

“One of the most important ways to foster unity in the home is holding family home evening regularly. Whether we are young or old, single or married, whether we have children at home or have become empty nesters, family home evening can increase unity and love in our homes. Family home evening is for everyone.” -- President James E. Faust

“The ideal way to transform your home into a house of learning is to hold family home evening faithfully. The Church has reserved Monday evening for that purpose. In 1915, the First Presidency instructed local leaders and parents to inaugurate a home evening, a time when parents should teach their families the principles of the gospel. The Presidency wrote: “If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influence and temptations which beset them.”⁴ President David O. McKay gave the same promise in 1965 and added that the youth will gain power “to choose righteousness and peace, and be assured an eternal place in the family circle of our Father.”⁵ In 1976, the Presidency reaffirmed that “regular participation in family home evening will develop increased personal worth, family unity, love for our fellowmen, and trust in our Father in heaven.”⁶ Considering these glorious promises, we would expect every faithful member to be exceedingly diligent in following this prophetic counsel. “ – Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

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**The Family: A Proclamation to the World
The First Presidency and Council of the
Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus
Christ of Latter-Day Saints**

We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose. In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

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

We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We

affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God’s eternal plan. Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. “Children are an heritage of the Lord” ([Psalm 127:3](#)). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations. The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed. We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will

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

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

Celestial Marriage
[Elder Russell M. Nelson](#)
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

[The] proclamation on the family helps us realize that celestial marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other relationship.

My beloved brethren and sisters, I am deeply grateful for each of you. Together we feel a profound sense of [gratitude](#) for the gospel of [Jesus Christ](#). In this world abounding with misery, we are truly thankful for God’s “great plan of happiness.”¹ His plan declares that men and women are “that they might have joy.”² That joy comes when we choose to live in harmony with God’s eternal plan.

The importance of choice may be illustrated by a homespun concept that came to mind one day when I was shopping in a large retail store. I call it “patterns of the shopper.” As shopping is part of our daily life, these patterns may be familiar.

Wise shoppers study their options thoroughly before they make a selection. They focus primarily on the quality and durability of a desired product. They want the very best. In contrast, some shoppers look for bargains, and others may splurge, only to learn later—much to their dismay—that their choice did not endure well. And sadly, there are those rare individuals who cast aside their personal integrity and steal what they want. We call them shoplifters. The patterns of the shopper may be applied to the topic of marriage. A couple in love can choose a marriage of the highest quality or a lesser type that will not endure. Or they can choose neither and brazenly steal what they want as “marital shoplifters.”

The subject of marriage is debated across the world, where various arrangements exist for conjugal living. My purpose in speaking

out on this topic is to declare, as an Apostle of the Lord,³ that marriage between a man and a woman is sacred—it is ordained of God.⁴ I also assert the virtue of a temple marriage. It is the highest and most enduring type of marriage that our Creator can offer to His children.

While salvation is an individual matter, exaltation is a [family](#) matter.⁵ Only those who are married in the temple and whose marriage is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise will continue as spouses after death⁶ and receive the highest degree of celestial glory, or exaltation. A temple marriage is also called a celestial marriage. Within the celestial glory are three levels. To obtain the highest, a husband and wife must be sealed for time and all eternity and keep their covenants made in a holy temple.⁷

The noblest yearning of the human heart is for a marriage that can endure beyond death. Fidelity to a temple marriage does that. It allows families to be together forever.

This goal is glorious. All Church activities, advancements, quorums, and classes are means to the end of an exalted family.⁸

To make this goal possible, our Heavenly Father has restored priesthood keys in this dispensation so that essential ordinances in His plan can be performed by proper authority. Heavenly messengers—including John the Baptist,⁹ Peter, James, and John;¹⁰ [Moses](#), Elias, and Elijah¹¹—have participated in that restoration.¹²

Knowledge of this revealed truth is spreading across the earth.¹³ We, as the Lord’s prophets and apostles, again proclaim to the world that “the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”¹⁴

We further proclaim that “all human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of

individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

“In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. [Heavenly Father’s great] plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.”¹⁵

That proclamation on the family helps us realize that celestial marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other relationship.¹⁶ The earth was created and this Church was restored so that families could be formed, sealed, and exalted eternally.¹⁷

Scriptures declare that “it is lawful that [a man] should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation.”¹⁸

Another affirms that “the man [is not] without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.”¹⁹ Thus, marriage is not only an exalting principle of the gospel; it is a divine commandment. Our Heavenly Father declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the [immortality](#) and eternal life of man.”²⁰ The Atonement of His Beloved Son enabled both of these objectives to be realized. Because of the Atonement, immortality—or [resurrection](#) from the dead—became a reality for all.²¹ And because of the Atonement, eternal life—which is living forever in God’s presence, the “greatest of all the gifts of God”²²—became a possibility. To qualify for eternal life, we must make an eternal and everlasting covenant with our Heavenly Father.²³ This means that a temple marriage

is not only between husband and wife; it embraces a partnership with God.²⁴

The family proclamation also reminds us that “husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other.”²⁵ Children born of that union are “an heritage of the Lord.”²⁶ When a family is sealed in the temple, that family may become as eternal as the kingdom of God itself.²⁷

Such a reward requires more than a hopeful wish. On occasion, I read in a newspaper obituary of an expectation that a recent death has reunited that person with a deceased spouse, when, in fact, they did *not* choose the eternal option. Instead, they opted for a marriage that was valid only as long as they both should live. Heavenly Father had offered them a supernal gift, but they refused it. And in rejecting the gift, they rejected the Giver of the gift.²⁸

One strong sentence of scripture clearly distinguishes between a hopeful wish and eternal truth: “All covenants, contracts, ... obligations, oaths, vows, ... or expectations, that are *not* made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, ... are of *no* efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are *not* made unto this end have an end when men are dead.”²⁹

These truths are absolute. Members of this Church invite all people to learn them and to qualify for eternal life.³⁰ We invite all to gain faith in God the Eternal Father and in His Son, Jesus [Christ](#), to repent, to receive the Holy Ghost, to obtain the blessings of the temple, to make and keep sacred covenants, and to endure to the end. Mercifully, God’s great plan of happiness and its eternal blessings can be extended to those who did not have the opportunity to hear the gospel in mortality. Temple

ordinances can be done vicariously for them.³¹

But what of the many mature members of the Church who are not married? Through no failing of their own, they deal with the trials of life alone. Be we all reminded that, in the Lord's own way and time, no blessings will be withheld from His faithful Saints.³² The Lord will judge and reward each individual according to heartfelt desire as well as deed.³³

Meanwhile, mortal misunderstandings can make mischief in a marriage. In fact, each marriage starts with two built-in handicaps. It involves two imperfect people. Happiness can come to them only through their earnest effort. Just as harmony comes from an orchestra only when its members make a concerted effort, so harmony in marriage also requires a concerted effort. That effort will succeed if each partner will minimize personal demands and maximize actions of loving selflessness.

President Thomas S. Monson has said: "To find real happiness, we must seek for it in a focus outside ourselves. No one has learned the meaning of living until he has surrendered his ego to the service of his fellow man. Service to others is akin to duty—the fulfillment of which brings true joy."³⁴

Harmony in marriage comes only when one esteems the welfare of his or her spouse among the highest of priorities. When that really happens, a celestial marriage becomes a reality, bringing great joy in this life and in the life to come.

God's plan of happiness allows us to choose for ourselves. As with the patterns of the shopper, we may choose celestial marriage or lesser alternatives.³⁵ Some marital options are cheap, some are costly, and some are cunningly crafted by the adversary. Beware of his options; they always breed misery!³⁶ The best choice is a celestial marriage. Thankfully, if a lesser choice has previously

been made, a choice can now be made to upgrade it to the best choice. That requires a mighty change of heart³⁷ and a permanent personal upgrade.³⁸ Blessings so derived are worth all efforts made.³⁹

The full realization of the blessings of a temple marriage is almost beyond our mortal comprehension. Such a marriage will continue to grow in the celestial realm. There we can become perfected.⁴⁰ As Jesus ultimately received the fulness of the glory of the Father,⁴¹ so we may "come unto the Father ... and in due time receive of his fulness."⁴²

Celestial marriage is a pivotal part of preparation for eternal life. It requires one to be married to the right person, in the right place, by the right authority, and to obey that sacred covenant faithfully.⁴³ Then one may be assured of exaltation in the celestial kingdom of God. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Eternal Blessings of Marriage **[Richard G. Scott](#)** **Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

The temple sealing has greater meaning as life unfolds. It will help you draw ever closer together and find greater joy and fulfillment.

That beautiful message by this magnificent choir describes, I think, the pattern of life for so many of us: "trying to be like Jesus." On July 16, 1953, my beloved Jeanene and I knelt as a young couple at an altar in the Manti Utah Temple. President Lewis R. Anderson exercised the sealing authority and pronounced us husband and wife, wedded for time and for all eternity. I have no power to describe the peace and serenity that come from the assurance that as I continue to live worthily, I will be able to be with my beloved Jeanene and our children

forever because of that sacred ordinance performed with the proper priesthood authority in the house of the Lord. Our seven children are bound to us by the sacred ordinances of the temple. My precious wife, Jeanene, and two of our children are beyond the veil. They provide a powerful motivation for each remaining member of our [family](#) to live so that together we will receive all of the eternal blessings promised in the temple.

Two of the vital pillars that sustain Father in Heaven's plan of happiness are marriage and the family. Their lofty significance is underscored by Satan's relentless efforts to splinter the family and to undermine the significance of temple ordinances, which bind the family together for eternity. The temple sealing has greater meaning as life unfolds. It will help you draw ever closer together and find greater joy and fulfillment in mortality.

Once I learned an important lesson from my wife. I traveled extensively in my profession. I had been gone almost two weeks and returned home one Saturday morning. I had four hours before I needed to attend another meeting. I noticed that our little washing machine had broken down and my wife was washing the clothes by hand. I began to fix the machine.

Jeanene came by and said, "Rich, what are you doing?"

I said, "I'm repairing the washing machine so you don't have to do this by hand."

She said, "No. Go play with the children."

I said, "I can play with the children anytime. I want to help you."

Then she said, "Richard, please go play with the children."

When she spoke to me that authoritatively, I obeyed.

I had a marvelous time with our children. We chased each other around and rolled in the fall leaves. Later I went to my meeting. I probably would have forgotten that

experience were it not for the lesson that she wanted me to learn.

The next morning about 4:00 a.m., I was awakened as I felt two little arms around my neck, a kiss on the cheek, and these words whispered in my ear, which I will never forget: "Dad, I love you. You are my best friend."

If you are having that kind of experience in your family, you are having one of the supernal joys of life.

If you are a young man of appropriate age and are not married, don't waste time in idle pursuits. Get on with life and focus on getting married. Don't just coast through this period of life. Young men, serve a worthy mission. Then make your highest priority finding a worthy, eternal companion. When you find you are developing an interest in a young woman, show her that you are an exceptional person that she would find interesting to know better. Take her to places that are worthwhile. Show some ingenuity. If you want to have a wonderful wife, you need to have her see you as a wonderful man and prospective husband.

If you have found someone, you can form an extraordinarily wonderful courtship and marriage and be very, very happy eternally by staying within the bounds of worthiness the Lord has established.

If you are married, are you faithful to your spouse mentally as well as physically? Are you loyal to your marriage covenants by never engaging in conversation with another person that you wouldn't want your spouse to overhear? Are you kind and supportive of your spouse and children?

Brethren, do you lead out in family activities such as scripture study, family prayer, and family home evening, or does your wife fill in the gap your lack of attention leaves in the home? Do you tell your wife often how very much you love her? It will bring her great happiness. I've heard men tell me

when I say that, “Oh, she knows.” You need to tell her. A woman grows and is greatly blessed by that reassurance. Express [gratitude](#) for what your spouse does for you. Express that love and gratitude often. That will make life far richer and more pleasant and purposeful. Don’t withhold those natural expressions of love. And it works a lot better if you are holding her close while you tell her.

I learned from my wife the importance of expressions of love. Early in our marriage, often I would open my scriptures to give a message in a meeting, and I would find an affectionate, supportive note Jeanene had slipped into the pages. Sometimes they were so tender that I could hardly talk. Those precious notes from a loving wife were and continue to be a priceless treasure of comfort and inspiration.

I began to do the same thing with her, not realizing how much it truly meant to her. I remember one year we didn’t have the resources for me to give her a valentine, so I decided to paint a watercolor on the front of the refrigerator. I did the best I could; only I made one mistake. It was enamel paint, not watercolor. She never let me try to remove that permanent paint from the refrigerator. I remember one day I took some of those little round paper circles that form when you punch holes in paper, and I wrote on them the numbers 1 to 100. I turned each over and wrote her a message, one word on each circle. Then I scooped them up and put them in an envelope. I thought she would get a good laugh.

When she passed away, I found in her private things how much she appreciated the simple messages that we shared with each other. I noted that she had carefully pasted every one of those circles on a piece of paper. She not only kept my notes to her, but she protected them with plastic coverings as if they were a valuable treasure. There is only one that she didn’t put with the others.

It is still behind the glass in our kitchen clock. It reads, “Jeanene, it is time to tell you I love you.” It remains there and reminds me of that exceptional daughter of Father in Heaven.

As I have thought back over our life together, I realize how blessed we’ve been. We have not had arguments in our home or unkind words between us. Now I realize that blessing came because of her. It resulted from her willingness to give, to share, and to never think of herself. In our later life together, I tried to emulate her example. I suggest that as husband and wife you do the same in your home.

Pure love is an incomparable, potent power for good. Righteous love is the foundation of a successful marriage. It is the primary cause of contented, well-developed children. Who can justly measure the righteous influence of a mother’s love? What enduring fruits result from the seeds of truth that a mother carefully plants and lovingly cultivates in the fertile soil of a child’s trusting mind and heart? As a mother you have been given divine instincts to help you sense your child’s special talents and unique capacities. With your husband you can nurture, strengthen, and cause those traits to flower. It is so rewarding to be married. Marriage is wonderful. In time you begin to think alike and have the same ideas and impressions. You have times when you are extremely happy, times of testing, and times of trial, but the Lord guides you through all of those growth experiences together.

One night our little son Richard, who had a heart problem, awoke crying. The two of us heard it. Normally my wife always got up to take care of a crying baby, but this time I said, “I’ll take care of him.”

Because of his problem, when he began to cry, his little heart would pound very rapidly. He would throw up and soil the bed clothing. That night I held him very close to try to calm his racing heart and stop his

crying as I changed his clothes and put on new bedsheets. I held him until he went to sleep. I didn't know then that just a few months later he would pass away. I will always remember holding him in my arms in the middle of that night.

I remember well the day he passed away. As Jeanene and I drove from the hospital, we pulled over to the side of the road. I held her in my arms. Each of us cried some, but we realized that we would have him beyond the veil because of the covenants we had made in the temple. That made his loss somewhat easier to accept.

Jeanene's kindness taught me so many valuable things. I was so immature, and she was so disciplined and so spiritual. Marriage provides an ideal setting for overcoming any tendency to be selfish or self-centered. I think one of the reasons that we are counseled to get married early in life is to avoid developing inappropriate character traits that are hard to change.

I feel sorry for any man who hasn't yet made the choice to seek an eternal companion, and my heart weeps for the sisters who haven't had the opportunity to marry. Some of you may feel lonely and unappreciated and cannot see how it will be possible for you to have the blessings of marriage and children or your own family. All things are possible to the Lord, and He keeps the promises He inspires His prophets to declare. Eternity is a long time. Have faith in those promises and live to be worthy of them so that in His time the Lord can make them come true in your life. With certainty, you will receive every promised blessing for which you are worthy.

