nauvoo, in order to go who knows where. No, as Brigham Young said for us all, “We have been kicked out of the frying-pan into the fire, out of the fire into the middle of the floor, and here we are and here we will stay.”<sup>11</sup>
11. Of course, that statement wasn't a comment about the Salt Lake Valley only or even the Wasatch Front generally; it became a statement for the members of the Church all over the world. In these last days, in this our dispensation, we would become mature enough to stop running. We would become mature enough to plant our feet and our families and our foundations in every nation, kindred, tongue, and people permanently. Zion would be everywhere—wherever the Church is. And with that change—one of the mighty changes of the last days—we no longer think of Zion as where we are going to live; we think of it as how we are going to live.

### **Three Incidents That Lead to Three Lessons**

12. To frame this new task just a little, I wish to draw tonight upon three incidents Sister Holland and I have experienced within the fairly recent past. If time permitted I could cite dozens more, and so could you.
13. Number one: A few years ago a young friend of mine—a returned missionary—was on one of the college basketball teams in Utah. He was a great young man and a very good ballplayer, but he wasn't playing as much as he hoped he would. His particular talents and skills weren't exactly what that team needed at that stage of its development or his. That happens in athletics. So,

with the full support and best wishes of his coaches and his teammates, my young friend transferred to another school where he hoped he might contribute a little more.

14. As fate would have it, things clicked at the new school, and my friend soon became a starter. And wouldn't you know it—the schedule (determined years before these events transpired) had this young man returning to play against his former team in Salt Lake City's then-named Delta Center.
15. What happened in that game has bothered me to this day, and I am seizing this unusual moment to get it off my chest. The vitriolic abuse that poured out of the stands on this young man's head that night—a Latter-day Saint, returned missionary, newlywed who paid his tithing, served in the elder's quorum, gave charitable service to the youth in his community, and waited excitedly for a new baby coming to him and his wife—what was said and done and showered upon him that night, and on his wife and their families, should not have been experienced by any human being anywhere anytime, whatever his sport, whatever his university, or whatever his personal decisions had been about either of them.
16. But here is the worst part. The coach of this visiting team, something of a legend in the profession, turned to him after a spectacular game and said: “What is going on here? You are the hometown boy who has made good. These are your people. These are your friends.” But worst of all, he then said in total bewilderment, “Aren't most of these people members of your church?”
17. Incident number two: I was invited to speak in a stake single-adult devotional—one of those open-ended “18-and-over” sort of things. As I entered the rear door of the stake center, a 30-something young woman entered the building at about the same time. Even in the crush of people moving toward the chapel, it was hard not to notice her. As I recall, she had a couple of tattoos, a variety of ear and nose rings, spiky hair reflecting all the colors now available in snow cones, a skirt that was too high, and a blouse that was too low.
18. Three questions leapt to my mind: Was this woman a struggling soul, not of our faith, who had been led—or even better, had been brought by someone—to this devotional under the guidance of the Lord in an effort to help her find the peace and the direction of the gospel that she needed in her life? Another possibility: Was she a member who had strayed a bit maybe from some of the hopes and standards that the Church encourages for its members but who, thank heaven, was still affiliating and had chosen to attend this Church activity that night? Or a third option: Is this the stake Relief Society president? (Somehow I was sure she was not.)

19. Here is my third example: While participating in the dedication of the Kansas City Missouri Temple just a few months ago, Sister Holland and I were hosted by Brother Isaac Freestone, a police officer by profession and a wonderful high priest in the Liberty Missouri Stake. In our conversations he told us that late one evening he was called to investigate a complaint in a particularly rough part of the city. Over the roar of loud music and with the smell of marijuana in the air, he found one woman and several men drinking and profaning, all of them apparently totally oblivious of the five little children—aged about two through eight years of age—huddled together in one room, trying to sleep on a filthy floor with no bed, no mattress, no pillows, no anything. Brother Freestone looked in the kitchen cupboards and in the refrigerator to see if he could find a single can or carton or box of food of any kind—but he literally could find nothing. He said the dog barking in the backyard had more food than those children did.
20. In the mother’s bedroom he found a bare mattress, the only one in the house. He hunted until he found some sheets (if you could call them that), put them on the mattress, and tucked all five children into the makeshift bed. With tears in his eyes he then knelt down, offered a prayer to Heavenly Father for their protection, and said good night.
21. As he arose and walked toward the door, one of the children, about age six, jumped out of bed, ran to him, grabbed him by the hand, and pled, “Will you please adopt me?” With more tears in his eyes, he put the child back in bed, then found the stoned mother (the men had long since fled) and said to her: “I will be back tomorrow, and heaven help you if some changes are not evident by the time I walk in this door. And there will be more changes after that. You have my word on it.”<sup>12</sup>
22. What do these three incidents have in common? Not much really, except that they happened to Sister Holland and me in the recent past. And they give three tiny, very different real-life examples of Babylon—one personal and as silly as deplorable behavior at a basketball game, one more cultural and indicative of one-on-one challenges with those who live differently than we do, and one very large and very serious matter, with legal implications and history so complex that it would seem to be beyond any individual one of us to address it.
23. In posing these three challenges, I intentionally did not use sensational cases of sexual transgression or physical violence or pornographic addiction, even though those might strike closer to home for some of you than the examples I have used. But you are smart enough to make unspoken applications.

### **Lesson 1: Never “Check Your Religion at the Door”**

24. First, let’s finish the basketball incident. The day after that game, when there was some public reckoning and a call to repentance over the incident, one young man said, in effect: “Listen. We are talking about basketball here, not Sunday School. If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. We pay good money to see these games. We can act the way we want. We check our religion at the door.”
25. “We check our religion at the door”? Lesson number one for the establishment of Zion in the 21st century: You never “check your religion at the door.” Not ever.
26. My young friends, that kind of discipleship cannot be—it is not discipleship at all. As the prophet Alma has taught the young women of the Church to declare every week in their Young Women theme, we are “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in,”<sup>13</sup> not just some of the time, in a few places, or when our team has a big lead.
27. “Check your religion at the door”! I was furious.

### **Lesson 2: Show Compassion, but Be Loyal to the Commandments**

28. But let’s stay with this for a minute because there is a second lesson on its way. Lesson number two in tonight’s quest for Zion is that in my righteous indignation (at least we always say it is righteous) I have to make sure that I don’t end up doing exactly what I was accusing this young fan of doing—getting mad, acting stupid, losing my cool, ranting about it, wanting to get my hands on him—preferably around his throat—until, before I know it, I have checked my religion at the door! No, someone in life, someone in the 21st century, someone in all of these situations has to live his or her religion because otherwise all we get is a whole bunch of idiots acting like moral pygmies.
29. It is easy to be righteous when things are calm and life is good and everything is going smoothly. The test is when there is real trial or temptation, when there is pressure and fatigue, anger and fear, or the possibility of real transgression. Can we be faithful then? That is the question because “Israel, Israel, God is calling.” Such integrity is, of course, the majesty of “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”<sup>14</sup>—right when forgiving and understanding and being generous about your crucifiers is the last thing that anyone less perfect than the Savior of the world would want to do. But we have to try; we have to wish to be strong. Whatever the situation or the provocation or the problem, no true disciple of Christ can “check his religion at the door.”

30. That leads me to the woman with the rainbow hair and the many splendored rings. However one would respond to that young woman, the rule forever is that it has to reflect our religious beliefs and our gospel commitments. Therefore, how we respond in any situation has to make things better, not worse. We can't act or react in such a way that we are guilty of a greater offense than, in this case, she is. That doesn't mean that we don't have opinions, that we don't have standards, that we somehow completely disregard divinely mandated "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" in life. But it does mean we have to live those standards and defend those "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" in a righteous way to the best of our ability, the way the Savior lived and defended them. And He always did what should have been done to make the situation better—from teaching the truth, to forgiving sinners, to cleansing the temple. It is no small gift to know how to do such things in the right way!
31. So, with our new acquaintance of the unusual dress and grooming code, we start, above all, by remembering she is a daughter of God and of eternal worth. We start by remembering that she is someone's daughter here on earth as well and could, under other circumstances, be my daughter. We start by being grateful that she is at a Church activity, not avoiding one. In short, we try to be at our best in this situation in a desire to help her be at her best. We keep praying silently: What is the right thing to do here? And what is the right thing to say? What ultimately will make this situation and her better? Asking these questions and really trying to do what the Savior would do is what I think He meant when He said, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."<sup>15</sup>
32. Having said that, I remind us all that while reaching out to and helping back a lamb who has strayed, we also have a profound responsibility to the 99 who didn't—and to the wishes and will of the Shepherd. There is a sheepfold, and we are all supposed to be in it, to say nothing of the safety and blessings that come to us for being there. My young brothers and sisters, this Church can never "dumb down" its doctrine in response to social goodwill or political expediency or any other reason. It is only the high ground of revealed truth that gives us any footing on which to lift another who may feel troubled or forsaken. Our compassion and our love—fundamental characteristics and requirements of our Christianity—must never be interpreted as compromising the commandments. As the marvelous George MacDonald once said, in such situations "we are not bound to say all that we [believe], but we are bound not even to look [like] what we do not [believe]."<sup>16</sup>