Please pardon me for speaking of my precious wife, Jeanene, but we are an [eternal family](#). She was always joyously happy, and much of it came from service to others.

Even while very ill, in her morning prayer she would ask her Father in Heaven to lead her to someone she could help. That sincere

supplication was answered time and again. The burdens of many were eased; their lives were brightened. She was blessed continually for being an instrument directed by the Lord.

I know what it is to love a daughter of Father in Heaven who with grace and devotion lived the full feminine splendor of her righteous womanhood. I am confident that when, in our future, I see her again beyond the veil, we will recognize that we have become even more deeply in love. We will appreciate each other even more, having spent this time separated by the veil. In the name of [Jesus Christ](#), amen.

Oneness in Marriage

By President Spencer W. Kimball

From a 7 September 1976 address at Brigham Young University. The full text is published in a Deseret Book Company book, *Marriage and Divorce*.

Honorable, happy, and successful marriage is surely the principal goal of every normal person. Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all the decisions and has the most far-reaching effects, for it has to do not only with immediate happiness, but also with eternal joys. It affects not only the two people involved, but also their families and particularly their children and their children's children down through the many generations.

In selecting a companion for life and for eternity, certainly the most careful planning and thinking and praying and fasting should be done to be sure that of all the decisions, this one must not be wrong. In true marriage there must be a union of minds as well as of hearts. Emotions must not wholly determine decisions, but the mind and the heart, strengthened by fasting and prayer and serious consideration, will give one a maximum chance of marital happiness. It brings with it sacrifice, sharing, and a demand for great selflessness.

Many of the TV screen shows and stories of fiction end with marriage: "They lived happily ever after." We have come to realize that the mere performance of a ceremony does not bring happiness and a successful marriage. Happiness does not come by pressing a button, as does the electric light; happiness is a state of mind and comes from within. It must be earned. It cannot be purchased with money; it cannot be taken for nothing.

Some think of happiness as a glamorous life of ease, luxury, and constant thrills; but true marriage is based on a happiness which is more than that, one which comes from giving, serving, sharing, sacrificing, and selflessness.

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

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

Often there is an unwillingness to settle down and to assume the heavy responsibilities that immediately are there. Economy is reluctant to replace lavish living, and the young people seem often too eager "to keep up with the Joneses." There is often an unwillingness to make the financial adjustments necessary. Young wives are often demanding that all the luxuries formerly enjoyed in the prosperous

homes of their successful fathers be continued in their own homes. Some of them are quite willing to help earn that lavish living by continuing employment after marriage. They consequently leave the home, where their duty lies, to pursue professional or business pursuits, thus establishing an economy that becomes stabilized so that it becomes very difficult to yield toward the normal [family](#) life. Through both spouses' working, competition rather than cooperation enters the family. Two weary workers return home with taut nerves, individual pride, increased independence, and then misunderstandings arise. Little frictions pyramid into monumental ones. While marriage is difficult, and discordant and frustrated marriages are common, yet real, lasting happiness is possible, and marriage can be, more an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive. This is within the reach of every couple, every person. "Soul mates" are fiction and an illusion; and while every young man and young woman will seek with all diligence and prayerfulness to find a mate with whom life can be most compatible and beautiful, yet it is certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage if both are willing to pay the price.

There is a never-failing formula which will guarantee to every couple a happy and eternal marriage; but like all formulas, the principal ingredients must not be left out, reduced, or limited. The selection before courting and then the continued courting after the marriage process are equally important, but not more important than the marriage itself, the success of which depends upon the two individuals—not upon one, but upon two.

In a marriage commenced and based upon reasonable standards as already mentioned, there are not combinations of power which can destroy it except the power within either

or both of the spouses themselves; and they must assume the responsibility generally. Other people and agencies may influence for good or bad. Financial, social, political, and other situations may seem to have a bearing; but the marriage depends first and always on the two spouses who can always make their marriage successful and happy if they are determined, unselfish, and righteous.

The formula is simple; the ingredients are few, though there are many amplifications of each.

First, there must be the proper approach toward marriage, which contemplates the selection of a spouse who reaches as nearly as possible the pinnacle of perfection in all the matters which are of importance to the individuals. And then those two parties must come to the altar in the temple realizing that they must work hard toward this successful joint living.

Second, there must be a great unselfishness, forgetting self and directing all of the family life and all pertaining thereunto to the good of the family, subjugating self.

Third, there must be continued courting and expressions of affection, kindness, and consideration to keep love alive and growing.

Fourth, there must be a complete living of the commandments of the Lord as defined in the gospel of [Jesus Christ](#).

With these ingredients properly mixed and continually kept functioning, it is quite impossible for unhappiness to come, misunderstandings to continue, or breaks to occur. Divorce attorneys would need to transfer to other fields and divorce courts would be padlocked.

Two individuals approaching the marriage altar must realize that to attain the happy marriage which they hope for they must know that marriage is not a legal coverall, but it means sacrifice, sharing, and even a reduction of some personal liberties. It means long, hard economizing. It means

children who bring with them financial burdens, service burdens, care and worry burdens; but also it means the deepest and sweetest emotions of all.

Before marriage, each individual is quite free to go and come as he pleases, to organize and plan his life as it seems best, to make all decisions with self as the central point. Sweethearts should realize before they take the vows that each must accept literally and fully that the good of the little new family must always be superior to the good of either spouse. Each party must eliminate the “I” and the “my” and substitute therefore “we” and “our.” Every decision must take into consideration that there are two or more affected by it. As she approaches major decisions now, the wife will be concerned as to the effect they will have upon the parents, the children, the home, and their spiritual lives. The husband’s choice of occupation, his social life, his friends, his every interest must now be considered in the light that he is only a part of a family, that the totalness of the group must be considered.

A marriage may not always be even and incidentless, but it can be one of great peace. A couple may have poverty, illness, disappointment, failures, and even death in the family, but even these will not rob them of their peace. The marriage can be a successful one so long as selfishness does not enter in. Troubles and problems will draw parents together into unbreakable unions if there is total unselfishness there. During the depression of the 1930s there was a definite drop in divorce. Poverty, failures, disappointment—they tied parents together. Adversity can cement relationships which prosperity can destroy.

The marriage that is based upon selfishness is almost certain to fail. The one who marries for wealth or the one who marries for prestige or social plane is certain to be disappointed. The one who marries to satisfy vanity and pride or who marries to spite or

to show up another person is fooling only himself. But the one who marries to give happiness as well as receive it, to give service as well as to receive it, and who looks after the interests of the two and then the family as it comes will have a good chance that the marriage will be a happy one.

Love is like a flower, and, like the body, it needs constant feeding. The mortal body would soon be emaciated and die if there were not frequent feedings. The tender flower would wither and die without food and water. And so love, also, cannot be expected to last forever unless it is continually fed with portions of love, the manifestation of esteem and admiration, the expressions of [gratitude](#), and the consideration of unselfishness.

Total unselfishness is sure to accomplish another factor in successful marriage. If one is forever seeking the interests, comforts, and happiness of the other, the love found in courtship and cemented in marriage will grow into mighty proportions. Many couples permit their marriages to become stale and their love to grow cold like old bread or worn-out jokes or cold gravy. Certainly the foods most vital for love are consideration, kindness, thoughtfulness, concern, expressions of affection, embraces of appreciation, admiration, pride, companionship, confidence, faith, partnership, equality, and interdependence. To be really happy in marriage, one must have a continued faithful observance of the commandments of the Lord. No one, single or married, was ever sublimely happy unless he was righteous. There are temporary satisfactions and camouflaged situations for the moment, but permanent, total happiness can come only through cleanliness and worthiness. One who has a pattern of religious life with deep religious convictions can never be happy in an inactive life. The conscience will continue to afflict, unless it

has been seared, in which case the marriage is already in jeopardy. A stinging conscience can make life most unbearable. Inactivity is destructive to marriage, especially where the parties are inactive in varying degrees. Religious differences are the most trying and among the most unsolvable of all differences.

Marriage is ordained of God. It is not merely a social custom. Without proper and successful marriage, one will never be exalted. Read the words of your Lord, that it is right and proper to be married.

That being true, the thoughtful and intelligent Latter-day Saint will plan his life carefully to be sure there are no impediments placed in the way. By making one serious mistake, one may place in the way obstacles which may never be removed and which may block the way to eternal life and godhood—our ultimate destiny. If two people love the Lord more than their own lives and then love each other more than their own lives, working together in total harmony with the gospel program as their basic structure, they are sure to have this great happiness. When a husband and wife go together frequently to the holy temple, kneel in prayer together in their home with their family, go hand in hand to their religious meetings, keep their lives wholly chaste—mentally and physically—so that their whole thoughts and desires and loves are all centered in the one being, their companion, and both work together for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, then happiness is at its pinnacle.

Sometimes in marriage there are other cleavings, in spite of the fact that the Lord said: “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.” ([D&C 42:22](#).)

This means just as completely that “thou shalt love thy husband with all thy heart and shall cleave unto him and none else.”

Frequently, people continue to cleave unto

their mothers and their fathers and their chums. Sometimes mothers will not relinquish the hold they have had upon their children, and husbands as well as wives return to their mothers and fathers to obtain advice and counsel and to confide, whereas cleaving should be to the wife in most things, and all intimacies should be kept in great secrecy and privacy from others. Couples do well to immediately find their own home, separate and apart from that of the in-laws on either side. The home may be very modest and unpretentious, but still it is an independent domicile. Your married life should become independent of her folks and his folks. You love them more than ever; you cherish their counsel; you appreciate their association; but you live your own lives, being governed by your decisions, by your own prayerful considerations after you have received the counsel from those who should give it. To cleave does not mean merely to occupy the same home; it means to adhere closely, to stick together:

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

“And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made.” ([D&C 49:16–17](#).)

Brothers and sisters, may I say this is the word of the Lord. It is very, very serious, and there is nobody who should argue with the Lord. He made the earth; he made the people. He knows the conditions. He set the program, and we are not intelligent enough or smart enough to be able to argue him out of these important things. He knows what is right and true.

We ask you to think of these things. Be sure that your marriage is right. Be sure that your life is right. Be sure that your part of the marriage is carried forward properly.

Divorce

[Dallin H. Oaks](#)

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

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.

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.

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.

We live in a world in which the whole concept of marriage is in peril and where divorce is commonplace.

The concept that society has a strong interest in preserving marriages for the common good as well as the good of the couple and their children has been replaced for many by the idea that marriage is only a private relationship between consenting adults, terminable at the will of either.¹

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.

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.

In contrast, modern prophets have warned that looking upon marriage “as a mere contract that may be entered into at pleasure ... and severed at the first difficulty ... is an evil meriting severe condemnation,” especially where children are made to suffer.²

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:

“[Moses](#) because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

“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](#)).

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.

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.

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.

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.

Now I speak to married members, especially to any who may be considering divorce. I strongly urge you and those who advise you to face up to the reality that for most marriage problems, the remedy is not divorce but repentance. Often the cause is not incompatibility but selfishness. The first step is not separation but reformation.

Divorce is not an all-purpose solution, and it often creates long-term heartache. A broad-based international study of the levels of happiness before and after “major life events” found that, on average, persons are far more successful in recovering their level of happiness after the *death* of a spouse than after a *divorce*.³ Spouses who hope that divorce will resolve conflicts often find that it aggravates them, since the complexities that follow divorce—especially where there are children—generate new conflicts. Think first of the children. Because divorce separates the interests of children from the interests of their parents, children are its first victims. Scholars of family life tell us that the most important cause of the current decline in the well-being of children is the current weakening of marriage, because family instability decreases parental investment in children.⁴ We know that children raised in a single-parent home after divorce have a much higher risk for drug and alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, poor school performance, and various kinds of victimization.

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. 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. Latter-day Saint spouses should do all within their power to preserve their marriages. They should follow the marriage enrichment counsel in the First Presidency’s message in the April 2007 *Ensign* and *Liahona*.⁵ To avoid so-called

“incompatibility,” they should be best friends, kind and considerate, sensitive to each other’s needs, always seeking to make each other happy. They should be partners in family finances, working together to regulate their desires for temporal things. 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. 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.

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. Consider these observations of a wise bishop with extensive experience in counseling members with marriage problems. Speaking of those who eventually divorced, he said: “Universally, every couple or individual said they recognized that divorce was not a good thing, but they all insisted that their situation was different.

“Universally, they focused on the fault of the spouse and attributed little responsibility to their own behavior. Communication had withered.

“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.’

“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.’”

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.”

Even those who think their spouse is entirely to blame should not act hastily. One study found “no evidence that divorce or separation typically made adults happier than staying in an unhappy marriage. Two out of three unhappily married adults who avoided divorce reported being happily married five years later.”⁶ A woman who persisted in an intolerable marriage for many years until the children were raised explained: “There were three parties to our marriage—my husband and I and the Lord. I told myself that if two of us could hang in there, we could hold it together.”

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.

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.

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.

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “Two individuals approaching the marriage altar must realize that to attain the happy marriage which they hope for they must know that marriage ... means sacrifice, sharing, and even a reduction of some personal liberties. It means long, hard

economizing. It means children who bring with them financial burdens, service burdens, care and worry burdens; but also it means the deepest and sweetest emotions of all.”⁷

From personal experience, I testify to the sweetness of the marriage and family life that the family proclamation describes as founded upon a husband and wife’s “solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children” and “upon the teachings of the Lord [Jesus Christ](#).”⁸ I testify of Him as our Savior and pray in His name for all who strive for the supreme blessings of an eternal family, in the name of [Jesus Christ](#), amen.

Covenant Marriage

Bruce C. Hafen

Of the First Quorum of the Seventy

Three summers ago, I watched a new bride and groom, Tracy and Tom, emerge from a sacred temple. They laughed and held hands as [family](#) and friends gathered to take pictures. I saw happiness and promise in their faces as they greeted their reception guests, who celebrated publicly the creation of a new family. I wondered that night how long it would be until these two faced the opposition that tests every marriage. Only then would they discover whether their marriage was based on a *contract* or a *covenant*.

Another bride sighed blissfully on her wedding day, “Mom, I’m at the end of all my troubles!” “Yes,” replied her mother, “but at which end?” When troubles come, the parties to a *contractual* marriage seek happiness by walking away. They marry to obtain benefits and will stay only as long as they’re receiving what they bargained for. But when troubles come to a *covenant*

marriage, the husband and wife work them through. They marry to give and to grow, bound by covenants to each other, to the community, and to God. *Contract* companions each give 50 percent; *covenant* companions each give 100 percent.¹ 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.”² 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.³ Before their marriage, Tom and Tracy received an eternal perspective on covenants and wolves. They learned through the story of Adam and Eve about life’s purpose and how to return to God’s presence through obedience and the Atonement. [Christ](#)’s life is the story of giving the Atonement. The life of Adam and Eve is the story of receiving the Atonement, which empowered them to overcome their separation from God and all opposition until they were eternally “at one,” with the Lord, and with each other. Without the Fall, Lehi taught, Adam and Eve would never have known opposition. And “they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery.”⁴ 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.

Still, the ground was cursed *for their sake*.⁵ Their path of affliction also led to the *joy* of both redemption and comprehension.⁶ That is why the husband and wife in a covenant marriage sustain and lift each other when the wolf comes. If Tom and Tracy had understood all this, perhaps they would have walked more slowly from the gardenlike temple grounds, like Adam and Eve, arm in arm, into a harsh and lonely world. And yet—marrying and raising children *can* yield the most valuable religious experiences of 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.”⁷ 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. 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.⁸ Second, the wolf of their own imperfections will test them. One woman told me through her tears how her husband’s constant criticism finally destroyed not only their marriage but her entire sense of self-worth. He first complained about her cooking and housecleaning, and then about how she used her time, how she talked, looked, and reasoned. Eventually she felt utterly inept and dysfunctional. My heart ached for her, and for him.

Contrast her with a young woman who had little self-confidence when she first married. Then her husband found so much to praise in her that she gradually began to believe she was a good person and that her opinions mattered. His belief in her rekindled her innate self-worth.

The third wolf is the excessive individualism that has spawned today's contractual attitudes. A seven-year-old girl came home from school crying, "Mom, don't I belong to you? Our teacher said today that nobody *belongs* to anybody—children don't belong to parents, husbands don't belong to wives. I am *yours*, aren't I, Mom?" Her mother held her close and whispered, "Of course you're mine—and I'm yours, too." Surely marriage partners must respect one another's individual identity, and family members are neither slaves nor inanimate objects. But this teacher's fear, shared today by many, is that the bonds of kinship and marriage are not valuable ties that bind, but are, instead, sheer bondage. Ours is the age of the waning of belonging.

The adversary has long cultivated this overemphasis on personal autonomy, and now he feverishly exploits it. Our deepest God-given instinct is to run to the arms of those who need us and sustain us. But he drives us away from each other today with wedges of distrust and suspicion. He exaggerates the need for having space, getting out, and being left alone. Some people believe him—and then they wonder why they feel left alone. And despite admirable exceptions, children in America's growing number of single-parent families are clearly more at risk than children in two-parent families.⁹ Further, the rates of divorce and births outside marriage are now so high that we may be witnessing "the collapse of marriage."¹⁰

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."¹¹ Even secular marriage was historically a three-party covenant among a man, a woman, and the state. Society has a huge interest in the outcome and the offspring of every marriage. So the public nature of marriage distinguishes it from all other relationships. Guests come to weddings 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."¹²

When we observe the covenants we make at the altar of sacrifice, we discover hidden reservoirs of strength. I once said in exasperation to my wife, Marie, "The Lord placed Adam and Eve on the earth as full-grown people. Why couldn't he have done that with this boy of ours, the one with the freckles and the unruly hair?" She replied, "The Lord gave us that child to make Christians out of us."

One night Marie exhausted herself for hours encouraging that child to finish a school assignment to build his own diorama of a Native American village on a cookie sheet. It was a test no hireling would have endured. At first he fought her efforts, but by bedtime, I saw him lay "his" diorama proudly on a counter. He started for his bed, then turned around, raced back across the room, and hugged his mother, grinning with his fourth-grade teeth. Later I asked Marie in complete awe, "How did you do it?" She said, "I just made up my mind that I couldn't leave him, no matter what." Then she added, "*I didn't know I had it in me.*" She discovered deep, internal wellsprings of compassion because the bonds of her covenants gave her strength to lay down her life for her sheep, even an hour at a time.

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

One night as Tracy waited patiently upon the Lord in the hospital, she sensed that perhaps her willingness to sacrifice herself for her baby was in some small way like the Good Shepherd's sacrifice for her. She said, "I had expected that trying to give so much would be really difficult, but somehow this felt more like a privilege." As many other parents in Zion have done, she and Tom gave their hearts to God by giving them to their child. In the process, they learned that theirs is a covenant marriage, one that binds them to each other and to the Lord.

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

¹⁵In the name of [Jesus Christ](#), amen.

Enriching Your Marriage
By President James E. Faust
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Enriching Your Marriage
Photograph by Busath Photography

Many years ago when I was practicing law, I was consulted by a woman who wanted a divorce from her husband on grounds that, in my opinion, seemed justified. After the divorce was concluded, I did not see her again for many years. In a chance meeting with her on the street, I noticed that the years of loneliness and discouragement were evident in her once-beautiful face.

After we passed a few pleasantries, she was quick to say that life had not been rich and rewarding for her and that she was tired of facing the struggle alone. Then she startled me by disclosing, "Bad as it was, if I had to do it over again and had known then what I do now, I would not have sought the divorce. This is worse."

Statistically, it is difficult to avoid divorce. Experts project that about half of the women in the United States will have a marriage dissolve some time in their lives. Divorce is also increasing in many other countries. Unless the present rate of ever-increasing divorces diminishes, even more marriages will come to a tragic end.

Divorce can be justified only in the rarest of circumstances. In my opinion, "just cause" for divorce should be nothing less serious than a prolonged and apparently irredeemable relationship that destroys a person's dignity as a human being. Divorce often tears people's lives apart and shears [family](#) happiness. Frequently in a divorce the parties lose much more than they gain. The traumatic experience one goes through in divorce seems little understood and is perhaps not well enough appreciated.

Certainly, much more sympathy and understanding need to be extended to those who have experienced this great tragedy and whose lives cannot be reversed. Yet for those who are divorced, there is still much to be hoped for and expected in terms of fulfillment and happiness in life, particularly in the forgetting of self and in the rendering of service to others.

Difficult Questions

Why is happiness in marriage so fragile and fleeting for so many yet so abundant for others? Why does the resulting train of heartache and suffering have to be so long and have so many innocent people on board?

What are the missing enriching ingredients in so many marriages that began with such happiness and so many high hopes?

I have long pondered these difficult questions. Having spent almost a lifetime dealing with human experiences, I am somewhat familiar with the problems of unhappy marriages, of divorce, and of heartbroken families. I can also speak of great happiness because, thanks to my beloved Ruth, I have found in marriage the richest fulfillment of human existence.

Reasons for Divorce

There are no simple, easy answers to the challenging and complex questions of happiness in marriage. Among the many supposed reasons for divorce are the serious problems of selfishness, immaturity, lack of commitment, inadequate communication, and unfaithfulness.

In my experience there is another reason for failure of marriage that seems not so obvious but that precedes and laces through all of the others. It is the lack of a constant enrichment in marriage, an absence of that something extra which makes it precious, special, and wonderful, and without which it becomes drudgery or difficult or even dull.

Enriching a Marriage

You might wonder, “How can a marriage be constantly enriched?” We build our marriages with endless friendship, confidence, and integrity and also by ministering to and sustaining each other in our difficulties. Adam, speaking of Eve, said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” ([Genesis 2:23](#)). There are a few simple, relevant questions that each person, whether married or contemplating

marriage, should honestly ask in an effort to become “one flesh.” They are:

First, am I able to think of the interest of my marriage and spouse first before I think of my own desires?

Second, how deep is my commitment to my companion, aside from any other interests?

Third, is he or she my best friend?

Fourth, do I have respect for the dignity of my spouse as a person of worth and value?

Fifth, do we quarrel over money? Money itself seems neither to make a couple happy, nor the lack of it, necessarily, to make them unhappy. A quarrel over money is often a symbol of selfishness.

Sixth, is there a spiritually sanctifying bond between us?

Building Bridges of Enrichment

Several key practices can contribute to enriching a marriage.

Prayer. Marriage relationships can be enriched by better communication. One important way is to pray together. This will resolve many of the differences, if there are any, between the couple before going to sleep. I do not mean to overemphasize differences, but they are real and do make things interesting. I believe our differences are the little pinches of salt that can make the marriage seem more flavorful.

We communicate in a thousand ways, such as a smile, a brush of the hair, a gentle touch. We should remember each day to say, “I love you.” The husband should say to his wife, “You’re beautiful.” Some other important words for both husband and wife to say, when appropriate, are, “I’m sorry.”

Listening is also an excellent form of communication.

Trust. Complete trust in each other is one of the greatest enriching factors in marriage. Nothing devastates the core of mutual trust necessary to maintain a fulfilling relationship like infidelity. There is never any justification for adultery. Despite this destructive experience, occasionally

marriages are saved and families preserved. To do so requires the aggrieved party to be capable of giving unreserved love great enough to forgive and forget. It requires the errant party to want desperately to repent and actually forsake evil.

Our loyalty to our eternal companion should not be merely physical, but mental and spiritual as well. Since there are no harmless flirtations and there is no place for jealousy after marriage, it is best to avoid the very appearance of evil by shunning any questionable contact with another to whom we are not married.

Virtue. Virtue is the strong glue that holds it all together. Said the Lord, “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else” ([D&C 42:22](#)).

Divine presence. Of all that can bless marriages, there is one special enriching ingredient that above all else will help join a man and a woman together in a very real, sacred, spiritual sense. It is the presence of the divine in marriage. Shakespeare, speaking through Queen Isabel in King Henry the Fifth, said, “God, the best maker of all marriages, / Combine your hearts in one” (act 5, scene 2, lines 67–68). God is also the best keeper of marriages.

There are many things that go into enriching a marriage, but some of them seem to be of the husk of the relationship. Having the companionship and enjoying the fruits of a holy and divine presence become the kernel of great happiness in marriage. Spiritual oneness is the anchor. Slow leaks in the sanctifying dimension of marriage often cause marriages to become flat tires.

I believe that divorces are increasing because in many cases the union lacks that sanctifying benediction that flows from keeping the commandments of God.

Marriages can die from a lack of spiritual nourishment.

Tithing. I learned in serving almost 20 years as bishop and as stake president that an

excellent insurance against divorce is the payment of tithing. Payment of tithing seems to facilitate keeping the spiritual battery charged in order to make it through the times when the spiritual generator has been idle or is not working.

There is no great or majestic music that constantly produces the harmony of a great love. The most perfect music is a welding of two voices into one spiritual song. Marriage is the way provided by God for the fulfillment of the greatest of human needs, based upon mutual respect, maturity, selflessness, decency, commitment, and honesty. Happiness in marriage and parenthood can exceed a thousand times any other happiness.

Parenthood. The soul of the marriage is greatly enriched and the spiritual growing process is greatly strengthened when a couple become parents. For couples who can have children, parenthood should bring the greatest of all happiness. Men grow because as fathers they must take care of their families. Women blossom because as mothers they must forget themselves. We understand best the full meaning of love when we become parents. However, if children do not come, couples who are nevertheless prepared to receive them with love will be honored and blessed by the Lord for their faithfulness. Our homes should be among the most hallowed of all earthly sanctuaries.

In the enriching of marriage, the big things are the little things. There must be constant appreciation for each other and thoughtful demonstration of [gratitude](#). A couple must encourage and help each other grow.

Marriage is a joint quest for the good, the beautiful, and the divine.

The Savior has said, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” ([Revelation 3:20](#)).

May the presence of God be found enriching and blessing all marriages and homes, especially those of His Saints, as part of His eternal plan.

Nurturing Marriage

Russell M. Nelson

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Marriages would be happier if nurtured more carefully.

My beloved brethren and sisters, thank you for your love of the Lord and His gospel. Wherever you live, your righteous lives provide good examples in these days of decaying morals and disintegrating marriages.

As we Brethren travel about the world, sometimes we see worrisome scenes. On a recent flight, I sat behind a husband and wife. She obviously loved her husband. As she stroked the back of his neck I could see her wedding ring. She would nestle close to him and rest her head upon his shoulder, seeking his companionship.

In contrast, he seemed totally oblivious to her presence. He was focused solely upon an electronic game player. During the entire flight, his attention was riveted upon that device. Not once did he look at her, speak to her, or acknowledge her yearning for affection.

His inattention made me feel like shouting: “Open your eyes, man! Can’t you see? Pay attention! Your wife loves you! She needs you!”

I don’t know more about them. I haven’t seen them since. Perhaps I was alarmed unduly. And very possibly, if this man knew of my concern for them, he might feel sorry for me in not knowing how to use such an exciting toy.

But these things I do know: I know “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.”¹ I know that the earth was created and that the Lord’s Church was restored so that families could be sealed and exalted as eternal entities.² And I know that one of Satan’s cunning methods of undermining the work of the Lord is to attack the sacred institutions of marriage and the family.

Marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other human relationship. Yet some married couples fall short of their full potential. They let their romance become rusty, take each other for granted, allow other interests or clouds of neglect to obscure the vision of what their marriage really could be. Marriages would be happier if nurtured more carefully.

I realize that many mature members of the Church are not married. Through no failing of their own, they deal with the trials of life alone. Be we all reminded that in the Lord’s own way and time, no blessings will be withheld from His faithful Saints.³ For those who are now or will be married, I suggest two steps you can take to have a more joyful marriage.

I. Doctrinal Foundation

The first step is to comprehend the doctrinal foundation for marriage. The Lord declared that marriage is the legal wedding of one man and one woman: “Marriage is ordained of God unto man.

“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.”⁴

Worldly trends to define marriage in some other way would sadly serve to destroy the institution of marriage. Such schemes are contrary to the plan of God.

It was He who said: “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh.”⁵

Scripture further reaffirms that “the man [is not] without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.”⁶ Marriage is the foundry for social order, the fountain of virtue, and the foundation for eternal exaltation. Marriage has been divinely designated as an eternal and everlasting covenant.⁷ Marriage is sanctified when it is cherished and honored in holiness. That union is not merely between husband and wife; it embraces a partnership with God.⁸ “Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other.”⁹ Children born of that marital union are “an heritage of the Lord.”¹⁰ Marriage is but the beginning bud of family life; parenthood is its flower. And that bouquet becomes even more beautiful when graced with grandchildren. Families may become as eternal as the kingdom of God itself.¹¹ Marriage is both a commandment and an exalting principle of the gospel.¹² Because it is ordained of God, the intimate physical expressions of married love are sacred. Yet all too commonly, these divine gifts are desecrated. If a couple allows lewd language or pornography to corrupt their intimacy, they offend their Creator while they degrade and diminish their own divine gifts. True happiness is predicated upon personal purity.¹³ Scripture commands: “Be ye clean.”¹⁴ Marriage should ever be a covenant to lift husbands and wives to exaltation in celestial glory. Marriage was intended by the Lord to endure beyond physical death. His plan offers eternal perpetuation of the family in the kingdom of God. His plan provides temples and opportunities to officiate therein for the living and the dead. A marriage sealed there launches a husband and wife into that grand order of unity so necessary to the perfection of God’s work.¹⁵ Doctrines related to marriage include individual agency and accountability. All of us are accountable for our choices. Couples

blessed with children are accountable to God for the care they give to their children. As I meet with priesthood leaders, I often ask about the priorities of their various responsibilities. Usually they mention their important Church duties to which they have been called. Too few remember their responsibilities at home. Yet priesthood offices, keys, callings, and quorums are meant to exalt families.¹⁶ Priesthood authority has been restored so that families can be sealed eternally. So brethren, your foremost priesthood duty is to nurture your marriage—to care for, respect, honor, and love your wife. Be a blessing to her and your children.

II. Strengthening Marriage

With these doctrinal underpinnings in mind, let us consider the second step—specific actions that would strengthen a marriage. I will offer sample suggestions and invite each couple privately to ponder them and adapt them as needed to their own particular circumstances.

My suggestions use three action verbs: to *appreciate*, to *communicate*, and to *contemplate*.

To *appreciate*—to say “I love you” and “thank you”—is not difficult. But these expressions of love and appreciation do more than acknowledge a kind thought or deed. They are signs of sweet civility. As grateful partners look for the good in each other and sincerely pay compliments to one another, wives and husbands will strive to become the persons described in those compliments.