## Judge Righteous Judgments

33. In this regard—this call for compassion and loyalty to the commandments—there is sometimes a chance for a misunderstanding, especially among young people who may think we are not supposed to judge anything, that we are never to make a value assessment of any kind. We have to help each other with that because the Savior makes it clear that in some situations we have to judge, we are under obligation to judge—as when He said, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine."<sup>17</sup> That sounds like a judgment to me. The alternative is to surrender to the moral relativism of a deconstructionist, postmodern world which, pushed far enough, posits that ultimately nothing is eternally true or especially sacred and, therefore, no one position on any given issue matters more than any other. And that simply is not true.
34. In this process of evaluation, we are not called on to condemn others, but we are called upon to make decisions every day that reflect judgment—we hope good judgment. Elder Dallin H. Oaks once referred to these kinds of decisions as "intermediate judgments," which we often have to make for our own safety or for the safety of others, as opposed to what he called "final judgments," which can only be made by God, who knows all the facts.<sup>18</sup> (Remember, in the scripture quoted earlier, that the Savior said these are to be "righteous judgments," not self-righteous judgments, which is a very different thing.)
35. For example, parents have to exercise good judgment regarding the safety and welfare of their children every day. No one would fault a parent who says children must eat their vegetables or who restricts a child from running into a street roaring with traffic. So why should a parent be faulted who cares, at a little later age, what time those children come home at night, or what the moral and behavioral standards of their friends are, or at what age they date, or whether or not they experiment with drugs or pornography or engage in sexual transgression? No, we are making decisions and taking stands and reaffirming our values—in short, making "intermediate judgments"—all the time, or at least we should be.

## Some Issues and Laws Have Eternal Consequences

36. When we face such situations in complex social issues in a democratic society, it can be very challenging and, to some, confusing. Young people may ask about this position taken or that policy made by the Church, saying: "Well, we don't believe we should live or behave in such and such a way, but why do we have to make other people do the same? Don't they have their free agency? Aren't we being self-righteous and judgmental,

forcing our beliefs on others, demanding that they act in a certain way?” In those situations you are going to have to explain sensitively why some principles are defended and some sins opposed wherever they are found because the issues and the laws involved are not just social or political but eternal in their consequence. And while not wishing to offend those who believe differently from us, we are even more anxious not to offend God, or as the scripture says, “not offend him who is your lawgiver”<sup>19</sup>—and I am speaking here of serious moral laws.

37. But to make the point, let me use the example of a lesser law. It is a little like a teenager saying, “Now that I can drive, I know I am supposed to stop at a red light, but do we really have to be judgmental and try to get everyone else to stop at red lights? Does everyone have to do what we do? Don’t others have their agency? Must they behave as we do?” You then have to explain why, yes, we do hope all will stop at a red light. And you have to do this without demeaning those who transgress or who believe differently than we believe because, yes, they do have their moral agency.
38. My young friends, there is a wide variety of beliefs in this world, and there is moral agency for all, but no one is entitled to act as if God is mute on these subjects or as if commandments only matter if there is public agreement over them. In the 21st century we cannot flee any longer. We are going to have to fight for laws and circumstances and environments that allow the free exercise of religion and our franchise in it. That is one way we can tolerate being in Babylon but not of it.
39. I know of no more important ability and no greater integrity for us to demonstrate in a world from which we cannot flee than to walk that careful path—taking a moral stand according to what God has declared and the laws He has given, but doing it compassionately and with understanding and great charity. Talk about a hard thing to do—to distinguish perfectly between the sin and the sinner. I know of few distinctions that are harder to make, or at least harder to articulate, but we must lovingly try to do exactly that. Believe me, brothers and sisters, in the world into which we are moving, we are going to have a lot of opportunity to develop such strength, display such courage, and demonstrate such compassion—all at the same time. And I am not speaking now of punk hairdos or rings in your nose.

### **Lesson 3: Use Gospel Values to Benefit Communities and Countries**

40. Now lastly, the difficult story from Kansas City. Not many of us are going to be police officers or social service agents or judges sitting on a legal bench, but all of us should care for the welfare of others and the moral safety of our extended community. Elder Quentin L.

Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve devoted an entire general conference talk to this subject two years ago. In speaking of the need for us to influence society beyond the walls of our own home he said:

41. “In addition to protecting our own families, we should be a source of light in protecting our communities. The Savior said, ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.’ ...
42. “In our increasingly unrighteous world, it is essential that values based on religious belief be [evident in] the public square. ...
43. “Religious faith is a store of light, knowledge, and wisdom and benefits society in a dramatic way.”<sup>20</sup>
44. If we don’t take gospel blessings to our communities and our countries, the simple fact of the matter is we will never have enough policemen—there will never be enough Isaac Freestones—to enforce moral behavior even if it were enforceable. And it isn’t. Those children in that home without food or clothing are sons and daughters of God. That mother, more culpable because she is older and should be more responsible, is also a daughter of God. Such situations may require tough love in formal, even legal ways, but we must try to help when and where we can because we are not checking our religion at the door, even as pathetic and irresponsible as some doors are.
45. We aren’t going to solve every personal or social problem in the world here tonight. When we leave this evening, there will still be poverty, ignorance and transgression, unemployment and abuse, violence and heartache in our neighborhoods and cities and nations. No, we can’t do everything, but as the old saying goes, we can do something. And in answer to God’s call, the children of Israel are the ones to do it—not to flee Babylon this time but to attack it. Without being naive or Pollyannaish about it, we can live our religion so broadly and unfailingly that we find all kinds of opportunities to help families, bless neighbors, and protect others, including the rising generation.

### **Live Your Life to Reflect Your Love of Jesus Christ**

46. I have not uttered the word missionary in this context for fear you would immediately think of white shirts and name tags. Don’t limit me on this. Stay with the big picture—the huge need—to share the gospel always, whether you are a full-time missionary or not. Latter-day Saints are called upon to be the leaven in the loaf, the salt that never loses its savor, the light set upon a hill never to be hidden under a bushel. And your age

group—18 to 30 for the most part—is the time in a person’s life when your acquaintances are most likely to accept the gospel if it is presented to them. We know that. A number of studies conducted by the Church have told us that.

47. So start presenting! If we do right and talk right and reach out generously with our words and our deeds, then when the Savior cuts short His work in righteousness, says time is no more in this last, great dispensation and then comes in His glory, He will find us—you and me and all of us—doing our best, trying to live the gospel, trying to improve our lives and our Church and our society the best way we can. When He comes, I so want to be caught living the gospel. I want to be surprised right in the act of spreading the faith and doing something good. I want the Savior to say to me: “Jeffrey”—because He knows all of our names—“I recognize you not by your title but by your life, the way you are trying to live and the standards you are trying to defend. I see the integrity of your heart. I know you have tried to make things better first and foremost by being better yourself, and then by declaring my word and defending my gospel to others in the most compassionate way you could.”
48. “I know you weren’t always successful,” He will certainly say, “with your own sins or the circumstances of others, but I believe you honestly tried. I believe in your heart you truly loved me.”
49. I want to have something like that encounter someday as I want nothing else in this mortal life. And I want it for you. I want it for us all. Israel, Israel, God is calling—calling us to live the gospel of Jesus Christ personally in small ways as well as large, and then to reach out to those who may not look or dress or behave quite like we do, and then (where you can) go beyond that to serve in the widest community you can address.
50. To help you do that, I leave along with my testimony, an apostolic blessing on each of you this night. I bless you, by the power of the priesthood and the commission that I have received, to know that God loves you, that He needs you in this last and greatest dispensation when everything is accelerated and more and more is expected. I bless you, with apostolic authority, that your prayers offered in righteousness will be answered, that your personal fears will be lifted, that your backs and your shoulders and your hearts will be strong for the burdens that are placed upon them. I bless you as you strive to be pure in heart, offering yourselves as instruments in the hands of God for establishing Zion in these latter days everywhere you stand. I bless you to be true friends to each other and to those not of your circle to whom we should reach out. Above that, I bless you to be friends of the Savior of the world, to know Him

personally, and to have confidence in His company.

51. I love the Lord Jesus Christ, whose servant I am trying to be. And I love our Heavenly Father, who cared enough to give Him to us. I know that, regarding that gift, God is calling to Israel in these latter days and that He expects us to respond to that call and to be more Christlike, to be more holy than we now are in our determination to live the gospel and establish Zion. I also know that He will give us both the strength and the holiness to be true disciples if we plead for it. I testify of the divinity of this work, of the love and grandeur of Almighty God, and the infinite Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ even down unto the least of each one of us. I bless you with this hope for happiness and holiness, tonight and tomorrow and forever, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. “Ye Elders of Israel,” Hymns, no. 319.
2. “Israel, Israel, God is Calling,” Hymns, no. 7.
3. See Abraham 2:3.
4. See Exodus 1:7–14.
5. “Israel, Israel, God is Calling,” Hymns, no. 7.
6. See 1 Nephi 2:2.
7. See 1 Nephi 18:22–24.
8. See Ether 6:5–13.
9. See Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (1984), 2–3.
10. “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” Hymns, no. 30.
11. Brigham Young, quoted in James S. Brown, *Life of a Pioneer* (1971), 121.
12. Isaac Freestone, experience shared with the author on May 5, 2012.
13. Mosiah 18:9.
14. Luke 23:34.
15. John 7:24.
16. George MacDonald, *The Unspoken Sermons* (2011), 264.
17. Matthew 7:6.
18. See Dallin H. Oaks, “‘Judge Not’ and Judging,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1999, 6–13.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 64:13.
20. Quentin L. Cook, “Let There Be Light!” *Ensign and Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 28–29.