Suggestion number two—to *communicate* well with your spouse—is also important. Good communication includes taking time to plan together. Couples need private time to observe, to talk, and really listen to each other. They need to cooperate—helping each other as equal partners. They need to nurture their spiritual as well as physical intimacy. They should strive to elevate and motivate

each other. Marital unity is sustained when goals are mutually understood. Good communication is also enhanced by prayer. To pray with specific mention of a spouse's good deed (or need) nurtures a marriage. My third suggestion is to *contemplate*. This word has deep meaning. It comes from Latin roots: *con*, meaning "with," and *templum*, meaning "a space or place to meditate." It is the root from which the word *temple* comes. If couples contemplate often—with each other in the temple—sacred covenants will be better remembered and kept. Frequent participation in temple service and regular family scripture study nourish a marriage and strengthen faith within a family. Contemplation allows one to anticipate and to resonate (or be in tune) with each other and with the Lord. Contemplation will nurture both a marriage and God's kingdom. The Master said, "Seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."¹⁷

I invite each marital partner to consider these suggestions and then determine specific goals to nurture your own relationship. Begin with sincere desire. Identify those actions needed to bless your spiritual unity and purpose. Above all, do not be selfish! Generate a spirit of selflessness and generosity. Celebrate and commemorate each day together as a treasured gift from heaven.

President Harold B. Lee said "that the most important of the Lord's work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes."¹⁸ And President David O. McKay declared, "No other success can compensate for failure in the home."¹⁹

When you as husband and wife recognize the divine design in your union—when you feel deeply that God has brought you to each other—your vision will be expanded and your understanding enhanced. Such feelings

are expressed in words of a song that has long been a favorite of mine:
*Because you come to me with naught save love,
And hold my hand and lift mine eyes above,
A wider world of hope and joy I see,
Because you come to me.
Because you speak to me in accents sweet,
I find the roses waking round my feet,
And I am led through tears and joy to thee,
Because you speak to me.
Because God made thee mine, I'll cherish thee
Through light and darkness, through all time to be,
And pray His love may make our love divine,
Because God made thee mine.*²⁰
That each marriage may be so nurtured is my prayer, in the name of [Jesus Christ](#), amen.

Coping with Difficulties in Marriage

"When a couple have commenced a marriage based upon reasonable standards," President Spencer W. Kimball has said, "no combination of power can destroy that marriage except the power within either or both of the spouses themselves; and they must assume the responsibility generally. Other people and agencies may influence for good or bad; financial, social, political, and other situations may seem to have a bearing. But the marriage depends first and always on the two spouses, who can always make their marriage successful and happy if they are determined, unselfish, and righteous." (Marriage and Divorce, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, p. 17.) Local ecclesiastical leaders often call upon LDS Social Services to assist in counseling couples. The Ensign interviews Val D. MacMurray, twice a bishop, and currently assistant commissioner for LDS Social Services responsible for research and staff

development and a marriage and [family](#) therapist.

Ensign (E): One of the major areas in which Latter-day Saint couples continually seek encouragement and ideas from their bishop is how to resolve disagreements productively within a gospel framework. As you have worked with couples and families, would you say that it is essential in most marriages to have the ability to handle differences?

MacMurray (M): Absolutely. As a bishop I counseled with about three hundred couples, and I saw a good cross section there. Most of these couples felt happy about their marriages. But all marriages—happy or otherwise—have the need to manage different viewpoints, different feelings, in a manner that is helpful rather than destructive to the relationship. Actually, one of the greatest blessings to any marriage is the opportunity to share and obtain different viewpoints and different feelings on some matters. Couples can acquire interpersonal skills and turn their differences into opportunities.

E: Are there really people who have problem-free marriages?

M: It's possible—but not common. Partners who have such a marriage may be extraordinarily mature.

E: Yet, on the other side, isn't it rather negative to believe that nearly all marriages likely have some types of challenges?

M: Not at all! In fact, think how depressing it would be to think that your marriage was the only one in the whole world that had challenges—and lots of people do add guilt to their difficulties by thinking that way. Of course, differences should not be viewed as the foundation of marriage, but it's important to realize that they exist as part of our earthly experience, and their very existence provides a potential richness and depth to the relationship.

The real issue is not that there are challenges—but knowing how to deal with them. Our similarities and differences can draw us into enormously compelling relationships with ourselves and our loved ones. Elder Neal A. Maxwell points out that “because the home is so crucial, it will be the source of our greatest failures as well as our greatest joys.” (Ensign, Feb. 1972, p. 7.) Latter-day Saints usually talk about the home's potential for joy. One of the best safeguards against the home's equally great potential for failure is recognizing that challenges can occur, and learning how to work together to manage them in Christlike ways.

E: Kind of like a fire drill?

M: Exactly. And even though we're talking about differences in marriage, let's keep clearly in mind that the average marriage is not a negative experience. Most couples are happier married—even with their challenges—than they would be if they were to become single again. It's vital to remember that the principle of progress applies here as it does everywhere else: first, we have to keep applying the basic gospel principles of righteous living; second, learn new skills or relearn skills we've neglected; and third, keep working toward a marriage that gets better and better.

E: Can you give us an example of what you mean?

M: Yes. I remember a woman who had been married nearly eighteen years and had five children. When she saw me, she was emotionally exhausted and said, “He seems completely different from me, and at times I think we both wonder if we really love each other. At other times, we seem good for each other partly because we are different. My marriage has been frustrating—almost always hard. Besides the emotional differences, there's money, coping with the demands of five children, music lessons, the vacuum cleaner. . . . You know.”

Fortunately, I was able to assure her that I did.

The point is this: This couple was not on the verge of a divorce, yet some people foolishly think of divorce when they sense these feelings or find themselves in this kind of malaise. From all I could tell, they were living gospel principles. They attended the temple fairly regularly, fulfilled Church assignments, and were quite mature. They were just having to cope with normal differences and frustrations.

E: What you're saying, then, is that a certain amount of tension and frustration is normal and can be present from time to time even in "good" relationships?

M: Of course! As I understand it, when the Lord wants to refine us, he doesn't do it with milk and honey, in easy, painless ways. He does it by requiring us to seek the Spirit, to work through our problems, to discover answers. Problem-solving has a very constructive role to play in marriage—it compels us to develop effective ways of handling differences. And through managing differences, we can grow closer to each other and to God.

E: That's certainly a positive way to look at disagreements.

M: As a bishop and a therapist, I saw it happen time and again—learning to resolve difficulties mated marriages and individuals. I suspect that whatever challenges make divorce appealing to some people the first time will also break up a second or third marriage as well if those individuals never face and maturely resolve their differences. Consequently, in cases where this assessment is true, the advantages of sticking with a "difficult" marriage are obvious. Another advantage is that appropriately handling disagreements can make you more resilient, more open to change, less threatened by challenges to yourself, to your relationships, or to the family. Furthermore, actually tackling a

challenge and doing something about it generates an immense amount of energy and builds confidence. Those are all great advantages.

We find that as couples work through their difficulties they develop and strengthen their marriage. On the other hand, I think we've all seen couples whose relationship is overloaded with conflict, where one or both partners feel so destructive about each other or have fallen into such bad reaction patterns that the relationship has already dissolved. This does not mean it cannot be rebuilt—but for the moment, the couple may have done great damage to their relationship. Certainly, I think we'd agree that some kinds of behavior do terrible damage to a marriage and cannot be condoned—adultery, physical violence, incest, emotional violence. If both partners are willing to work hard on it, even those wounds can be healed through the power of [Christ](#)'s atonement as they become more receptive to the Spirit of the Lord through repentance and obedience and as they learn better ways of relating to each other.

We also know of situations where couples, though still married, have been almost completely withdrawn from each other for years—where there simply isn't a marriage in any meaningful sense of the word. But with real effort and love on their part, they learn new skills and regain the love for each other that brought them to marry in the first place. Couples in this category should really consider trying "marriage" before they consider any other alternative.

E: That seems a helpful way of looking at it.

M: What this means is that the potential for challenges in marriage exists, but that real peace in marriage can come as husbands and wives implement gospel principles and develop the skills to resolve differences when conflicts arise.

E: Where do you advise people to start?

M: Usually we try to get them to stop trying to change each other—then to work on changing themselves. Of course, this means that both people have to make that same commitment.

E: How do you actually get a person to stop trying to change his or her partner?

M: A Latter-day Saint counselor, Carlfred Broderick, suggests that couples give each other “emotional space” by laying off the negative messages that they send and by giving each other more positive messages. (See *Couples: How to Confront Problems and Maintain Loving Relationships*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979, chapter 1.)

When a person doesn’t feel “boxed in” by disapproval and demands, he’s not so likely to fight back or run away. Another expert suggests the establishment of “caring days” as a way of building commitment in a marriage before tackling real conflicts. On caring days, each spouse lists positive, specific, “small” deeds that can be done at least once a day that the partner could do to show caring. These shouldn’t be deeds that have been the basis for a recent disagreement; for instance, “Please ask me how I spent my day” instead of “don’t ignore me so much.” (Richard Stuart, *Helping Couples Change: A Social Learning Approach to Marital Therapy*, New York: The Guildford Press, 1980, chapter 6.)

E: These are preliminary techniques for solving the problem?

M: They’re preliminary exercises for helping people feel that their relationship is valuable and worth working on. Often, simply being nicer to each other will actually eliminate many aspects of disagreements. Generally, however, it makes it easier for the couple to trust each other. Consequently, these skills are ways of implementing gospel principles of love, commitment, faith, and trust. It goes without saying, of course, that living the gospel can prevent a lot of problems from ever

developing. But living the Word of Wisdom, for example, doesn’t mean that you have the skills to have a loving conversation.

E: Would some people say it’s insincere to act lovingly—giving emotional space or having a caring day—if you don’t feel loving right then toward your spouse?

M: Well, it’s that old principle again: If we do the will of the Savior, we will know whether the doctrine is true. (See [John 7:17](#).)

All of us need to learn new ways of thinking and we need to learn new ways of behaving. Usually we change both of them at the same time. That brings up a very big point. It is very important that people believe that they can and should change. One woman who was being counseled had what she called an “unbearable” marriage, but announced that she was willing to endure in “quiet desperation.” Well, that kind of “nobility” is really a cover-up; she was in effect avoiding learning how to manage and overcome the difficulties. Of course, the husband in this instance needed to learn how his behavior was negatively affecting his marriage relationship. But she needed to start doing something about the problem rather than simply “enduring” it.

E: Once a couple has spent enough time in confirming that their relationship is important and that they’re willing to work on it, what do you suggest?

M: There are two attitudes or ways of thinking that will help each of us act better.

Let me describe them; then I’d like to suggest four things we can do that will help us keep those attitudes in perspective.

The first attitude is learn to accept some tension. In our modern cultures, we think that pain of any sort is wrong—whether it be boredom, confusion, sorrow, tension, discomfort, or temptation. Consequently, many people today resort to drugs, alcohol, and promiscuous sex in a futile attempt to escape tension. The truth is that some tension is inevitable and we can learn to live

even with fairly high levels without being damaged. In fact, one of the signs of a mature person is the ability to handle tension and ambiguity.

I like the story Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone tells of LeBaron Russell Briggs, Harvard dean, who asked a student why he hadn't done an assignment. The student said it was because he didn't feel very well. "Mr. Smith," said the dean, "I think in time you may perhaps find that most of the work in the world is done by people who aren't feeling very well." (New Era, Nov. 1977, p. 9.)

And we're not just talking about emotional tensions. A couple in the 1980s is obviously going to have to withstand tensions of higher inflation and other economic challenges.

E: What's the second attitude?

M: As married partners we need to feel comfortable with the notion, "I'm not yet perfect and you're not yet perfect, but we're both still trying." We need to allow each other a chance to improve, to progress. All of us need to rely on our Father in Heaven and the Savior's atonement. I think for us to demand instant perfection of our partner isn't Christlike. It is Christlike for us to seriously work to improve and perfect ourselves and to also lovingly assist our partner when and how we can—but to do it at their invitation and compassionately, as outlined in [D&C 121](#).

E: With those two attitudes in mind, what are the four skills or behaviors that you'd recommend couples develop?

M: The first is to renew our energy. It is difficult to forgive seventy times seven when we're angry or exhausted. I relearn again and again not to try and talk about differences when I'm either too angry or too tired.

E: What do you mean by renewing energy?

M: Doing something that makes you feel relaxed, happy, and at peace with yourself.

For some people it means taking time to read, or to make cookies, or to do something for someone. The list could be endless. Just figure out what works for you, and do it.

E: And the second skill?

M: Pray alone and together. Prayer can bring revelation in the form of ideas. Sometimes problem-solving is that divinely simple. Of course all difficulties aren't instantly resolved by a few prayers. But prayer can change our attitudes and help us become more willing to work with each other.

A couple I know says that prayer eases tensions in a miraculous way. "All of the problems aren't necessarily solved when we get up off our knees," they say, "but when you pray, you invite the Lord into your life and humble yourselves by recognizing your need for help." My wife and I have found that asking the Lord specifically to help us use the skills we have and to learn new ones really makes a difference in how successful we are.

E: In other words, an initial benefit from prayer can be better feelings about each other or about the difficulty, which, in turn, can help us find ways of working through the difficulty.

M: That's right. Prayer brings many possibilities—one of which is peace. At least, that's been my experience. And although a feeling of peace doesn't by itself eliminate most challenges, it can help us work together better, or endure the problems better, or recognize that we don't need to solve them immediately. Peace can also give us the emotional room to find other answers. Some matters simply take time to work out.

E: And the third skill?

M: Serve. President Spencer W. Kimball has given us profoundly wise counsel on this subject. He says, "There is great security in spirituality, and we cannot have spirituality without service! ... So often, our acts of service consist of simple encouragement or of giving mundane help with mundane tasks,

but what glorious consequences can flow from mundane acts and from small but deliberate deeds! ... In the midst of the miracle of serving, there is the promise of Jesus, that by losing ourselves, we find ourselves. (See [Matt. 10:39](#).) Not only do we ‘find’ ourselves in terms of acknowledging guidance in our lives, but the more we serve our fellowmen in appropriate ways, the more substance there is to our souls. ... Indeed, it is easier to ‘find’ ourselves because there is so much more of us to find!” (Ensign, Dec. 1974, pp. 5, 2.)

E: How would you apply these suggestions to marriage?

M: Those “small deeds” President Kimball talks about are the same loving, caring acts that we’ve already discussed. But let’s take warning. It’s possible for a husband to take his turn at the dishes in such a put-upon way that it communicates anger, not love. The principles discussed in Doctrine and Covenants 121 have far-reaching implications, including application in marriage. Our service needs to follow its suggestions: persuasion rather than coercion, long-suffering rather than impatience, gentleness and meekness rather than harshness and arrogance, love unfeigned rather than insincerity, kindness and knowledge (and sometimes getting enough knowledge to do the right thing in a relationship takes a lot of hard work), reproof only under the influence of the Holy Ghost and always with an increase of love so that faithfulness—or commitment to the relationship—is “stronger than the cords of death.” (See [D&C 121:41–44](#).)

E: And the fourth skill?

M: I’m not sure it’s a skill, exactly, but that’s what I’m calling it. Look for helpful ideas among the happy marriages you know. Now, we need to watch this one. A lot of marriages present such a peaceful surface that we might think, “They never have any disagreements. What’s wrong with our

marriage?” That’s not going to help us.

What we need as a model is a marriage that knows how to resolve difficulties—in other words, we all need to see how others productively implement basic gospel principles, skills, and attitudes to solve their challenges together.

I think those who have read Edward and Andrew Kimball’s splendid biography of President Kimball (Spencer W. Kimball, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979) and the follow-up volume, *Camilla*, by Caroline Eyring Miner and Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980) have felt increased love for President and Sister Kimball and increased confidence in their own ability to deal with challenges. Through faith in Christ, President and Sister Kimball made a solid marriage despite economic strains, time demands elsewhere, and health problems—problems that are certainly not foreign to any of us.

E: Any other skills?

M: One of the most important is open communication. Let me say something about what we mean by open. Some groups in society advocate spilling whatever’s on your mind. We do not. We are with those who suggest “measured honesty,” so that we share important feelings but in an atmosphere of love and support rather than hostility, using self-discipline and sincerity in expression.

E: What are the essentials of good communication?

M: You’ve printed many articles that have dealt with important aspects of communication. To summarize: learn to listen, be specific and reasonable in your requests, use positive and corrective feedback, clarify what you mean as you give messages, and learn to ask questions.

E: What about outside help if the couple tries all this but can’t progress as fast as they would like?

M: Outside help may be needed if there's a problem that keeps coming up again and again in the relationship, or if there's some kind of prolonged crisis putting pressure on the family, or if one of the partners is having a lingering problem—such as depression or failure to feel secure or worthy. Outside help usually comes from parents or priesthood leaders. Sometimes professional help is needed. However, whatever the help, remember that we can always turn to our Heavenly Father for help.

Children

[Neil L. Andersen](#)

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

I testify of the great blessing of children and of the happiness they will bring us in this life and in the eternities.

As we look into the eyes of a child, we see a fellow son or daughter of God who stood with us in the premortal life.

It is a crowning privilege of a husband and wife who are able to bear children to provide mortal bodies for these spirit children of God. We believe in families, and we believe in children.

When a child is born to a husband and wife, they are fulfilling part of our Heavenly Father's plan to bring children to earth. The Lord said, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the [immortality](#) and eternal life of man."¹ Before immortality, there must be mortality.

The [family](#) is ordained of God. Families are central to our Heavenly Father's plan here on earth and through the eternities. After Adam and Eve were joined in marriage, the scripture reads, "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth."² In our day prophets and apostles have declared, "The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential

for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force."³

This commandment has not been forgotten or set aside in The Church of [Jesus Christ](#) of Latter-day Saints.⁴ We express deep [gratitude](#) for the enormous faith shown by husbands and wives (especially our wives) in their willingness to have children. When to have a child and how many children to have are private decisions to be made between a husband and wife and the Lord. These are sacred decisions—decisions that should be made with sincere prayer and acted on with great faith.

Years ago, Elder James O. Mason of the Seventy shared this story with me: "The birth of our sixth child was an unforgettable experience. As I gazed on this beautiful, new daughter in the nursery just moments after her birth, I distinctly heard a voice declare, 'There will yet be another, and it will be a boy.' Unwisely, I rushed back to the bedside of my absolutely exhausted wife and told her the good news. It was very bad timing on my part."⁵ Year after year the Masons anticipated the arrival of their seventh child. Three, four, five, six, seven years passed. Finally, after eight years, their seventh child was born—a little boy. Last April, President Thomas S. Monson declared:

"Where once the standards of the Church and the standards of society were mostly compatible, now there is a wide chasm between us, and it's growing ever wider. . . . "The Savior of mankind described Himself as being in the world but not of the world. We also can be in the world but not of the world as we reject false concepts and false teachings and remain true to that which God has commanded."⁶

Many voices in the world today marginalize the importance of having children or suggest delaying or limiting children in a family. My

daughters recently referred me to a blog written by a Christian mother (not of our faith) with five children. She commented: “[Growing] up in this culture, it is very hard to get a biblical perspective on motherhood. . . . Children rank way below college. Below world travel for sure. Below the ability to go out at night at your leisure. Below honing your body at the gym. Below any job you may have or hope to get.” She then adds: “Motherhood is not a hobby, it is a calling. You do not collect children because you find them cuter than stamps. It is not something to do if you can squeeze the time in. It is what God gave you time for.”⁷

Having young children is not easy. Many days are just difficult. A young mother got on a bus with seven children. The bus driver asked, “Are these all yours, lady? Or is it a picnic?”

“They’re all mine,” she replied. “And it’s no picnic!”⁸

As the world increasingly asks, “Are these all yours?” we thank you for creating within the Church a sanctuary for families, where we honor and help mothers with children. To a righteous father, there are no words sufficient to express the gratitude and love he feels for his wife’s incalculable gift of bearing and caring for their children. Elder Mason had another experience just weeks after his marriage that helped him prioritize his family responsibilities. He said:

“Marie and I had rationalized that to get me through medical school it would be necessary for her to remain in the workplace. Although this was not what we [wanted] to do, children would have to come later. [While looking at a Church magazine at my parents’ home,] I saw an article by Elder Spencer W. Kimball, then of the Quorum of the Twelve, [highlighting] responsibilities associated with marriage. According to Elder Kimball, one sacred responsibility was to multiply and replenish

the earth. My parents’ home was [close to] the Church Administration Building. I immediately walked to the offices, and 30 minutes after reading his article, I found myself sitting across the desk from Elder Spencer W. Kimball.” (This wouldn’t be so easy today.)

“I explained that I wanted to become a doctor. There was no alternative but to postpone having our family. Elder Kimball listened patiently and then responded in a soft voice, ‘Brother Mason, would the Lord want you to break one of his important commandments in order for you to become a doctor? With the help of the Lord, you can have your family and still become a doctor. Where is your faith?’”

Elder Mason continued: “Our first child was born less than a year later. Marie and I worked hard, and the Lord opened the windows of heaven.” The Masons were blessed with two more children before he graduated from medical school four years later.⁹

Across the world, this is a time of economic instability and financial uncertainty. In April general conference, President Thomas S. Monson said: “If you are concerned about providing financially for a wife and family, may I assure you that there is no shame in a couple having to scrimp and save. It is generally during these challenging times that you will grow closer together as you learn to sacrifice and to make difficult decisions.”¹⁰ Elder Kimball’s piercing question, “Where is your faith?” turns us to the holy scriptures.

It was not in the Garden of Eden that Adam and Eve bore their first child. Leaving the garden, “Adam [and Eve] began to till the earth. . . . Adam knew his wife, and she [bore] . . . sons and daughters, and [acting in faith] they began to multiply and to replenish the earth.”¹¹

It was not in their Jerusalem home, with gold, silver, and precious things, that Lehi

and Sariah, acting in faith, bore their sons Jacob and Joseph. It was in the wilderness. Lehi spoke of his son Jacob as “my first-born in the days of my tribulation in the wilderness.”¹² Lehi said of Joseph, “Thou wast born in the wilderness of [our] afflictions; yea, in the days of [our] greatest sorrow did thy mother bear thee.”¹³ In the book of Exodus, a man and woman married and, acting in faith, had a baby boy. There was no welcoming sign on the front door to announce his birth. They hid him because Pharaoh had instructed that every newborn male Israelite should be “cast into the river.”¹⁴ You know the rest of the story: the baby lovingly laid in a little ark made of bulrushes, placed in the river, watched over by his sister, found by Pharaoh’s daughter, and cared for by his own mother as his nurse. The boy was returned to Pharaoh’s daughter, who took him as her son and called him [Moses](#). In the most beloved story of a baby’s birth, there was no decorated nursery or designer crib—only a manger for the Savior of the world. In “the best of times [and] ... the worst of times,”¹⁵ the true Saints of God, acting in faith, have never forgotten, dismissed, or neglected “God’s commandment ... to multiply and replenish the earth.”¹⁶ We go forward in faith—realizing the decision of how many children to have and when to have them is between a husband and wife and the Lord. We should not judge one another on this matter. The bearing of children is a sensitive subject that can be very painful for righteous women who do not have the opportunity to marry and have a family. To you noble women, our Heavenly Father knows your prayers and desires. How grateful we are for your remarkable influence, including reaching out with loving arms to children who need your faith and strength.

The bearing of children can also be a heartbreaking subject for righteous couples who marry and find that they are unable to have the children they so anxiously anticipated or for a husband and wife who plan on having a large family but are blessed with a smaller family. We cannot always explain the difficulties of our mortality. Sometimes life seems very unfair—especially when our greatest desire is to do exactly what the Lord has commanded. As the Lord’s servant, I assure you that this promise is certain: “Faithful members whose circumstances do not allow them to receive the blessings of eternal marriage and parenthood in this life will receive all promised blessings in the eternities, [as] they keep the covenants they have made with God.”¹⁷ President J. Scott Dorius of the Peru Lima West Mission told me their story. He said: “Becky and I were married for 25 years without being able to have [or adopt] children. We moved several times. Introducing ourselves in each new setting was awkward and sometimes painful. Ward members wondered why we [didn’t have] children. They weren’t the only ones wondering. “When I was called as a bishop, ward members [expressed] concern that I did not have any experience with children and teenagers. I thanked them for their sustaining vote and asked them to allow me to practice my child-raising skills on their children. They lovingly obliged. “We waited, gained perspective, and learned patience. After 25 years of marriage, a miracle baby came into our lives. We adopted two-year-old Nicole and then newborn Nikolai. Strangers now compliment us on our beautiful grandchildren. We laugh and say, ‘They are our children. We have lived our lives backwards.’”¹⁸

Brothers and sisters, we should not be judgmental with one another in this sacred and private responsibility.

“And [Jesus] took a child ... in his arms [and] said ...

“Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth ... him that sent me.”¹⁹

What a wonderful blessing we have to receive sons and daughters of God into our home.

Let us humbly and prayerfully seek to understand and accept God’s commandments, reverently listening for the voice of His Holy Spirit.

Families are central to God’s eternal plan. I testify of the great blessing of children and of the happiness they will bring us in this life and in the eternities, in the name of Jesus [Christ](#), amen.

Love Her Mother

[Elaine S. Dalton](#)

Young Women General President

How can a father raise a happy, well-adjusted daughter in today’s increasingly toxic world? The answer has been taught by the Lord’s prophets.

No words describe the sacred occasion when a new father holds a baby daughter in his arms for the first time. This year three of our sons have become new fathers of baby girls. As I watched our rugged, strong, rugby-playing son, Jon, hold his first baby daughter in his arms, he looked at her with a reverent tenderness, and then he looked at me with an expression that seemed to say, “How do I raise a girl?”

This morning I would like to speak to our sons and to all fathers. How can a father raise a happy, well-adjusted daughter in today’s increasingly toxic world? The

answer has been taught by the Lord’s prophets. It is a simple answer, and it is true—“The most important thing a father can do for his [daughter] is to love [her] mother.”¹ By the way you love her mother, you will teach your daughter about tenderness, loyalty, respect, compassion, and devotion. She will learn from your example what to expect from young men and what qualities to seek in a future spouse. You can show your daughter by the way you love and honor your wife that she should never settle for less. Your example will teach your daughter to value womanhood. You are showing her that she is a daughter of our Heavenly Father, who loves her. Love her mother so much that your marriage is celestial. A temple marriage for time and all eternity is worthy of your greatest efforts and highest priority. It was only after Nephi had completed the temple in the wilderness that he stated, “And ... we lived after the manner of happiness.”² The “manner of happiness” is found in the temple. It is covenant keeping. Don’t let any influence come into your life or your home that would cause you to compromise your covenants or your commitment to your wife and [family](#). In Young Women we are helping your daughter understand her identity as a daughter of God and the importance of remaining virtuous and worthy to receive the blessings of the temple and of a temple marriage. We are teaching your daughter the importance of making and keeping sacred covenants. We are teaching her to commit now to live so that she can always be worthy to enter the temple and not to allow anything to delay, distract, or disqualify her from that goal. Your example, as her father, speaks louder than our important words. Young women worry about their fathers. Many express that their greatest desire is to be united eternally as a family. They want you to be there when they go to the temple or get married in the temple. Stay close to your

daughter and help her prepare and remain worthy for the temple. When she turns 12, take her with you to the temple often to perform baptisms for your ancestors and others. She will cherish these memories forever.

Today's popular culture tries to erode and demean your eternal role as a patriarch and father and minimize your most important responsibilities. These have been given to you "by divine design," and as fathers you "are to preside over [your] families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for [your] families."³

Fathers, you are the guardians of your homes, your wives, and your children.

Today "it is not an easy thing to protect one's family against intrusions of evil into [their] minds and spirits. ... These influences can and do flow freely into the home. Satan [is very clever]. He need not break down the door."⁴

You must be the guardians of virtue. "A priesthood holder is *virtuous*. Virtuous behavior implies that [you have] pure thoughts and clean actions. ... Virtue is ... an attribute of godliness." It "is akin to holiness."⁵ The Young Women values are Christlike attributes which include the value of virtue. We now call upon you to join with us in leading the world in a return to virtue. In order to do so, you "must practise virtue and holiness"⁶ by eliminating from your life anything that is evil and inconsistent with one who holds the holy priesthood of God. "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and ... the Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion."⁷ So be cautious about what you view in entertainment media or print. Your personal virtue will model for your daughters, and also your sons, what true strength and moral courage are. By being a guardian of virtue in your own life, in your

home, and in the lives of your children, you are showing your wife and daughters what true love really is. Your personal purity will give you power.

You are your daughter's guardian in more than the legal sense. Be present in your daughter's life. Let her know your standards, your expectations, your hopes and dreams for her success and happiness. Interview her, get to know her friends and, when the time comes, her boyfriends. Help her understand the importance of education. Help her understand that the principle of modesty is a protection. Help her choose music and media that invite the Spirit and are consistent with her divine identity. Be an active part of her life. And if in her teenage years she should not come home from a date on time, go get her. She will resist and tell you that you have ruined her social life, but she will inwardly know that you love her and that you care enough to be her guardian. You are not ordinary men. Because of your valiance in the premortal realms, you qualified to be leaders and to possess priesthood power. There you exhibited "exceeding faith and good works," and you are here now to do the same.⁸ Your priesthood sets you apart.

Within a few weeks our three sons will have given their baby daughters a name and a blessing. I hope this will be the first of many priesthood blessings they receive from their fathers, because in the world in which they will grow up, they will need those blessings. Your daughter will cherish the priesthood and determine in her heart that this is what she wants in her future home and family. Always remember "that the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven" and can "be controlled ... only upon the principles of righteousness."⁹

Fathers, you are your daughter's hero. My father was my hero. I used to wait on the steps of our home for him to arrive each

night. He would pick me up and twirl me around and let me put my feet on top of his big shoes, and then he would dance me into the house. I loved the challenge of trying to follow his every footstep. I still do.

Did you know that your testimony has a powerful influence on your daughters? I knew my father had a testimony. I knew he loved the Lord. And because my father loved the Lord, I did too. I knew he cared about the widows because he took his vacation to paint the home of the widow who lived next door. I thought that was the greatest vacation our family ever had because he taught me how to paint! You will bless the life of your daughter for years to come if you will look for ways to spend time with her and to share your testimony with her.

In the Book of Mormon, Abish was converted by her father's sharing with her his remarkable vision. For many years thereafter, she kept her testimony in her heart and lived righteously in a very wicked society. Then the time came when she could no longer be still, and she ran from house to house to share her testimony and the miracles she had witnessed in the king's court. The power of Abish's conversion and testimony was instrumental in changing an entire society. The people who heard her testify became a people who "were converted unto the Lord, [and] never did fall away," and their sons became the stripling warriors!¹⁰

As the [hymn](#) says, "Rise up, O men of God!"¹¹ This is a call to you, the men who bear the holy priesthood of God. May it be said of you as was said of Captain Moroni: "[He] was a strong and a mighty man; ... a man of a perfect understanding; ... a man who was firm in the faith of [Christ](#). ... " ... 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; ... the devil would never have

power over the hearts of the children of men."¹²

Brethren, fathers, young men, "Be loyal to the royal within you."¹³

So how do you raise a girl? Love her mother. Lead your family to the temple, be guardians of virtue, and magnify your priesthood. Fathers, you have been entrusted with our Heavenly Father's royal daughters. They are virtuous and elect. It is my prayer that you will watch over them, strengthen them, model virtuous behavior, and teach them to follow in the Savior's every footstep—for He lives! In the name of [Jesus Christ](#), amen.