Israel, Israel, God is Calling  
(QR Code)





## Protect The Children

Elder Dallin H. Oaks  
General Conference, October 2012



1. None should resist the plea that we unite to increase our concern for the welfare and future of our children—the rising generation.
2. We can all remember our feelings when a little child cried out and reached up to us for help. A loving Heavenly Father gives us those feelings to impel us to help His children. Please recall those feelings as I speak about our responsibility to protect and act for the well-being of children.
3. I speak from the perspective of the gospel of Jesus Christ, including His plan of salvation. That is my calling. Local Church leaders have responsibility for a single jurisdiction, like a ward or stake, but an Apostle is responsible to witness to the entire world. In every nation, of every race and creed, all children are children of God.
4. Although I do not speak in terms of politics or public policy, like other Church leaders, I cannot speak for the welfare of children without implications for the choices being made by citizens, public officials, and workers in private organizations. We are all under the Savior's command to love and care for each other and especially for the weak and defenseless.
5. Children are highly vulnerable. They have little or no power to protect or provide for themselves and little influence on so much that is vital to their well-being. Children need others to speak for them, and they need decision makers who put their well-being ahead of selfish adult interests.
6. Worldwide, we are shocked at the millions of children victimized by evil adult crimes and selfishness.
7. In some war-torn countries, children are abducted to serve as soldiers in contending armies.
8. A United Nations report estimates that over two million children are victimized each year through prostitution and pornography.<sup>1</sup>
9. From the perspective of the plan of salvation, one of the most serious abuses of children is to deny them birth. This is a worldwide trend. The national birthrate in the United States is the lowest in 25 years,<sup>2</sup> and the birthrates in most European and Asian countries have been below replacement levels for many years. This is not just a religious issue. As rising generations diminish in numbers, cultures and even nations are hollowed out and eventually disappear.
10. One cause of the diminishing birthrate is the practice of abortion. Worldwide, there are estimated to be more than 40 million abortions per year.<sup>3</sup> Many laws permit or even promote abortion, but to us this is a great evil. Other abuses of children that occur during pregnancy are the fetal impairments that result from the mother's inadequate nutrition or drug use.
11. There is a tragic irony in the multitude of children eliminated or injured before birth while throngs of infertile couples long for and seek babies to adopt.
12. Childhood abuses or neglect of children that occur after birth are more publicly visible. Worldwide, almost eight million children die before their fifth birthday, mostly from diseases both treatable and preventable<sup>4</sup> And the World Health Organization reports that one in four children have stunted growth, mentally and physically, because of inadequate nutrition.<sup>5</sup> Living and traveling internationally, we Church leaders see much of this. The general presidency of the Primary report children living in conditions “beyond our imaginations.” A mother in the Philippines said: “Sometimes we do not have enough money for food, but that is all right because it gives me the opportunity to teach my children about faith. We gather and pray for relief, and the children see the Lord bless us.”<sup>6</sup> In South Africa, a Primary worker met a little girl, lonely and sad. In faint responses to loving questions, she said she had no mother, no father, and no grandmother—only a grandfather to care for her<sup>7</sup> Such tragedies are common on a continent where many caregivers have died of AIDS.
13. Even in rich nations little children and youth are impaired by neglect. Children growing up in poverty have inferior health care and inadequate

educational opportunities. They are also exposed to dangerous environments in their physical and cultural surroundings and even from the neglect of their parents. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland recently shared the experience of an LDS police officer. In an investigation he found five young children huddled together and trying to sleep without bedding on a filthy floor in a dwelling where their mother and others were drinking and partying. The apartment had no food to relieve their hunger. After tucking the children into a makeshift bed, the officer knelt and prayed for their protection. As he walked toward the door, one of them, about six, pursued him, grabbed him by the hand, and pleaded, “Will you please adopt me?”<sup>8</sup>

14. We remember our Savior’s teaching as He placed a little child before His followers and declared:
15. “And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.
16. “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:5–6).
17. When we consider the dangers from which children should be protected, we should also include psychological abuse. Parents or other caregivers or teachers or peers who demean, bully, or humiliate children or youth can inflict harm more permanent than physical injury. Making a child or youth feel worthless, unloved, or unwanted can inflict serious and long-lasting injury on his or her emotional well-being and development.<sup>9</sup> Young people struggling with any exceptional condition, including same-gender attraction, are particularly vulnerable and need loving understanding—not bullying or ostracism.<sup>10</sup>
18. With the help of the Lord, we can repent and change and be more loving and helpful to children—our own and those around us.
19. There are few examples of physical or emotional threats to children as important as those arising out of their relationships with their parents or guardians. President Thomas S. Monson has spoken of what he called the “vile deeds” of child abuse, where a parent has broken or disfigured a child, physically or emotionally.<sup>11</sup> I grieved as I had to study the shocking evidence of such cases during my service on the Utah Supreme Court.
20. Of utmost importance to the well-being of children is whether their parents were married, the nature and duration of the marriage, and, more broadly, the culture and expectations of marriage and child care where they live. Two scholars of the family explain: “Throughout history, marriage has first and foremost been an institution for procreation and raising children. It has provided the cultural tie that seeks to connect the father to his children by binding him to the mother of his children. Yet in recent times, children have increasingly been pushed from center stage.”<sup>12</sup>
21. A Harvard law professor describes the current law and attitude toward marriage and divorce: “The [current] American story about marriage, as told in the law and in much popular literature, goes something like this: marriage is a relationship that exists primarily for the fulfillment of the individual spouses. If it ceases to perform this function, no one is to blame and either spouse may terminate it at will. . . . Children hardly appear in the story; at most they are rather shadowy characters in the background.”<sup>13</sup>
22. Our Church leaders have taught that looking “upon marriage as a mere contract that may be entered into at pleasure . . . and severed at the first difficulty . . . is an evil meriting severe condemnation,” especially where “children are made to suffer.”<sup>14</sup> And children are impacted by divorces. Over half of the divorces in a recent year involved couples with minor children.<sup>15</sup>
23. Many children would have had the blessing of being raised by both of their parents if only their parents had followed this inspired teaching in the family proclamation: “Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. . . . Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another.”<sup>16</sup> The most powerful teaching of children is by the example of their parents. Divorcing parents inevitably teach a negative lesson.
24. There are surely cases when a divorce is necessary for the good of the children, but those circumstances are exceptional.<sup>17</sup> In most marital contests the contending parents should give much greater weight to the interests of the children. With the help of the Lord, they can do so. Children need the emotional and personal strength that come from being raised by two parents who are united in their marriage and their goals. As one who was raised by a widowed mother, I know firsthand that this cannot always be achieved, but it is the ideal to be sought whenever possible.
25. Children are the first victims of current laws permitting so-called “no-fault divorce.” From the standpoint of children, divorce is too easy. Summarizing decades of social science research, a careful scholar concluded that “the family structure that produces the best outcomes for children, on average, are two biological parents who remain married.”<sup>18</sup> A New York Times writer noted