Marriage and Family: Our Sacred Responsibility **W. Douglas Shumway** **Of the Second Quorum of the Seventy**

In a society where marriage is often shunned, parenthood avoided, and families degraded, we have the responsibility to honor our marriages, nurture our children, and fortify our families.

Shortly after I was married, my three brothers and I were sitting in my father's office for a business meeting. At the conclusion of our meeting, as we stood to leave, Dad stopped, turned to us, and said: "You boys are not treating your wives as you should. You need to show them more kindness and respect." My father's words penetrated my soul.

Today we are witnessing an unending assault on marriage and the [family](#). They seem to be the adversary's prime targets for belittlement and destruction. In a society where marriage is often shunned, parenthood avoided, and families degraded, we have the responsibility to honor our marriages, nurture our children, and fortify our families.

Honoring marriage requires that spouses render love, respect, and devotion to one another. We have been given sacred instruction to “love thy wife with all thy heart, and ... cleave unto her and none else” ([D&C 42:22](#)).

The prophet Malachi taught: “The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. ... Therefore take heed ... and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth” ([Mal. 2:14–15](#)). To live our life with the wife of our youth, keeping covenants, acquiring wisdom, and sharing love now and throughout eternity is a privilege indeed. I am reminded of the expression, “When the satisfaction or the security of another person becomes as significant to one as is one’s own satisfaction or security, then the state of love exists” (Harry Stack Sullivan, *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry* [1940], 42–43).

Marriage is meant to be and must be a loving, binding, harmonious relationship between a man and a woman. When a husband and a wife understand that the family is ordained of God and that marriage can be filled with promises and blessings extending into the eternities, separation and divorce would seldom be a consideration in the Latter-day Saint home. Couples would realize that the sacred ordinances and covenants made in the house of the Lord provide the means whereby they can return to the presence of God.

Parents have been given the sacred duty to “bring ... up [children] in the nurture ... of the Lord” ([Eph. 6:4](#)). “The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Oct. 1998, 24; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Our responsibility, then, not only is for

the well-being of our spouse but extends to the watchful care of our children, for “children are an heritage of the Lord” ([Ps. 127:3](#)). We can make the choice to nurture our children accordingly and “teach [them] to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” ([D&C 68:28](#)). As parents, we must regard our children as gifts from God and be committed to making our homes a place to love, train, and nurture our sons and daughters.

President Thomas S. Monson reminds us: “The mantle of leadership is not the cloak of comfort, but the role of responsibility. ... ‘Youth needs fewer critics and more models [to follow].’ One hundred years from now it will not matter what kind of a car we drove, what kind of a house we lived in, how much we had in the bank account, nor what our clothes looked like. But the world may be a little better because we were important in the life of a boy or a girl” (*Pathways to Perfection* [1973], 131).

Although life sometimes makes us weary, impatient, or too busy for our children, we must never forget the infinite worth of what we have in our homes—our sons and our daughters. The task at hand, a business engagement, or a new automobile are all of benefit but pale in value when compared to the worth of a young soul.

John Gunther, a father who lost his young son to brain cancer, urged those who still have sons and daughters to “embrace them with a little added rapture and a keener awareness of joy” (*Death Be Not Proud: A Memoir* [1949], 259).

President Harold B. Lee told of a great educator, Horace Mann, who “was the speaker at the dedication of a ... boys’ school. ... In his talk he said, ‘This school has cost hundreds of thousands of dollars; but if this school is able to save one boy, it is worth all that it cost.’ One of his friends came up to [Mr. Mann] at the close of the meeting and said, ‘You let your enthusiasm

get away with you, didn't you? You ... said that if this school, costing hundreds of thousands of dollars, were to save just one boy, it was worth all that it cost? You surely don't mean that.'

"Horace Mann looked at him and said, 'Yes, my friend. It would be worth it if that one boy were my son; it would be worth it'" ("Today's Young People," *Ensign*, June 1971, 61).

Loving, protecting, and nurturing our children are among the most sacred and eternally important things we will do. Worldly belongings will vanish, today's number-one movie or song will be irrelevant tomorrow, but a son or a daughter is eternal. "The family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World"). Therefore parents and children must work together in unity to fortify family relationships, cultivating them day in and day out.

I have a brother who was associated with a large university. He told of a student athlete who was an outstanding hurdler. The young man was blind. Rex asked him, "Don't you ever fall?" "I have to be exact," the athlete responded. "I measure each time before I jump. One time I didn't, and I nearly killed myself." The young man then spoke of the countless hours his father had devoted over the years teaching, helping, and showing him how to hurdle, until he became one of the best.

How could this young man fail with a team like that—a father and a son.

Young men and women, you can be a great influence for good in your homes as you help to achieve worthy family objectives. I shall never forget the family home evening, years ago, in which the name of each member of our family was placed in a hat. The name you picked from the hat would be your "secret friend" for the week. You can imagine the love that filled my heart when I

came home that Tuesday after work to sweep out the garage, as I had earlier promised, and found it cleanly swept. There was a note attached to the garage door which read, "Hope you had a good day—your secret friend." And on Friday night, as I turned down my bed, I uncovered an Almond Joy, my favorite candy bar, wrapped carefully in scotch tape and plain white paper, with a note: "Dad, I love you a lot! Thanks, your secret friend." Then to top it off, after returning home from a late meeting Sunday evening, I found the dining room table beautifully set, and written on the napkin by my place were the words "SUPER DAD" in big bold letters and in parentheses, "your secret friend." Hold your family home evenings, for this is where the gospel is taught, a testimony gained, and the family fortified.

Although the adversary seeks to destroy the key elements necessary for a happy marriage and a righteous family, let me assure you that the gospel of [Jesus Christ](#) provides the tools and teachings necessary to combat and conquer the assailant in this war. If we will but honor our marriages by imparting more love and selflessness to our spouses; nurture our children through gentle persuasion and the expert teacher we call example; and fortify the spirituality of our families through consistent family home evening, prayer, and scripture study, I testify to you that the living Savior, Jesus [Christ](#), will guide us and grant us victory in our efforts to achieve an [eternal family](#) unit. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Eternal Marriage

F. Burton Howard

Of the First Quorum of the Seventy

If you want something to last forever, you treat it differently. . . . It becomes special because you have made it so.

A number of years ago my wife and I went to a garden wedding reception. Earlier that day we had been to the temple, where two young people we knew had been married for time and all eternity. They were much in love. The circumstances of their meeting had been almost miraculous. Many tears of happiness were shed. We stood in the reception line at the end of a perfect day. Ahead of us was a close friend of the [family](#). As he approached the couple, he stopped and in a beautiful, clear tenor voice sang to them the stirring words from the book of Ruth: “Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die” ([Ruth 1:16–17](#)).

We were deeply touched and felt reassured about their prospects for happiness—this in part, I suppose, because my wife and I have had these same words on the wall of our home for many years.

Sadly, the significance of these beautiful words is subsiding. Far too many marriages today end in divorce. Selfishness, sin, and personal convenience often prevail over covenants and commitment.

Eternal marriage is a principle which was established before the foundation of the world and was instituted on this earth before death came into it. Adam and Eve were given to each other by God in the Garden of Eden before the Fall. The scripture says, “In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and *blessed* them” ([Gen. 5:1–2](#); emphasis added).

The prophets have uniformly taught that the consummate and culminating element of God’s great plan for the blessing of His children is eternal marriage. President Ezra Taft Benson stated, “Faithfulness to the

marriage covenant brings the fullest joy here and glorious rewards hereafter” (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [1988], 533–34). President Howard W. Hunter described celestial marriage as “the crowning gospel ordinance” and clarified that “while it might take somewhat longer [for some,] perhaps even beyond this mortal life,” it would not be denied to any worthy individual (*Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1997], 132, 140). President Gordon B. Hinckley has called eternal marriage a wonderful thing (see “What God Hath Joined Together,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 71) and a “gift, precious beyond all others” (“The Marriage That Endures,” *Ensign*, May 1974, 23).

However, notwithstanding the grandeur and glory of the gift, it is not free. In fact it is conditional, and having been given, it may be withdrawn if we do not keep the conditions of the covenant which accompanies it. Section 131 of the Doctrine and Covenants tells us that “in the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; And in order to obtain the highest, a man [that means a woman too] must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]” ([D&C 131:1–2](#)).

A covenant is a sacred promise. We promise to do some things, and God binds Himself to do others. To those who keep the covenant of marriage, God promises the fulness of His glory, eternal lives, eternal increase, exaltation in the celestial kingdom, and a fulness of joy. We all know that, but sometimes we don’t give much thought to what *we* have to do to receive these blessings. The scriptures seem to clearly say that at least three obligations are inherent in this covenant.

First, an eternal marriage is eternal. *Eternal* implies continuing growth and improvement. It means that man and wife will honestly try to perfect themselves. It

means that the marriage relationship is not to be frivolously discarded at the first sign of disagreement or when times get hard. It signifies that love will grow stronger with time and that it extends beyond the grave. It means that each partner will be blessed with the company of the other partner forever and that problems and differences might as well be resolved because they are not going to go away. *Eternal* signifies repentance, [forgiveness](#), long-suffering, patience, hope, charity, love, and humility. All of these things are involved in anything that is eternal, and surely we must learn and practice them if we intend to claim an eternal marriage.

Second, an eternal marriage is ordained of God. This means that the parties to the marriage covenant agree to invite God into their marriage, to pray together, to keep the commandments, to keep wants and passions within certain limits that the prophets have outlined. It means to be equal companions and to be just as true and pure outside the home as inside the home. That is part of what *ordained of God* means.

Third, eternal marriage is a kind of partnership with God. He promises a continuation of lives to those who are sealed together in the temple. There is a oneness with the Creator implied in the commandment given to Adam and Eve to multiply and replenish the earth. There is an obligation to teach children the gospel, for they are His children too. Thus we have family home evening and scripture study, gospel conversations, and service to others. There would seem to be an obligation to support and sustain each other in callings and roles that each is given to perform. How can we claim to be one with God if we cannot sustain one another when the wife is called to serve in the Primary or the husband in the bishopric?

So the covenant of marriage implies at least these things and probably others. I may miss

the mark, but I don't think by far, when I say that those who verbally or physically abuse their wives or husbands or those who degrade or demean or exercise unrighteous dominion in a marriage are not keeping the covenant. Nor are those who neglect the commandments or who fail to sustain their leaders. Even those who merely decline callings, neglect neighbors, or moderately adopt worldly ways are at risk. If we are not keeping our part of the covenant, we have no promise.

Most of all, I think eternal marriage cannot be achieved without a commitment to make it work. Most of what I know about this I have learned from my companion. We have been married for almost 47 years now. From the beginning she knew what kind of marriage she wanted.

We started as poor college students, but her vision for our marriage was exemplified by a set of silverware. As is common today, when we married she registered with a local department store. Instead of listing all the pots and pans and appliances we needed and hoped to receive, she chose another course. She asked for silverware. She chose a pattern and the number of place settings and listed knives, forks, and spoons on the wedding registry and nothing else. No towels, no toasters, no television—just knives, forks, and spoons.

The wedding came and went. Our friends and our parents' friends gave gifts. We departed for a brief honeymoon and decided to open the presents when we returned.

When we did so, we were shocked. There was not a single knife or fork in the lot. We joked about it and went on with our lives.

Two children came along while we were in law school. We had no money to spare. But when my wife worked as a part-time election judge or when someone gave her a few dollars for her birthday, she would quietly set it aside, and when she had enough she would go to town to buy a fork

or a spoon. It took us several years to accumulate enough pieces to use them. When we finally had service for four, we began to invite some of our friends for dinner.

Before they came, we would have a little discussion in the kitchen. Which utensils would we use, the battered and mismatched stainless or the special silverware? In those early days I would often vote for the stainless. It was easier. You could just throw it in the dishwasher after the meal, and it took care of itself. The silver, on the other hand, was a lot of work. My wife had it hidden away under the bed where it could not be found easily by a burglar. She had insisted that I buy a tarnish-free cloth to wrap it in. Each piece was in a separate pocket, and it was no easy task to assemble all the pieces. When the silver was used, it had to be hand washed and dried so that it would not spot, and put back in the pockets so it would not tarnish, and wrapped up and carefully hidden again so it would not get stolen. If any tarnish was discovered, I was sent to buy silver polish, and together we carefully rubbed the stains away.

Over the years we added to the set, and I watched with amazement how she cared for the silver. My wife was never one to get angry easily. However, I remember the day when one of our children somehow got hold of one of the silver forks and wanted to use it to dig up the backyard. That attempt was met with a fiery glare and a warning not to even think about it. Ever!

I noticed that the silverware never went to the many ward dinners she cooked, or never accompanied the many meals she made and sent to others who were sick or needy. It never went on picnics and never went camping. In fact it never went anywhere; and, as time went by, it didn't even come to the table very often. Some of our friends were weighed in the balance, found wanting,

and didn't even know it. They got the stainless when they came to dinner.

The time came when we were called to go on a mission. I arrived home one day and was told that I had to rent a safe-deposit box for the silver. She didn't want to take it with us. She didn't want to leave it behind. And she didn't want to lose it.

For years I thought she was just a little bit eccentric, and then one day I realized that she had known for a long time something that I was just beginning to understand. *If you want something to last forever, you treat it differently.* You shield it and protect it. You never abuse it. You don't expose it to the elements. You don't make it common or ordinary. If it ever becomes tarnished, you lovingly polish it until it gleams like new. It becomes special because you have made it so, and it grows more beautiful and precious as time goes by.

Eternal marriage is just like that. We need to treat it just that way. I pray that we may see it for the priceless gift that it is, in the name of [Jesus Christ](#), amen.

Fundamentals of Enduring Family Relationships

Ezra Taft Benson

President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Marriage is the rock foundation, the cornerstone, of civilization. No nation will ever rise above its homes.

Marriage and [family](#) life are ordained of God.

In an eternal sense, salvation is a family affair. God holds parents responsible for their stewardship in rearing their family. It is a most sacred responsibility.

Today we are aware of great problems in our society. The most obvious are sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, drug abuse,

alcoholism, vandalism, pornography, and violence.

These grave problems are symptoms of failure in the home—the disregarding of principles and practices established by God in the very beginning.

Because parents have departed from the principles the Lord gave for happiness and success, families throughout the world are undergoing great stress and trauma. Many parents have been enticed to abandon their responsibilities in the home to seek after an elusive “self-fulfillment.” Some have abdicated parental responsibilities for pursuit of material things, unwilling to postpone personal gratification in the interest of their children’s welfare.

It is time to awaken to the fact that there are deliberate efforts to restructure the family along the lines of humanistic values. Images of the family and of love as depicted in television and film often portray a philosophy contrary to the commandments of God.

If one doubts that the family as an institution is being restructured, consider these facts: Nearly one out of every three marriages ends in divorce.

The traditional family—one which has a husband, a wife not working outside the home, and children—constitutes only 14 percent of American households. (Current Population Reports, 1980.)

Nearly fifty percent of the work force is now female.