- “the striking fact that even as traditional marriage has declined in the United States ... the evidence has mounted for the institution’s importance to the well-being of children.”<sup>19</sup> That reality should give important guidance to parents and parents-to-be in their decisions involving marriage and divorce. We also need politicians, policy makers, and officials to increase their attention to what is best for children in contrast to the selfish interests of voters and vocal advocates of adult interests.
26. Children are also victimized by marriages that do not occur. Few measures of the welfare of our rising generation are more disturbing than the recent report that 41 percent of all births in the United States were to women who were not married.<sup>20</sup> Unmarried mothers have massive challenges, and the evidence is clear that their children are at a significant disadvantage when compared with children raised by married parents<sup>21</sup>
  27. Most of the children born to unmarried mothers—58 percent—were born to couples who were cohabitating.<sup>22</sup> Whatever we may say about these couples’ forgoing marriage, studies show that their children suffer significant comparative disadvantages.<sup>23</sup> For children, the relative stability of marriage matters.
  28. We should assume the same disadvantages for children raised by couples of the same gender. The social science literature is controversial and politically charged on the long-term effect of this on children, principally because, as a New York Times writer observed, “same-sex marriage is a social experiment, and like most experiments it will take time to understand its consequences.”<sup>24</sup>
  29. I have spoken for children—children everywhere. Some may reject some of these examples, but none should resist the plea that we unite to increase our concern for the welfare and future of our children—the rising generation.
  30. We are speaking of the children of God, and with His powerful help, we can do more to help them. In this plea I address not only Latter-day Saints but also all persons of religious faith and others who have a value system that causes them to subordinate their own needs to those of others, especially to the welfare of children<sup>25</sup>
  31. Religious persons are also conscious of the Savior’s New Testament teaching that pure little children are our role models of humility and teachableness:
  32. “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”
  33. “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3–4).
  34. In the Book of Mormon we read of the risen Lord teaching the Nephites that they must repent and be baptized “and become as a little child” or they could not inherit the kingdom of God (3 Nephi 11:38; see also Moroni 8:10).
  35. I pray that we will humble ourselves as little children and reach out to protect our little children, for they are the future for us, for our Church, and for our nations. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. See UNICEF, *The State of the World’s Children 2005: Childhood under Threat* (2004), 26.
2. See Haya El Nasser, “National Birthrate Lowest in 25 Years,” *USA Today*, July 26, 2012, A1.
3. See Gilda Sedgh and others, “Induced Abortion: Incidence and Trends Worldwide from 1995 to 2008,” *The Lancet*, vol. 379, no. 9816 (Feb. 18, 2012), 625–32.
4. See UNICEF, “Young Child Survival and Development,” <http://www.unicef.org/childsurvival/index.html>.
5. See World Health Organization, *World Health Statistics 2012* (2012), 109, 118.
6. Report of Primary general presidency, Sept. 13, 2012.
7. Report of Primary general presidency.
8. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “Israel, Israel, God Is Calling” (Church Educational System devotional for young adults, Sept. 9, 2012), [lds.org/broadcasts](http://lds.org/broadcasts); see also R. Scott Lloyd, “Zion Not Only Where, but How We Live, Says Elder Holland,” *Deseret News*, Sept. 10, 2012, B2.
9. See Kim Painter, “Parents Can Inflict Deep Emotional Harm,” *USA Today*, July 30, 2012, B8; Rachel Lowry, “Mental Abuse as Injurious as Other Forms of Child Abuse, Study Shows,” *Deseret News*, Aug. 5, 2012, A3.
10. See “End the Abuses,” *Deseret News*, June 12, 2012, A10.
11. Thomas S. Monson, “A Little Child Shall Lead Them,” *Liahona*, June 2002, 2; *Ensign*, May 1990, 53.
12. W. Bradford Wilcox and Elizabeth Marquardt, eds., *The State of Our Unions: Marriage in America* (2011), 82.
13. Mary Ann Glendon, *Abortion and Divorce in Western Law: American Failures, European Challenges* (1987), 108.
14. David O. McKay, “Structure of the Home Threatened by Irresponsibility and Divorce,” *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 5.
15. See Diana B. Elliott and Tavia Simmons, “Marital Events of Americans: 2009,” *American Community Survey Reports*, Aug. 2011.
16. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
17. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Divorce,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2007, 71.
18. Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010* (2012), 158.
19. Ross Douthat, “Gay Parents and the Marriage Debate,” *New York Times*, June 11, 2012, <http://douthat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/06/11/gay-parents-and-the-marriage-debate>.
20. See Joyce A. Martin and others, “Births: Final Data for 2010,” *National*

Vital Statistics Reports, vol. 61, no. 1 (Aug. 2012), 10.

36. 21. See William J. Doherty and others, *Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-One Conclusions from the Social Sciences* (2002); W. Bradford Wilcox and others, *Why Marriage Matters: Thirty Conclusions from the Social Sciences*, 3rd ed. (2011).
22. See Martin, "Births: Final Data for 2010," 10–11.
23. See Wilcox, *Why Marriage Matters*.
24. Douthat, "Gay Parents and the Marriage Debate." The latest and most thorough study finds significant disadvantages reported by young adults with a parent who had same-sex relationships prior to the child's turning age 18 (see Mark Regnerus, "How Different Are the Adult Children of Parents Who Have Same-Sex Relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study," *Social Science Research*, vol. 41 [2012], 752–70).
25. Latter-day Saints are especially committed to parenthood as one of the most important goals in life (see Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, *Mormons in America: Certain in Their Beliefs, Uncertain of Their Place in Society*, Jan. 12, 2012, 10, 16, 51).

Protect The Children  
(QR Code)





# Truth And Tolerance

Elder Dallin H. Oaks  
CES Devotional for Young Adults, September 2011



1. My dear young brothers and sisters, Kristen and I feel privileged to be with you on this significant occasion. We meet on 9/11, the 10th anniversary of an event that has profoundly influenced our lives and thinking and will do so for many years to come. It is forever associated with the Twin Towers.
2. I have felt impressed to speak this evening about another set of twins, the twin ideas of Truth and Tolerance. These subjects were not chosen because they are uniquely your concern as young adults, like the dating, hanging out, and marriage I described to this audience some years ago. My treatment of truth and tolerance will invite you to consider and to teach these twin subjects because they are vital to the rising generation, in which you are the senior members.

## We Believe in Absolute Truth

3. First: Truth. We believe in absolute truth, including the existence of God and the right and wrong established by His commandments. We sing:

*Tho the heavens depart and the earth's fountains burst,  
Truth, the sum of existence, will weather the worst,  
Eternal, unchanged, evermore.<sup>1</sup>*

4. In the words of President Joseph F. Smith: “We believe in all truth, no matter to what subject it may refer. No sect or religious denomination in the world possesses a single principle of truth that we do not accept or that we will reject. We are willing to receive all truth, from whatever source it may come; for truth will stand, truth will endure.”<sup>2</sup>
5. The existence and nature of truth is one of the fundamental questions of mortal life. Jesus told the Roman governor Pilate that He came into the world to “bear witness unto the truth.” “What is truth?” that unbeliever responded (see John 18:37–38). In earlier times the Savior had declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). In modern revelation He declared: “Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24).
6. My young brothers and sisters, we know that the

existence of God and the existence of absolute truth are fundamental to life on this earth, whether they are believed or not. We also know that evil exists and that some things are simply, seriously, and everlastingly wrong. You whom I address shun evil and seek truth. I salute you for your righteous actions and your righteous desires. As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I seek to help you make right choices in a world that is increasingly polarized between belief and disbelief, between good and evil.

7. Shocking reports of large-scale thievery and lying in civilized societies in the last two months suggest a moral vacuum in which many have little sense of right and wrong. Last month’s widespread rioting and pillaging in Britain and the scandalous, widespread cheating by teachers on state-mandated tests in elementary and middle schools in Atlanta, Georgia, have caused many to wonder whether we are losing the moral foundation Western countries have received from their Judeo-Christian heritage.<sup>3</sup>

## Beware of Moral Relativism

8. It is well to worry about our moral foundation. We live in a world where more and more persons of influence are teaching and acting out a belief that there is no absolute right and wrong, that all authority and all rules of behavior are man-made choices that can prevail over the commandments of God. Many even question whether there is a God.
9. The philosophy of moral relativism, which holds that each person is free to choose for himself what is right and wrong, is becoming the unofficial creed for many in America and other Western nations. At the extreme level, evil acts that used to be localized and covered up like a boil are now legalized and paraded like a banner. Persuaded by this philosophy, many of the rising generation—youth and young adults—are caught up in self-serving pleasures, pagan painting and piercing of body parts, foul language, revealing attire, pornography, dishonesty, and degrading sexual indulgence.
10. On the foundation belief in right and wrong, there is an

alarming contrast between the older and the younger generations. According to survey data of two decades ago, “79 percent of American adults [believed] that ‘there are clear guidelines about what’s good and evil that apply to everyone regardless of the situation.’”<sup>4</sup> In contrast, a more recent poll of college seniors suggests that “three-quarters of [them] believe that the difference between right and wrong is relative.”<sup>5</sup>

11. Many religious leaders teach the existence of God as the Ultimate Lawgiver, by whose action certain behavior is absolutely right and true and certain other behavior is absolutely wrong and untrue.<sup>6</sup> Bible and Book of Mormon prophets foresaw this time, when men would be “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:4) and, indeed, when men would deny God (see Jude 1:4; 2 Nephi 28:5; Moroni 7:17; D&C 29:22).
12. In this troubled circumstance, we who believe in God and the corollary truth of absolute right and wrong have the challenge of living in a godless and increasingly amoral world. In this circumstance, all of us—and especially you of the rising generation—have a duty to stand up and speak up to affirm that God exists and that there are absolute truths His commandments establish. In doing so, we Latter-day Saints rely on the truth we sing in the hymn I quoted earlier:

The pillar of truth will endure to the last,  
And its firm-rooted bulwarks outstand the rude blast  
And the wreck of the fell tyrant’s hopes.<sup>7</sup>

13. As I face this audience of committed young people, I know that some of you may be wondering why I am speaking about what is obvious to you and what, you might assume, is obvious to others. Recall the survey data I mentioned earlier, suggesting that about three-quarters of all college seniors believe the difference between right and wrong is relative.
14. I have chosen to speak about truth because teachers in schools, colleges, and universities are teaching and practicing relative morality. This is shaping the attitudes of many young Americans who are taking their places as the teachers of our children and the shapers of public attitudes through the media and popular entertainment. This philosophy of moral relativism denies what millions of believing Christians, Jews, and Muslims consider fundamental, and this denial creates serious problems for all of us. What believers should do about this introduces the second of my twin subjects: Tolerance.

### **Tolerance**

15. Tolerance is defined as a friendly and fair attitude toward unfamiliar opinions and practices or toward

the persons who hold or practice them. As modern transportation and communication have brought all of us into closer proximity to different peoples and different ideas, we have greater need for tolerance. When I was a young adult, about 60 years ago, it was only in books and magazines that most Americans were exposed to great differences in cultures, values, and peoples. Now we experience such differences in television and the Internet, through travel, and often in personal interactions in our neighborhoods and the marketplace.