About 56 percent of these female workers are mothers with preschool children, and nearly 60 percent of them have teenagers at home.

In the United States alone it is estimated that eight to ten million youngsters, six and under, are in child-care situations outside the home.

Almost one-fifth of all children in the United States live in a one-parent home.

No society will long survive without mothers who care for their young and provide that nurturing care so essential for their normal development.

Innocent sounding phrases are now used to give approval to sinful practices. Thus, the term “alternative life-style” is used to justify adultery and homosexuality, “freedom of choice” to justify [abortion](#), “meaningful relationship” and “self-fulfillment” to justify sex outside of marriage.

If we continue with present trends, we can expect to have more emotionally disturbed young people, more divorce, more depression, and more suicide.

The family is the most effective place to instill lasting values in its members. Where family life is strong and based on principles and practices of the gospel of [Jesus Christ](#), these problems do not as readily appear.

My message this morning is to return to the God-ordained fundamentals that will ensure love, stability, and happiness in our homes. May I offer three fundamentals to happy, enduring family relationships.

First: A husband and wife must attain righteous unity and oneness in their goals, desires, and actions.

Marriage itself must be regarded as a sacred covenant before God. A married couple have an obligation not only to each other, but to God. He has promised blessings to those who honor that covenant.

Fidelity to one’s marriage vows is absolutely essential for love, trust, and peace. Adultery is unequivocally condemned by the Lord. Husbands and wives who love each other will find that love and loyalty are reciprocated. This love will provide a nurturing atmosphere for the emotional growth of children. Family life should be a time of happiness and joy that children can look back on with fond memories and associations.

Hear these simple admonitions from the Lord which may be applied to the marriage covenant.

First: “See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires. . . . Cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another.” ([D&C 88:123–24.](#))

Second: “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else. . . . Thou shalt not commit adultery.” ([D&C 42:22, 24.](#))

Third: “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention.” ([3 Ne. 11:29.](#))

And there are many more scriptural admonitions.

Restraint and self-control must be ruling principles in the marriage relationship. Couples must learn to bridle their tongues as well as their passions.

Prayer in the home and prayer with each other will strengthen your union. Gradually thoughts, aspirations, and ideas will merge into a oneness until you are seeking the same purposes and goals.

Rely on the Lord, the teachings of the prophets, and the scriptures for guidance and help, particularly when there may be disagreements and problems.

Spiritual growth comes by solving problems together—not by running from them.

Today’s inordinate emphasis on individualism brings egotism and separation. Two individuals becoming “one flesh” is still the Lord’s standard. (See [Gen. 2:24.](#))

The secret of a happy marriage is to serve God and each other. The goal of marriage is unity and oneness, as well as self-development. Paradoxically, the more we serve one another, the greater is our spiritual and emotional growth.

The first fundamental, then, is to work toward righteous unity.

Second: *Nurture your children with love and the admonitions of the Lord.*

Rearing happy, peaceful children is no easy challenge in today’s world, but it can be done, and it is being done.

Responsible parenthood is the key.

Above all else, children need to know and feel they are loved, wanted, and appreciated. They need to be assured of that often.

Obviously, this is a role parents should fill, and most often the mother can do it best.

Children need to know who they are in the eternal sense of their identity. They need to know that they have an eternal Heavenly Father on whom they can rely, to whom they can pray, and from whom they can receive guidance. They need to know whence they came so that their lives will have meaning and purpose.

Children must be taught to pray, to rely on the Lord for guidance, and to express appreciation for the blessings that are theirs. I recall kneeling at the bedsides of our young children, helping them with their prayers.

Children must be taught right from wrong. They can and must learn the commandments of God. They must be taught that it is wrong to steal, lie, cheat, or covet what others have. Children must be taught to work at home. They should learn there that honest labor develops dignity and self-respect. They should learn the pleasure of work, of doing a job well.

The leisure time of children must be constructively directed to wholesome, positive pursuits. Too much time viewing television can be destructive, and pornography in this medium should not be tolerated. It is estimated that growing children today watch television over twenty-five hours per week.

Communities have a responsibility to assist the family in promoting wholesome entertainment. What a community tolerates will become tomorrow’s standard for today’s youth.

Families must spend more time together in work and recreation. Family home evenings should be scheduled once a week as a time for recreation, work projects, skits, songs around the piano, games, special refreshments, and family prayers. Like iron links in a chain, this practice will bind a family together, in love, pride, tradition, strength, and loyalty.

Family study of the scriptures should be the practice in our homes each Sabbath day. Daily devotionals are also a commendable practice, where scripture reading, singing of hymns, and family prayer are a part of our daily routine.

Third: Parents must prepare their children for the ordinances of the gospel.

The most important teachings in the home are spiritual. Parents are commanded to prepare their sons and daughters for the ordinances of the gospel: [baptism](#), confirmation, priesthood ordinations, and temple marriage. They are to teach them to respect and honor the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Most importantly, parents are to instill within their children a desire for eternal life and to earnestly seek that goal above all else.

Eternal life may be obtained only by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

When parents themselves have complied with the ordinances of salvation, when they have set the example of a temple marriage, not only is their own marriage more likely to succeed, but their children are far more likely to follow their example.

Parents who provide such a home will have, as the Lord has said, “a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, ... a house of order, a house of God.” ([D&C 88:119](#).) Regardless of how modest or humble that home may be, it will have love, happiness, peace, and joy.

Children will grow up in righteousness and truth and will desire to serve the Lord.

One past Church President gave this counsel to parents:

“The home is what needs reforming. Try today, and tomorrow, to make a change in your home by praying twice a day with your family. ... Ask a blessing upon every meal you eat. Spend ten minutes ... reading a chapter from the words of the Lord in the [scriptures]. ... Let love, peace, and the Spirit of the Lord, kindness, charity, sacrifice for others, abound in your families. Banish harsh words, ... and let the Spirit of God take possession of your hearts. Teach to your children these things, in spirit and power. ... Not one child in a hundred would go astray, if the home environment, example and training, were in harmony with ... the gospel of [Christ](#).” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939, p. 302.)

I testify that, by following these precepts and practices, serious problems with the family can and will be avoided.

Thank God for the joys of family life. I have often said there can be no genuine happiness separate and apart from a good home. The sweetest influences and associations of life are there.

God bless us to strengthen our homes with love and unity and by following his precepts, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Are We Not All Mothers?

Sheri L. Dew

Motherhood is more than bearing children. ... It is the essence of who we are as women.

This summer four teenage nieces and I shared a tense Sunday evening when we set out walking from a downtown hotel in a city we were visiting to a nearby chapel where I was to speak. I had made that walk many times, but that evening we suddenly found

ourselves engulfed by an enormous mob of drunken parade-goers. It was no place for four teenage girls, or their aunt, I might add. But with the streets closed to traffic, we had no choice but to keep walking. Over the din, I shouted to the girls, “Stay right with me.” As we maneuvered through the crush of humanity, the only thing on my mind was my nieces’ safety.

Thankfully, we finally made it to the chapel. But for one unnerving hour, I better understood how mothers who forgo their own safety to protect a child must feel. My siblings had entrusted me with their daughters, whom I love, and I would have done anything to lead them to safety. Likewise, our Father has entrusted us as women with His children, and He has asked us to love them and help lead them safely past the dangers of mortality back home.

Loving and leading—these words summarize not only the all-consuming work of the Father and the Son, but the essence of our labor, for our work is to help the Lord with His work. How, then, may we as Latter-day women of God best help the Lord with His work?

Prophets have repeatedly answered this question, as did the First Presidency six decades ago when they called motherhood “the highest, holiest service ... assumed by mankind.”¹

Have you ever wondered why prophets have taught the doctrine of motherhood—and it *is* doctrine—again and again? I have. I have thought long and hard about the work of women of God. And I have wrestled with what the doctrine of motherhood means for *all* of us. This issue has driven me to my knees, to the scriptures, and to the temple—all of which teach an ennobling doctrine regarding our most crucial role as women. It is a doctrine about which we must be clear if we hope to stand “steadfast and immovable”² regarding the issues that swirl around our gender. For Satan has declared war on

motherhood. He knows that those who rock the cradle can rock his earthly empire. And he knows that without righteous mothers loving and leading the next generation, the kingdom of God will fail.

When we understand the magnitude of motherhood, it becomes clear why prophets have been so protective of woman’s most sacred role. While *we* tend to equate motherhood solely with maternity, in the Lord’s language, the word *mother* has layers of meaning. Of all the words they could have chosen to define her role and her essence, both God the Father and Adam called Eve “the mother of all living”³—and they did so *before* she ever bore a child. Like Eve, our motherhood began before we were born. Just as worthy men were foreordained to hold the priesthood in mortality,⁴ righteous women were endowed premortally with the privilege of motherhood.⁵ Motherhood is more than bearing children, though it is certainly that. It is the essence of who we are as women. It defines our very identity, our divine stature and nature, and the unique traits our Father gave us.

President Gordon B. Hinckley stated that “God planted within women something divine.”⁶ That something is the gift and the gifts of motherhood. Elder Matthew Cowley taught that “men have to have something given to them [in mortality] to make them saviors of men, but not mothers, not women. [They] are born with an inherent right, an inherent authority, to be the saviors of human souls ... and the regenerating force in the lives of God’s children.”⁷

Motherhood is not what was left over after our Father blessed His sons with priesthood ordination. It was the most ennobling endowment He could give His daughters, a sacred trust that gave women an unparalleled role in helping His children keep their second estate. As President J. Reuben Clark Jr. declared, motherhood is

“as divinely called, as eternally important in its place as the Priesthood itself.”⁸

Nevertheless, the subject of motherhood is a very tender one, for it evokes some of our greatest joys and heartaches. This has been so from the beginning. Eve was “glad” after the Fall, realizing she otherwise “never should have had seed.”⁹ And yet, imagine her anguish over Cain and Abel. Some mothers experience pain because of the children they have borne; others feel pain because they do not bear children here. About this Elder John A. Widtsoe was explicit: “Women who through no fault of their own cannot exercise the gift of motherhood directly, may do so vicariously.”¹⁰

For reasons known to the Lord, some women are required to wait to have children. This delay is not easy for any righteous woman. But the Lord’s timetable for each of us does not negate our nature. Some of us, then, must simply find other ways to mother. And all around us are those who need to be loved and led.

Eve set the pattern. In addition to bearing children, she mothered all of mankind when she made the most courageous decision any woman has ever made and with Adam opened the way for us to progress. She set an example of womanhood for men to respect and women to follow, modeling the characteristics with which we as women have been endowed: heroic faith, a keen sensitivity to the Spirit, an abhorrence of evil, and complete selflessness. Like the Savior, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,”¹¹ Eve, for the joy of helping initiate the human [family](#), endured the Fall. She loved us enough to help lead us.

As daughters of our Heavenly Father, and as daughters of Eve, we are all mothers and we have always been mothers. And we each have the responsibility to love and help lead the rising generation. How will our young

women learn to live as women of God unless they see what women of God look like, meaning what we wear, watch, and read; how we fill our time and our minds; how we face temptation and uncertainty; where we find true joy; and why modesty and femininity are hallmarks of righteous women? How will our young men learn to value women of God if we don’t show them the virtue of our virtues?

Every one of us has an overarching obligation to model righteous womanhood because our youth may not see it anywhere else. Every sister in Relief Society, which is the most significant community of women on this side of the veil, is responsible to help our young women make a joyful transition into Relief Society. This means our friendship with them must begin long before they turn 18. Every one of us can mother someone—beginning, of course, with the children in our own families but extending far beyond. Every one of us can show by word and by deed that the work of women in the Lord’s kingdom is magnificent and holy. I repeat: *We are all mothers in Israel*, and our calling is to love and help lead the rising generation through the dangerous streets of mortality.

Few of us will reach our potential without the nurturing of both the mother who bore us and the mothers who bear with us. I was thrilled recently to see one of my youth leaders for the first time in years. As a teenager who had absolutely no self-confidence, I always sidled up to this woman because she would put her arm around me and say, “You are just the best girl!” She loved me, so I let her lead me. How many young men and women are desperate for *your* love and leadership? Do we fully realize that our influence as mothers in Israel is irreplaceable and eternal?

When I was growing up, it was not uncommon for Mother to wake me in the

middle of the night and say, “Sheri, take your pillow and go downstairs.” I knew what that meant. It meant a tornado was coming, and I was instantly afraid. But then Mother would say, “Sheri, everything will be OK.” Her words always calmed me. Today, decades later, when life seems overwhelming or frightening, I call Mother and wait for her to say, “Everything will be OK.”

Recent horrifying events in the United States have underscored the fact that we live in a world of uncertainty. Never has there been a greater need for righteous mothers—mothers who bless their children with a sense of safety, security, and confidence about the future, mothers who teach their children where to find peace and truth and that the power of [Jesus Christ](#) is always stronger than the power of the adversary. Every time we build the faith or reinforce the nobility of a young woman or man, every time we love or lead anyone even one small step along the path, we are true to our endowment and calling as mothers and in the process we build the kingdom of God. No woman who understands the gospel would ever think that any other work is more important or would ever say, “I am *just* a mother,” for mothers heal the souls of men.

Look around. Who needs you and your influence? If we really want to make a difference, it will happen as we mother those we have borne and those we are willing to bear with. If we will stay right with our youth—meaning, if we will *love* them—in most cases they will stay right with us—meaning, they will let us *lead* them.

As mothers in Israel, we are the Lord’s secret weapon. Our influence comes from a divine endowment that has been in place from the beginning. In the premortal world, when our Father described our role, I wonder if we didn’t stand in wide-eyed wonder that He would bless us with a sacred trust so central to His plan and that He

would endow us with gifts so vital to the loving and leading of His children. I wonder if we shouted for joy¹² at least in part because of the ennobling stature He gave us in His kingdom. The world won’t tell you that, but the Spirit will.

We just can’t let the Lord down. And if the day comes when we are the only women on earth who find nobility and divinity in motherhood, so be it. For *mother* is the word that will define a righteous woman made perfect in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom, a woman who has qualified for eternal increase in posterity, wisdom, joy, and influence.

I know, I absolutely know, that these doctrines about our divine role are true, and that when understood they bring peace and purpose to all women. My dear sisters, whom I love more than I know how to express, will you rise to the challenge of being mothers in these perilous times, though doing so may test the last ounce of your endurance and courage and faith? Will you stand steadfast and immovable as a mother in Israel and a woman of God? Our Father and His Only Begotten Son have given us a sacred stewardship and a holy crown in their kingdom. May we rejoice in it. And may we be worthy of Their trust. In the name of Jesus [Christ](#), amen.

Our Sacred Duty to Honor Women **[Russell M. Nelson](#)** **Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

Thank the Lord for these sisters who—like our Heavenly Father—love us not only for what we are but for what we may become. It is a joy to be with you tonight, brethren, and wonderful to see so many young men with their fathers. We are assembled because of our desire to hearken to the leaders of the Church. But this congregation

is unique. I don't see any mothers. Not one of us could be here without a mother, yet we are all here—without our mothers.