16. This greater exposure to diversity both enriches our lives and complicates them. We are enriched by associations with different peoples, which remind us of the wonderful diversity of the children of God. But diversities in cultures and values also challenge us to identify what can be embraced as consistent with our gospel culture and values and what cannot. In this way diversity increases the potential for conflict and requires us to be more thoughtful about the nature of tolerance. What is tolerance, when does it apply, and when does it not apply?
17. This is a harder question for those who affirm the existence of God and absolute truth than for those who believe in moral relativism. The weaker one’s belief in God and the fewer one’s moral absolutes, the fewer the occasions when the ideas or practices of others will confront one with the challenge to be tolerant. For example, an atheist has no need to decide what kinds and occasions of profanity or blasphemy can be tolerated and what kinds should be confronted. Persons who don’t believe in God or in absolute truth in moral matters can see themselves as the most tolerant of persons. For them, almost anything goes. “You do your thing, and I’ll do my thing” is the popular description. This belief system can tolerate almost any behavior and almost any persons. Unfortunately, some who believe in moral relativism seem to have difficulty tolerating those who insist that there is a God who should be respected and certain moral absolutes that should be observed.

### **Three Absolute Truths for Tolerance**

18. I will say no more about the tolerance or intolerance of nonbelievers. I am speaking to an audience of Latter-day Saints who believe in God and in absolute truth. What does tolerance mean to us and to other believers, and what are our special challenges in applying it?
19. I begin with three absolute truths. I express them as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I believe that most of these ideas are shared by believers generally.
20. First, all persons are brothers and sisters under God, taught within their various religions to love and do

good to one another. President Gordon B. Hinckley expressed this idea for Latter-day Saints: “Each of us [from various religious denominations] believes in the fatherhood of God, although we may differ in our interpretations of Him. Each of us is part of a great family, the human family, sons and daughters of God, and therefore brothers and sisters. We must work harder to build mutual respect, an attitude of forbearance, with tolerance one for another regardless of the doctrines and philosophies which we may espouse.”<sup>8</sup>

21. Note that President Hinckley spoke of “mutual respect” as well as tolerance. Speaking at BYU a decade later, a Muslim scholar, Dr. Alwi Shihab, an Indonesian, elaborated that idea in these words: “To tolerate something is to learn to live with it, even when you think it is wrong and downright evil. . . . We must go, I believe, beyond tolerance if we are to achieve harmony in our world.”
22. Relying on the teachings of the Quran, Dr. Shihab continued: “We must respect this God-given dignity in every human being, even in our enemies. For the goal of all human relations—whether they are religious, social, political, or economic—ought to be cooperation and mutual respect.”<sup>9</sup>
23. Living together with mutual respect for one another’s differences is a challenge in today’s world. However—and here I express a second absolute truth—this living with differences is what the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us we must do.
24. The kingdom of God is like a leaven, Jesus taught (see Matthew 13:33). A leaven—yeast—is hidden away in the larger mass until the whole is leavened, which means raised by its influence. Our Savior also taught that His followers will have tribulation in the world, that their numbers and dominions will be small (see 1 Nephi 14:12), and that they will be hated because they are not of the world (see John 17:14). But that is our role. We are called to live with other children of God who do not share our faith or our values and who do not have the covenant obligations we have assumed. So it was that, at the conclusion of His ministry, Jesus prayed to the Father, “Not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15). We are to be in the world, but not of the world.
25. Since followers of Jesus Christ are commanded to be a leaven—not to be taken out of the world, but to remain in it—we must seek tolerance from those who hate us for not being of the world. As part of this, we will sometimes need to challenge laws that would impair our freedom to practice our faiths, doing so in reliance on our constitutional rights to the free exercise of religion.

As described by an attorney supporting a Lutheran school in a case now before the United States Supreme Court, the big concern is “the ability of people of all faiths to work out their relationship with God and one another without the government looking over their shoulder.”<sup>10</sup> That is why we need understanding and support—including your understanding and support—when we must contend for religious freedom.

26. We must also practice tolerance and respect toward others. As the Apostle Paul taught, Christians should “follow after the things which make for peace” (Romans 14:19) and, as much as possible, “live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). Consequently, we should be alert to honor the good we should see in all people and in many opinions and practices that differ from our own. As the Book of Mormon teaches:
27. “All things which are good cometh of God. . . .
28. “... Wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.
29. “Wherefore, take heed . . . that ye do not judge . . . that which is good and of God to be of the devil” (Moroni 7:12–14).
30. That approach to differences will yield tolerance and also respect.
31. Our tolerance and respect for others and their beliefs does not cause us to abandon our commitment to the truths we understand and the covenants we have made. That is a third absolute truth: We do not abandon the truth and our covenants. We are cast as combatants in the war between truth and error. There is no middle ground. We must stand up for truth, even while we practice tolerance and respect for beliefs and ideas different from our own and for the people who hold them.
32. While we must practice tolerance and respect for others and their beliefs, including their constitutional freedom to explain and advocate their positions, we are not required to respect and tolerate wrong behavior. Our duty to truth requires us to seek relief from some behavior that is wrong. This is easy to see when it involves extreme behaviors that most believers and nonbelievers recognize as wrong or unacceptable. For example, we must all deplore murder or other terrorist behavior, even when done by extremists in the name of religion. And we must all oppose violence and thievery.

## The Two-Sided Coin of Tolerance and Truth

33. As to less extreme behaviors, where even believers disagree on whether or not they are wrong, the nature and extent of what we should tolerate is much more difficult to define. Thus, a thoughtful LDS woman wrote me about her concern that “the world’s definition of ‘tolerance’ seems to be increasingly used in relation to tolerating wicked lifestyles.” She asked how the Lord would define “tolerance.”<sup>11</sup>
34. President Boyd K. Packer gave an inspired introduction to this subject. Speaking to an audience of institute students three years ago, he said: “The word tolerance does not stand alone. It requires an object and a response to qualify it as a virtue. . . . Tolerance is often demanded but seldom returned. Beware of the word tolerance. It is a very unstable virtue.”<sup>12</sup>
35. This inspired caution reminds us that for persons who believe in absolute truth, tolerance for behavior is like a two-sided coin. Tolerance, or respect, is on one side of the coin, but truth is always on the other. You cannot possess or use the coin of tolerance without being conscious of both sides.
36. Our Savior applied this principle. When He faced the woman taken in adultery, Jesus spoke the comforting words of tolerance: “Neither do I condemn thee.” Then, as He sent her away, He spoke the commanding words of truth: “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). We should all be edified and strengthened by this example of speaking both tolerance and truth: kindness in the communication, but firmness in the truth.

### **Facing Profanity, Cohabitation, and Sabbath Breaking with Truth and Tolerance**

37. Let us consider how to apply that example to some other behaviors. Another thoughtful LDS member wrote:
38. “In Mosiah 18:9 Alma tells us that when we are baptized we covenant ‘to stand as “witnesses” of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in.’ . . . What does this scripture mean for our day and how can it be applied by Latter-day Saints?”
39. “Living in the mission field, I often hear the name of the Lord taken in vain, and I also have acquaintances who tell me that they are living with their boyfriends. I have found that observance of the Sabbath is almost obsolete. How can I keep my covenant to stand as a witness and not offend these people?”<sup>13</sup>
40. Profanity, cohabitation, and Sabbath breaking—excellent examples to illustrate how Latter-day Saints might balance their competing duties to truth and tolerance in their own lives in these difficult circumstances.
41. I begin with our personal conduct, including the teaching of our children. In applying the sometimes competing demands of truth and tolerance in these three behaviors and many others, we should not be tolerant with ourselves. We should be ruled by the demands of truth. We should be strong in keeping the commandments and our covenants, and we should repent and improve when we fall short.
42. As President Thomas S. Monson taught us in the conference where he was sustained as our prophet: “My young friends, be strong. . . . The face of sin today often wears the mask of tolerance. Do not be deceived; behind that façade is heartache, unhappiness, and pain. You know what is right and what is wrong, and no disguise, however appealing, can change that. The character of transgression remains the same. If your so-called friends urge you to do anything you know to be wrong, you be the one to make a stand for right, even if you stand alone.”<sup>14</sup>
43. Similarly, with our children and others we have a duty to teach—such as in our Church callings—our duty to truth is paramount. Of course, teaching efforts only bear fruit through the agency of others, so they must always be done with love, patience, and persuasion.
44. I turn now to the obligations of truth and tolerance in our personal relations with associates who use profanity in our presence, who live with a partner out of wedlock, or who do not observe the Sabbath day appropriately. How should we react toward and communicate with them?
45. Our obligation to tolerance means that none of these behaviors—or others we consider deviations from the truth—should ever cause us to react with hateful communications or unkind actions. But our obligation to truth has its own set of requirements and its own set of blessings. When we “speak every man truth with his neighbour” (Ephesians 4:25), and when we “[speak] the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) as the Apostle Paul taught, we are acting as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, doing His work. Angels will stand with us, and He will send His Holy Spirit to guide us.
46. In this sensitive matter we should first consider whether or the extent to which we should communicate to our associates what we know to be true about their behavior. In most cases this decision can depend on how directly we are personally affected by it.
47. Profanity consistently used in our presence is an appropriate cause for us to communicate the fact that this is offensive to us. Profanity used out of our presence by nonbelievers probably would not be an occasion for us to confront the offenders.

48. Cohabitation we know to be a serious sin in which Latter-day Saints must not engage, whatever the circumstances. When practiced by those around us, it can be private behavior or something we are asked to condone, sponsor, or facilitate. In the balance between truth and tolerance, tolerance can be dominant where the behavior does not involve us personally. If the cohabitation does involve us personally, we should be governed by our duty to truth. For example, it is one thing to ignore serious sins when they are private; it is quite another thing to be asked to sponsor or impliedly endorse them, such as by housing them in our own homes.
49. On Sabbath observance, Latter-day Saints know that we are taught to observe the Sabbath day in a different way than many other Christians. Most of us are troubled by packed shopping centers and other commercial activities on the Sabbath. Perhaps we should explain our belief that our observance of the Sabbath, including our partaking of the sacrament, restores us spiritually and makes us better people for the rest of the week. Then, to other believers, we might express appreciation for the fact that we share common ground on what is most vital because each of us believes in God and in the existence of absolute truth, even though we differ in our definitions of these fundamentals. Beyond that, we should remember the Savior's teaching that we should avoid contention (see 3 Nephi 11:29–30) and that our example and our preaching should “be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness” (D&C 38:41).
50. In all of this we should not presume to judge our neighbors or associates on the ultimate effect of their behaviors. That judgment is the Lord's, not ours. Even He refrained from a final mortal judgment of the woman taken in adultery. Tolerance requires a similar refraining in our judgment of others.

### **Four Principles of Truth and Tolerance When Seeking Government Action**

51. Having discussed the balancing of truth and tolerance in our personal behavior and in our relations with associates, I come to a different and more difficult circumstance. When believers enter the public square to try to influence the making or the administration of laws motivated by their beliefs, they should apply some different principles.
52. As young adults, you may wonder why I am speaking to you about the principles we should follow when we seek government action, such as by the legislature. You might say, “That is a matter for senior Church authorities to handle.” I describe these principles to you young adults

because you are current members and future leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ, and you will need to decide these kinds of questions sooner than you think. You will need to understand how our efforts in the public square are informed by the balance between truth and tolerance.

53. Whether or how we might seek to obtain laws that would compel or influence behavior that we deem desirable because of our belief in God and His commandments is too large a subject for adequate treatment in the concluding few minutes of my talk. I will, therefore, limit myself to describing four paramount principles that should govern such an effort.
54. First, when believers in Jesus Christ take their views of truth into the public square, they must seek the inspiration of the Lord to be selective and wise in choosing which true principles they seek to promote by law or executive action. Generally, they should refrain from seeking laws or administrative action to facilitate beliefs that are distinctive to believers, such as the enforcement of acts of worship, even by implication. Believers can be less cautious in seeking government action that would serve principles broader than merely facilitating the practice of their beliefs, such as laws concerning public health, safety, and morals.
55. In any event, as defenders of the faith, believers can and must seek laws that will preserve religious freedom. Along with the ascendancy of moral relativism, the United States is experiencing a disturbing reduction in overall public esteem for religion. Once an accepted part of American life, religion is now suspect in the minds of many. To them it has become something that must prove its legitimacy as a part of our public life. Some influential voices even question the extent to which our constitution should protect the free exercise of religion, including the right to practice and preach religious principles.
56. This is a vital matter on which we who believe in a Supreme Being who has established absolute right and wrong in human behavior must unite to insist on our time-honored constitutional rights to exercise our religion, to vote our consciences on public issues, and to participate in elections and debates in the public square and in the halls of justice. In doing so we stand with angels. We must also stand shoulder to shoulder with other believers to preserve and strengthen the freedom to advocate and practice our religious beliefs, whatever they are. For this purpose we must walk together on the same path in order to secure our freedom to pursue our separate ways when that is necessary according to our separate beliefs. Guided by heaven in this righteous cause, our words will be sweet and find place in the hearts of many.

57. Second, when believers seek to promote their positions in the public square, their methods and their advocacy should always be tolerant of the opinions and positions of others who do not share their beliefs. We should not add to the extremism that divides our society. As believers, we must always speak with love and show patience, understanding, and compassion toward our adversaries. Christian believers are under command to love their neighbors (see Luke 10:27), to forgive (see Matthew 18:21–35), and to do good to those who spitefully use them (see Matthew 5:44). They should always remember the Savior’s teaching that we “bless them that curse [us], do good to them that hate [us], and pray for them which spitefully use [us], and persecute [us]” (Matthew 5:44).

58. As believers, we should also frame our arguments and positions in ways that contribute to the reasoned discussion and accommodation that are essential to democratic government in a pluralistic society. By this means we will contribute to the civility that is essential to preserve our civilization.

59. Third, believers should not be deterred by the familiar charge that they are trying to legislate morality. Many areas of the law are based on Judeo-Christian morality and have been for centuries. Our civilization is based on morality and cannot exist without it. As John Adams declared: “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”<sup>15</sup>

60. Fourth, believers should not shrink from seeking laws to maintain public conditions or policies that assist them in practicing the requirements of their faith where those conditions or policies are also favorable to the public health, safety, or morals. For example, even though religious beliefs are behind many criminal laws, and some family laws, such laws have a long-standing history of appropriateness in democratic societies. But where believers are in the majority, they should always be sensitive to the views of the minority.

61. We Latter-day Saints are sometimes accused of being self-righteous and intolerant of others, especially where we are in the majority or where others are in the majority and our beliefs cause us to oppose them. Surely Latter-day Saints do need to be more wise and skillful in explaining and pursuing our views and in exercising our influence when we have it.

62. That is the spirit of the two-sided coin of truth and tolerance. President Thomas S. Monson has provided an excellent example of the practice of these twin virtues. Throughout his life he has been exemplary in reaching out and working with the members and leaders of other

faiths in cooperative efforts on matters of common interest and in the Christian fellowship and concern that have no denominational boundaries.<sup>16</sup>

63. Finally, the spirit of our balance of truth and tolerance is applied in these words of President Gordon B. Hinckley: “Let us reach out to those in our community who are not of our faith. Let us be good neighbors, kind and generous and gracious. Let us be involved in good community causes. There may be situations, there will be situations, where, with serious moral issues involved, we cannot bend on matters of principle. But in such instances we can politely disagree without being disagreeable. We can acknowledge the sincerity of those whose positions we cannot accept. We can speak of principles rather than personalities.”<sup>17</sup>

### **The Gift to Know and the Gift to Believe**

64. I close with this assurance and this testimony:

65. The Bible teaches that one of the functions of a prophet is to be a “watchman” to warn Israel (see Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7). In revelation the Lord added this parable for modern Zion: “Set ... a watchman upon the tower,” who will “[see] the enemy while he [is] yet afar off” and give warning to save the “vineyard from the hands of the destroyer” (D&C 101:45, 54).

66. I have spoken to you as one of those watchmen on the subject the Spirit has assigned me. I assure you that my message is true. If you have doubts about this, or if you have questions about how to apply these principles in your own life, I urge you to seek guidance from the same source.

67. On the broader question being widely agitated by the atheists of our day, I proclaim my knowledge that God lives! His creations witness His existence, and His servants hear and proclaim His voice. Modern revelation teaches that some have the gift “to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, ... crucified for the sins of the world,” and that it is given to others “to believe on their words” (D&C 46:13–14). As one who knows, I invite you to believe on my words.

68. I testify of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the vineyard. He is our Savior, and He reaches out to each of us with the timeless invitation to receive His peace by learning of Him and by walking in His way (see D&C 19:23):

69. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

70. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.



71. “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

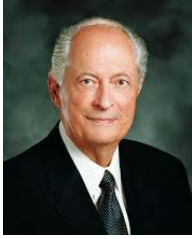
72. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. “Oh Say, What Is Truth?” Hymns, no. 272.
2. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 1.
3. See “Anarchy in the UK,” *The Economist*, Aug. 13, 2011, 14; Patrick Jonsson, “Is the US a Nation of Liars?” *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 25, 2011, 20.
4. Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (1993), 225.
5. “Campus Confidential,” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 5, 2002, W11.
6. See, for example, John Paul II: *The Encyclicals in Everyday Language*, 3rd ed., ed. Joseph G. Donders (2005), 210–13; Harold Kushner, *Who Needs God* (1989), 83–84.
7. “Oh Say, What Is Truth?” Hymns, no. 272.
8. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 665.
9. Alwi Shihab, *Building Bridges to Harmony Through Understanding* (forum address at Brigham Young University, Oct. 10, 2006), <http://speeches.byu.edu/reader/reader.php?id=11324>.
10. Eric Rassbach, quoted in William McGurn, “Religion and the Cult of Tolerance,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 16, 2011, A11.
11. Letter to Dallin H. Oaks, May 14, 1998.
12. Boyd K. Packer, “Be Not Afraid” (address at the Ogden Institute of Religion, Nov. 16, 2008), 5; see also Bruce D. Porter, “Defending the Family in a Troubled World,” *Ensign*, June 2011, 12–18.
13. Letter to Dallin H. Oaks, Dec. 22, 1987.
14. Thomas S. Monson, in *Conference Report*, Apr. 2008, 66; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 65.
15. John Adams, from an address to officers of the militia of Massachusetts, Oct. 11, 1798, in *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, ed. Charles Francis Adams, 10 vols. (1856), 9:229.
16. See Heidi S. Swinton, *To the Rescue: The Biography of Thomas S. Monson* (2010), especially chapters 25 and 28 and pages 462–63.
17. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 662.

Truth And Tolerance  
(QR Code)





## Preserving Agency, Protecting Religious Freedom

Elder Robert D. Hales  
General Conference, April 2015



1. This is Easter Sunday: a day of gratitude and remembrance honoring our Savior Jesus Christ's Atonement and Resurrection for all mankind. We worship Him, grateful for our freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and our God-given right of agency.
2. As prophets foretold about these latter days in which we live, there are many confused about who we are and what we believe. Some are "false accusers ... [and] despisers of those that are good."<sup>1</sup> Others "call evil good, and good evil; [and] put darkness for light, and light for darkness."<sup>2</sup>
3. As those around us make choices about how to respond to our beliefs, we must not forget that moral agency is an essential part of God's plan for all His children. That eternal plan, presented to us in the premortal Council in Heaven, included the gift of agency.<sup>3</sup>
4. In that Grand Council, Lucifer, known as Satan, used his agency to oppose God's plan. God said: "Because ... Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, ... I caused that he should be cast down."<sup>4</sup>
5. He continued: "And also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency."<sup>5</sup>
6. As a result, Heavenly Father's spirit children who chose to reject His plan and follow Lucifer lost their divine destiny.
7. Jesus Christ, using His agency, said: "Here am I, send me."<sup>6</sup> "Thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever."<sup>7</sup>
8. Jesus, who exercised His agency to sustain Heavenly Father's plan, was identified and appointed by the Father as our Savior, foreordained to perform the atoning sacrifice for all. Similarly, our exercise of agency to keep the commandments enables us to fully understand who we are and receive all of the blessings our Heavenly Father has—including the opportunity to have a body, to progress, to experience joy, to have a family, and to inherit eternal life.
9. To keep the commandments, we need to know the official doctrine of the Church so we are not diverted from Christ's leadership by the ever-changing whims of individuals.
10. The blessings we enjoy now are because we made the choice to follow the Savior before this life. To everyone hearing or reading these words, whoever you are and whatever your past may be, remember this: it is not too late to make that same choice again and follow Him.
11. Through our faith in Jesus Christ, believing in His Atonement, repenting of our sins, and being baptized, we may then receive the supernal gift of the Holy Ghost. This gift provides knowledge and understanding, guidance and strength to learn and gain a testimony, power, cleansing to overcome sin, and comfort and encouragement to be faithful in tribulation. These incomparable blessings of the Spirit increase our freedom and power to do what is right, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."<sup>8</sup>
12. As we walk the path of spiritual liberty in these last days, we must understand that the faithful use of our agency depends upon our having religious freedom. We already know that Satan does not want this freedom to be ours. He attempted to destroy moral agency in heaven, and now on earth he is fiercely undermining, opposing, and spreading confusion about religious freedom—what it is and why it is essential to our spiritual life and our very salvation.
13. There are four cornerstones of religious freedom that we as Latter-day Saints must rely upon and protect.
14. The first is freedom to believe. No one should be criticized, persecuted, or attacked by individuals, or governments either, for what he or she believes about God. It is very personal and very important. An early declaration of our beliefs regarding religious liberty states:
15. "No government can exist in peace, except such laws are

framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience. ...

16. "... The civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control conscience [or] suppress the freedom of the soul."<sup>9</sup>
17. This fundamental freedom of belief has since been acknowledged by the United Nations in its Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by other national and international human rights documents.<sup>10</sup>
18. The second cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to share our faith and our beliefs with others. The Lord commands us, "Ye shall teach [the gospel to] your children ... when thou sittest in thine house."<sup>11</sup> He also said to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."<sup>12</sup> As parents, full-time missionaries, and member missionaries, we rely on religious freedom in order to teach the Lord's doctrine in our families and throughout the world.
19. The third cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to form a religious organization, a church, to worship peacefully with others. The eleventh article of faith declares, "We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may." International human rights documents and many national constitutions support this principle.
20. The fourth cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to live our faith—free exercise of faith not just in the home and chapel but also in public places. The Lord commands us not only to pray privately<sup>13</sup> but also to go forth and "let [our] light so shine before men, that they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father which is in heaven."<sup>14</sup>
21. Some are offended when we bring our religion into the public square, yet the same people who insist that their viewpoints and actions be tolerated in society are often very slow to give that same tolerance to religious believers who also wish their viewpoints and actions to be tolerated. The general lack of respect for religious viewpoints is quickly devolving into social and political intolerance for religious people and institutions.
22. As we face increased pressure to bow to secular standards, forfeit our religious liberties, and compromise our agency, consider what the Book of Mormon teaches about our responsibilities. In the book of Alma we read of Amlici, "a very cunning" and "wicked man" who sought to be king over the people and "deprive them of their rights and privileges," which "was alarming to the people of the church."<sup>15</sup> They were taught by King Moriah to raise their voices for what they felt was right.<sup>16</sup> Therefore they "assembled themselves together throughout all the land, every man according to his mind, whether it were for or against Amlici, in separate bodies, having much dispute ... one with another."<sup>17</sup>
23. In these discussions, members of the Church and others had the opportunity to come together, experience the spirit of unity, and be influenced by the Holy Ghost. "And it came to pass that the voice of the people came against Amlici, that he was not made king."<sup>18</sup>
24. As disciples of Jesus Christ we have a responsibility to work together with like-minded believers, to raise our voices for what is right. While members should never claim or even imply that they are speaking for the Church, we are all invited, in our capacity as citizens, to share our personal witness with conviction and love—"every man [and woman] according to his [or her own] mind."<sup>19</sup>
25. Said the Prophet Joseph Smith:  
"I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination [as for a Mormon]; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves.
26. "It is a love of liberty which inspires my soul—civil and religious liberty to the whole of the human race."<sup>20</sup>
27. Brothers and sisters, we are responsible to safeguard these sacred freedoms and rights for ourselves and our posterity. What can you and I do?
28. First, we can become informed. Be aware of issues in your community that could have an impact on religious liberty.
29. Second, in your individual capacity, join with others who share our commitment to religious freedom. Work side by side to protect religious freedom.
30. Third, live your life to be a good example of what you believe—in word and deed. How we live our religion is far more important than what we may say about our religion.
31. Our Savior's Second Coming is drawing nearer. Let us not delay in this great cause. Remember Captain Moroni, who hoisted the title of liberty inscribed with the words "In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children."<sup>21</sup> Let us remember the people's response: exercising their

agency, they “came running together” with a covenant to act.<sup>22</sup>

32. My beloved brothers and sisters, don't walk! Run! Run to receive the blessings of agency by following the Holy Ghost and exercising the freedoms God has given us to do His will.
33. I bear my special witness on this special Easter day that Jesus Christ used His agency to do our Father's will.
34. Of our Savior, we sing, “His precious blood he freely spilt; His life he freely gave.”<sup>23</sup> And because He did, we have the priceless opportunity “to choose liberty and eternal life” through the power and blessings of His Atonement.<sup>24</sup> May we freely choose to follow Him today and always, I pray in His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. 2 Timothy 3:3.
2. Isaiah 5:20.
3. See Moses 6:56.
4. Moses 4:3.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 29:36.
6. Abraham 3:27.
7. Moses 4:2.
8. 2 Corinthians 3:17.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 134:2, 4.
10. See the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by United Nations General Assembly on Dec. 10, 1948, [un.org/en/documents/udhr](http://un.org/en/documents/udhr). Article 18 states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.” See also article 9 of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, ratified on Sept. 3, 1953, [conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/005.htm](http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/005.htm).
11. Deuteronomy 11:19.
12. Mark 16:15.
13. See Matthew 6:6.
14. Matthew 5:16.
15. See Alma 2:1–4.
16. See Mosiah 29:25–26.
17. Alma 2:5; emphasis added.
18. Alma 2:7.
19. Alma 2:5.
20. Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007), 345.
21. Alma 46:12.
22. Alma 46:21.
23. “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” Hymns, no. 195.
24. 2 Nephi 2:27.

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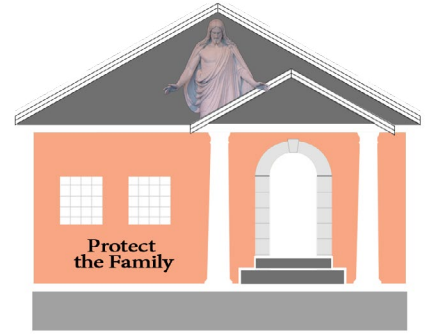
Preserving Agency, Protecting  
Religious Freedom  
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## The Challenge to Become

Elder Dallin H. Oaks  
General Conference, October 2000



1. The Apostle Paul taught that the Lord's teachings and teachers were given that we may all attain "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). This process requires far more than acquiring knowledge. It is not even enough for us to be convinced of the gospel; we must act and think so that we are converted by it. In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to know something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to become something.
2. Many Bible and modern scriptures speak of a final judgment at which all persons will be rewarded according to their deeds or works or the desires of their hearts. But other scriptures enlarge upon this by referring to our being judged by the condition we have achieved.
3. The prophet Nephi describes the Final Judgment in terms of what we have become: "And if their works have been filthiness they must needs be filthy; and if they be filthy it must needs be that they cannot dwell in the kingdom of God" (1 Ne. 15:33; emphasis added). Moroni declares, "He that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still" (Morm. 9:14; emphasis added; see also Rev. 22:11-12; 2 Ne. 9:16; D&C 88:35). The same would be true of "selfish" or "disobedient" or any other personal attribute inconsistent with the requirements of God. Referring to the "state" of the wicked in the Final Judgment, Alma explains that if we are condemned by our words, our works, and our thoughts, "we shall not be found spotless; . . . and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God" (Alma 12:14).
4. From such teachings we conclude that the Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts--what we have done. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts--what we have become. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.
5. A parable illustrates this understanding. A wealthy father knew that if he were to bestow his wealth upon a child who had not yet developed the needed wisdom and stature, the inheritance would probably be wasted. The father said to his child:
  6. "All that I have I desire to give you--not only my wealth, but also my position and standing among men. That which I have I can easily give you, but that which I am you must obtain for yourself. You will qualify for your inheritance by learning what I have learned and by living as I have lived. I will give you the laws and principles by which I have acquired my wisdom and stature. Follow my example, mastering as I have mastered, and you will become as I am, and all that I have will be yours."
  7. This parable parallels the pattern of heaven. The gospel of Jesus Christ promises the incomparable inheritance of eternal life, the fulness of the Father, and reveals the laws and principles by which it can be obtained.
  8. We qualify for eternal life through a process of conversion. As used here, this word of many meanings signifies not just a convincing but a profound change of nature. Jesus used this meaning when he taught His chief Apostle the difference between a testimony and a conversion. Jesus asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matt. 16:13). Next He asked, "But whom say ye that I am?"
  9. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
  10. "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:15-17).
  11. Peter had a testimony. He knew that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, and he declared it. To testify is to know and to declare.
  12. Later on, Jesus taught these same men about conversion, which is far more than testimony. When the disciples asked who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the

midst of them,

13. “And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.
14. “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:2-4; emphasis added).
15. Later, the Savior confirmed the importance of being converted, even for those with a testimony of the truth. In the sublime instructions given at the Last Supper, He told Simon Peter, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32).
16. In order to strengthen his brethren--to nourish and lead the flock of God--this man who had followed Jesus for three years, who had been given the authority of the holy apostleship, who had been a valiant teacher and testifier of the Christian gospel, and whose testimony had caused the Master to declare him blessed still had to be “converted.”
17. Jesus’ challenge shows that the conversion He required for those who would enter the kingdom of heaven (see Matt. 18:3) was far more than just being converted to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel. To testify is to know and to declare. The gospel challenges us to be “converted,” which requires us to do and to become. If any of us relies solely upon our knowledge and testimony of the gospel, we are in the same position as the blessed but still unfinished Apostles whom Jesus challenged to be “converted.” We all know someone who has a strong testimony but does not act upon it so as to be converted. For example, returned missionaries, are you still seeking to be converted, or are you caught up in the ways of the world?
18. The needed conversion by the gospel begins with the introductory experience the scriptures call being “born again” (e.g., Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49; John 3:7; 1 Pet. 1:23). In the waters of baptism and by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, we become the spiritual “sons and daughters” of Jesus Christ, “new creatures” who can “inherit the kingdom of God” (Mosiah 27:25-26).
19. In teaching the Nephites, the Savior referred to what they must become. He challenged them to repent and be baptized and be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, “that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day” (3 Ne. 27:20). He concluded: “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Ne. 27:27).
20. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the plan by which we can become what children of God are supposed to become. This spotless and perfected state will result from a steady succession of covenants, ordinances, and actions, an accumulation of right choices, and from continuing repentance. “This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God” (Alma 34:32).
21. Now is the time for each of us to work toward our personal conversion, toward becoming what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. As we do so, we should remember that our family relationships--even more than our Church callings--are the setting in which the most important part of that development can occur. The conversion we must achieve requires us to be a good husband and father or a good wife and mother. Being a successful Church leader is not enough. Exaltation is an eternal family experience, and it is our mortal family experiences that are best suited to prepare us for it.
22. The Apostle John spoke of what we are challenged to become when he said: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn. 3:2; see also Moro. 7:48).
23. I hope the importance of conversion and becoming will cause our local leaders to reduce their concentration on statistical measures of actions and to focus more on what our brothers and sisters are and what they are striving to become.
24. Our needed conversions are often achieved more readily by suffering and adversity than by comfort and tranquility, as Elder Hales taught us so beautifully this morning. Father Lehi promised his son Jacob that God would “consecrate [his] afflictions for [his] gain” (2 Ne. 2:2). The Prophet Joseph was promised that “thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high” (D&C 121:7-8).
25. Most of us experience some measure of what the scriptures call “the furnace of affliction” (Isa. 48:10; 1 Ne. 20:10). Some are submerged in service to a disadvantaged family member. Others suffer the death of a loved one or the loss or postponement of a righteous goal like marriage or childbearing. Still others struggle with personal impairments or with feelings of rejection, inadequacy, or depression. Through the justice and mercy of a loving Father in Heaven, the refinement and sanctification possible through such experiences can help us achieve what God desires us to become.
26. We are challenged to move through a process of conversion toward that status and condition called eternal life. This is achieved not just by doing what is right, but by

doing it for the right reason--for the pure love of Christ. The Apostle Paul illustrated this in his famous teaching about the importance of charity (see 1 Cor. 13). The reason charity never fails and the reason charity is greater than even the most significant acts of goodness he cited is that charity, “the pure love of Christ” (Moro. 7:47), is not an act but a condition or state of being. Charity is attained through a succession of acts that result in a conversion. Charity is something one becomes. Thus, as Moroni declared, “except men shall have charity they cannot inherit” the place prepared for them in the mansions of the Father (Ether 12:34; emphasis added).

27. All of this helps us understand an important meaning of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, which the Savior gave to explain what the kingdom of heaven is like. As you remember, the owner of the vineyard hired laborers at different times of the day. Some he sent into the vineyard early in the morning, others about the third hour, and others in the sixth and ninth hours. Finally, in the eleventh hour he sent others into the vineyard, promising that he would also pay them “whatsoever is right” (Matt. 20:7).
28. At the end of the day the owner of the vineyard gave the same wage to every worker, even to those who had come in the eleventh hour. When those who had worked the entire day saw this, “they murmured against the goodman of the house” (Matt. 20:11). The owner did not yield but merely pointed out that he had done no one any wrong, since he had paid each man the agreed amount.
29. Like other parables, this one can teach several different and valuable principles. For present purposes its lesson is that the Master’s reward in the Final Judgment will not be based on how long we have labored in the vineyard. We do not obtain our heavenly reward by punching a time clock. What is essential is that our labors in the workplace of the Lord have caused us to become something. For some of us, this requires a longer time than for others. What is important in the end is what we have become by our labors. Many who come in the eleventh hour have been refined and prepared by the Lord in ways other than formal employment in the vineyard. These workers are like the prepared dry mix to which it is only necessary to “add water”--the perfecting ordinance of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. With that addition--even in the eleventh hour--these workers are in the same state of development and qualified to receive the same reward as those who have labored long in the vineyard.
30. This parable teaches us that we should never give up hope and loving associations with family members and friends whose fine qualities (see Moro. 7:5-14) evidence their progress toward what a loving Father would have

them become. Similarly, the power of the Atonement and the principle of repentance show that we should never give up on loved ones who now seem to be making many wrong choices.

31. Instead of being judgmental about others, we should be concerned about ourselves. We must not give up hope. We must not stop striving. We are children of God, and it is possible for us to become what our Heavenly Father would have us become.
32. How can we measure our progress? The scriptures suggest various ways. I will mention only two.
33. After King Benjamin’s great sermon, many of his hearers cried out that the Spirit of the Lord “has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). If we are losing our desire to do evil, we are progressing toward our heavenly goal.
34. The Apostle Paul said that persons who have received the Spirit of God “have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). I understand this to mean that persons who are proceeding toward the needed conversion are beginning to see things as our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, see them. They are hearing His voice instead of the voice of the world, and they are doing things in His way instead of by the ways of the world.
35. I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, whose Church this is. I testify with gratitude of the plan of the Father under which, through the Resurrection and Atonement of our Savior, we have the assurance of immortality and the opportunity to become what is necessary for eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Challenge to Become  
(QR Code)



# Unit 6 Additional Readings

Links and QR Codes



[Elder Quentin L. Cook, “Let There Be Light”](#)



Let There Be Light

[Elder M. Russell Ballard, “Let Our Voices Be Heard”](#)



Let Our Voices Be Heard

[Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “Religious Freedom”](#)



Religious Freedom