Tonight I am attending with a son, sons-in-law, and grandsons. Where are their mothers? Gathered in the kitchen of our home! What are they doing? Making large batches of homemade doughnuts! And when we return home, we will feast on those doughnuts. While we enjoy them, these mothers, sisters, and daughters will listen intently as each of us speaks of things he learned here tonight. It's a nice [family](#) tradition, symbolic of the fact that everything we learn and do as priesthood bearers should bless our families.¹

Let us speak about our worthy and wonderful sisters, particularly our mothers, and consider our sacred duty to honor them. When I was a young university student, one of my classmates urgently pleaded with a group of us—his Latter-day Saint friends—to donate blood for his mother, who was bleeding profusely. We went directly to the hospital to have our blood typed and tested. I'll never forget our shock when told that one of the prospective donors was unfit because of a positive blood test for a venereal disease. That infected blood was his own! Fortunately, his mother survived, but I'll never forget his lingering sorrow. He bore the burden of knowing that his personal immorality had disqualified him from giving needed aid to his mother, and he had added to her grief. I learned a great lesson: if one dishonors the commandments of God, one dishonors mother, and if one dishonors mother, one dishonors the commandments of God.²

Honor Motherhood

During my professional career as a doctor of medicine, I was occasionally asked why I chose to do that difficult work. I responded with my opinion that the highest and noblest work in this life is that of a mother. Since that option was not available to me, I

thought that caring for the sick might come close. I tried to care for my patients as compassionately and competently as Mother cared for me.

Many years ago the First Presidency issued a statement that has had a profound and lasting influence upon me. "Motherhood," they wrote, "is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels."³ Because mothers are essential to God's great plan of happiness, their sacred work is opposed by Satan, who would destroy the family and demean the worth of women. You young men need to know that you can hardly achieve your highest potential without the influence of good women, particularly your mother and, in a few years, a good wife. Learn now to show respect and [gratitude](#). Remember that your mother is your *mother*. She should not need to issue orders. Her wish, her hope, her hint should provide direction that you would honor. Thank her and express your love for her. And if she is struggling to rear you without your father, you have a double duty to honor her.

The influence of your mother will bless you throughout life, especially when you serve as a missionary. Long years ago, Elder Frank Croft was serving in the state of Alabama. While preaching to the people, he was forcefully abducted by a vicious gang, to be whipped and lashed across his bare back. Elder Croft was ordered to remove his coat and shirt before he was tied to a tree. As he did so, a letter he had recently received from his mother fell to the ground. The vile leader of the gang picked up the letter. Elder Croft closed his eyes and uttered a silent prayer. The attacker read the letter from Elder Croft's mother. From a copy of that letter, I quote:

"My beloved son, ... remember the words of the Savior when He said, ... 'Blessed are ye

when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for you will have your reward in Heaven for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' Also remember the Savior upon the cross suffering from the sins of the world when He had uttered these immortal words, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Surely, my boy, they who are mistreating you ... know not what they do or they would not do it. Sometime, somewhere, they will understand and then they will regret their action and they will honor you for the glorious work you are doing. So be patient, my son, love those who mistreat you and say all manner of evil against you and the Lord will bless you and magnify you. ... Remember also, my son, that day and night, your mother is praying for you."

Elder Croft watched the hateful man as he studied the letter. He would read a line or two, then sit and ponder. He arose to approach his captive. The man said: "Feller, you must have a wonderful mother. You see, I once had one, too." Then, addressing the mob, he said: "Men, after reading this Mormon's mother's letter, I just can't go ahead with the job. Maybe we had better let him go." Elder Croft was released without harm.⁴

We are deeply grateful for the faithful mothers and fathers of our wonderful missionaries. The love they bear for their children is sublime.

Honor the Sisters

We who bear the holy priesthood have a sacred duty to honor our sisters. We are old enough and wise enough to know that teasing is wrong. We respect sisters—not only in our immediate families but all the wonderful sisters in our lives. As daughters of God, their potential is divine. Without them, eternal life would be impossible. Our high regard for them should spring from our

love of God and from an awareness of their lofty purpose in His great eternal plan. Hence, I warn against pornography. It is degrading of women. It is evil. It is infectious, destructive, and addictive. The body has means by which it can cleanse itself from harmful effects of contaminated food or drink. But it cannot vomit back the poison of pornography. Once recorded, it always remains subject to recall, flashing its perverted images across your mind, with power to draw you away from the wholesome things in life. Avoid it like the plague!

Honor Your Wife

To you who are not yet married, think about your future marriage. Choose your companion well. Remember the scriptures that teach the importance of marriage in the temple:

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

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

"And if he does not, he cannot obtain it."⁵

The highest ordinances in the house of the Lord are received by husband and wife together and equally—or not at all!

In retrospect, I see that the most important day of my life was the day when my sweetheart, Dantzel, and I were married in the holy temple. Without her I could not have the highest and most enduring blessings of the priesthood. Without her I would not be the father to our wonderful children or grandfather to our precious grandchildren.

As fathers we should have love unbounded for the mothers of our children. We should accord to them the gratitude, respect, and praise that they deserve. Husbands, to keep alive the spirit of romance in your marriage, be considerate and kind in the tender intimacies of your married life. Let your

thoughts and actions inspire confidence and trust. Let your words be wholesome and your time together be uplifting. Let nothing in life take priority over your wife—neither work, recreation, nor hobby.

An ideal marriage is a true partnership between two imperfect people, each striving to complement the other, to keep the commandments, and to do the will of the Lord.

Fathers Preside over the Family in Love

The family is the most important unit of society and of the Church. The family is ordained of God. It is central to His plan for the eternal destiny of His children.⁶ “God has established families to bring happiness to his children, to allow them to learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and to prepare them for eternal life.”⁷

Parents have the primary responsibility for the welfare of their children.⁸ The Church does not replace that parental responsibility. Ideally, the Latter-day Saint family is presided over by a worthy man who holds the priesthood. This patriarchal authority has been honored among the people of God in all dispensations. It is of divine origin, and that union, if sealed by proper authority, will continue throughout eternity. He who is the Father of us all and the source of this authority demands that governance in the home be in love and righteousness.⁹

You fathers can help with the dishes, care for a crying baby, and change a diaper. And perhaps some Sunday you could get the children ready for Church, and your wife could sit in the car and honk.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as [Christ](#) also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”¹⁰ With that kind of love, brethren, we will be better husbands and fathers, more loving and spiritual leaders. Happiness at home is most likely to be achieved when practices there are founded upon the teachings of [Jesus Christ](#).¹¹ Ours is the responsibility to ensure that we have family

prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. Ours is the responsibility to prepare our children to receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation and the blessings promised to tithing payers. Ours is the privilege to bestow priesthood blessings of healing, comfort, and direction.

The home is the great laboratory of love. There the raw chemicals of selfishness and greed are melded in the crucible of cooperation to yield compassionate concern and love one for another.¹²

Honor the special sisters in your lives, brethren. Express your love to your wife, to your mother, and to the sisters. Praise them for their forbearance with you even when you are not at your best. Thank the Lord for these sisters who—like our Heavenly Father—love us not only for what we are but for what we may become. Humbly I thank God for my mother, my sisters, my daughters, granddaughters, and for my special sweetheart, companion, and friend—my wife!

May God bless us to honor each virtuous woman I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Becoming Provident Providers Temporally and Spiritually [Elder Robert D. Hales](#) **Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

When we live providently, we can provide for ourselves and our families and also follow the Savior’s example to serve and bless others.

How blessed we are to be led by a living prophet! Growing up during the Great Depression, President Thomas S. Monson learned how to serve others. Often his mother asked him to deliver food to needy neighbors, and she would give homeless men odd jobs in exchange for home-cooked

meals. Later as a young bishop, he was taught by President J. Reuben Clark, “Be kind to the widow and look after the poor” (in Thomas S. Monson, “A Provident Plan—A Precious Promise,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 62). President Monson looked after 84 widows and cared for them until they passed away. Through the years, his service to members and neighbors throughout the world has become the hallmark of his ministry. We are grateful to have his example. Thank you, President Monson. Brothers and sisters, as did President Monson, our children are growing up in times of economic uncertainty. Just as our grandparents and great-grandparents learned vital lessons through economic adversity, what we learn now, in our present circumstances, can bless us and our posterity for generations to come.

Today I speak to all whose freedom to choose has been diminished by the effects of ill-advised choices of the past. I speak specifically of choices that have led to excessive debt and addictions to food, drugs, pornography, and other patterns of thought and action that diminish one’s sense of self-worth. All of these excesses affect us individually and undermine our [family](#) relationships. Of course some debt incurred for education, a modest home, or a basic automobile may be necessary to provide for a family. Unfortunately however, additional debt is incurred when we cannot control our wants and addictive impulses. And for both debt and addiction, the hopeful solution is the same—we must turn to the Lord and follow His commandments. We must want more than anything else to change our lives so that we can break the cycle of debt and our uncontrolled wants. I pray that in the next few minutes, and throughout this conference, you will be filled with hope in our Savior, [Jesus Christ](#), and find hope in the doctrines of His restored gospel.

Our challenges, including those we create by our own decisions, are part of our test in mortality. Let me assure you that your situation is not beyond the reach of our Savior. Through Him, every struggle can be for our experience and our good (see [D&C 122:7](#)). Each temptation we overcome is to strengthen us, not destroy us. The Lord will never allow us to suffer beyond what we can endure (see [1 Corinthians 10:13](#)).

We must remember that the adversary knows us extremely well. He knows where, when, and *how* to tempt us. If we are obedient to the promptings of the Holy Ghost, we can learn to recognize the adversary’s enticements. Before we yield to temptation, we must learn to say with unflinching resolve, “Get thee behind me, Satan” ([Matthew 16:23](#)).

Our success is never measured by how strongly we are tempted but by how faithfully we respond. We must ask for help from our Heavenly Father and seek strength through the Atonement of His Son, Jesus [Christ](#). In both temporal and spiritual things, obtaining this divine assistance enables us to become provident providers for ourselves and others.

What is a provident provider?

All of us are responsible to provide for ourselves and our families in both temporal and spiritual ways. To provide providently, we must practice the principles of provident living: joyfully living within our means, being content with what we have, avoiding excessive debt, and diligently saving and preparing for rainy-day emergencies. When we live providently, we can provide for ourselves and our families and also follow the Savior’s example to serve and bless others.

Being provident providers, we must keep that most basic commandment, “Thou shalt not covet” ([Exodus 20:17](#)). Our world is fraught with feelings of entitlement. Some of us feel embarrassed, ashamed, less

worthwhile if our family does not have everything the neighbors have. As a result, we go into debt to buy things we can't afford—and things we do not really need. Whenever we do this, we become poor temporally *and* spiritually. We give away some of our precious, priceless agency and put ourselves in self-imposed servitude. Money we could have used to care for ourselves and others must now be used to pay our debts. What remains is often only enough to meet our most basic physical needs. Living at the subsistence level, we become depressed, our self-worth is affected, and our relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and the Lord are weakened. We do not have the time, energy, or interest to seek spiritual things. How then do we avoid and overcome the patterns of debt and addiction to temporal, worldly things? May I share with you two lessons in provident living that can help each of us. These lessons, along with many other important lessons of my life, were taught to me by my wife and eternal companion. These lessons were learned at two different times in our marriage—both on occasions when I wanted to buy her a special gift. The first lesson was learned when we were newly married and had very little money. I was in the air force, and we had missed Christmas together. I was on assignment overseas. When I got home, I saw a beautiful dress in a store window and suggested to my wife that if she liked it, we would buy it. Mary went into the dressing room of the store. After a moment the salesclerk came out, brushed by me, and returned the dress to its place in the store window. As we left the store, I asked, “What happened?” She replied, “It was a beautiful dress, but *we can't afford it!*” Those words went straight to my heart. I have learned that the three most loving words are “I love

you,” and the four most caring words for those we love are “We can't afford it.” The second lesson was learned several years later when we were more financially secure. Our wedding anniversary was approaching, and I wanted to buy Mary a fancy coat to show my love and appreciation for our many happy years together. When I asked what she thought of the coat I had in mind, she replied with words that again penetrated my heart and mind. “Where would I wear it?” she asked. (At the time she was a ward Relief Society president helping to minister to needy families.) Then she taught me an unforgettable lesson. She looked me in the eyes and sweetly asked, “Are you buying this for me or for you?” In other words, she was asking, “Is the purpose of this gift to show your love for me or to show me that you are a good provider or to prove something to the world?” I pondered her question and realized I was thinking less about her and our family and more about me. After that we had a serious, life-changing discussion about provident living, and both of us agreed that our money would be better spent in paying down our home mortgage and adding to our children's education fund. These two lessons are the essence of provident living. When faced with the choice to buy, consume, or engage in worldly things and activities, we all need to learn to say to one another, “We *can't* afford it, even though we want it!” or “We *can* afford it, but we don't *need* it—and we really don't even want it!” There is an equally important principle underlying these lessons: we can learn much from communicating with our husbands and wives. As we counsel and work together in family councils, we can help each other become provident providers and teach our children to live providently as well. The foundation of provident living is the law of the tithe. The primary purpose of this law

is to help us develop faith in our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Tithing helps us overcome our desires for the things of this world and willingly make sacrifices for others. Tithing is the great equitable law, for no matter how rich or poor we are, all of us pay the same one-tenth of our increase annually (see [D&C 119:4](#)), and all of us receive blessings so great “that there shall not be room enough to receive [them]” ([Malachi 3:10](#)).

In addition to our tithes, we should also be an example with the payment of fast offerings. A fast offering is at least the cost of the two consecutive meals from which we fast each month. By not eating these two meals, we draw close to the Lord in humility and prayer and also participate in anonymous giving to bless our brothers and sisters all over the world.

Another important way we help our children learn to be provident providers is by establishing a family budget. We should regularly review our family income, savings, and spending plan in family council meetings. This will teach our children to recognize the difference between wants and needs and to plan ahead for meaningful use of family resources.

When our boys were young, we had a family council and set a goal to take a “dream vacation” down the Colorado River. When any of us wanted to buy something during the next year, we would ask each other, “Do we really want to buy that thing now, or do we want to take our dream trip later?” This was a wonderful teaching experience in choosing provident living. By not satisfying our every immediate want, we obtained the more desirable reward of family togetherness and fond memories for years to come.

Whenever we want to experience or possess something that will impact us and our resources, we may want to ask ourselves, “Is the benefit temporary, or will it have eternal

value and significance?” Truthfully answering these questions may help us avoid excessive debt and other addictive behavior. In seeking to overcome debt and addictive behaviors, we should remember that addiction is the craving of the natural man, and it can never be satisfied. It is an insatiable appetite. When we are addicted, we seek those worldly possessions or physical pleasures that seem to entice us. But as children of God, our deepest hunger and what we should be seeking is what the Lord alone can provide—His love, His sense of worth, His security, His confidence, His hope in the future, and assurance of His love, which brings us eternal joy. We must want, more than anything else, to do our Heavenly Father’s will and providently provide for ourselves and others. We must say, as did King Lamoni’s father, “I will give away all my sins to know thee” ([Alma 22:18](#)). Then we can go to Him with steadfast determination and promise Him, “I will do whatever it takes.” Through prayer, fasting, obedience to the commandments, priesthood blessings, and His atoning sacrifice, we will feel His love and power in our lives. We will receive His spiritual guidance and strength through the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Only through our Lord’s Atonement can we obtain a mighty change of heart (see [Mosiah 5:2](#); [Alma 5:14](#)) and experience a mighty change in our addictive behavior.

With all the love I have in me and with the Savior’s love through me, I invite you to come unto Him and hear His words: “Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy. Harken diligently unto me, and remember the words which I have spoken; and come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted” ([2 Nephi 9:51](#)).

I testify that the appetite to possess worldly things can only be overcome by turning to the Lord. The hunger of addiction can only be replaced by our love for Him. He stands ready to help each one of us. “Fear not,” He said, “for you are mine, and I have overcome the world” ([D&C 50:41](#)).

I bear my special witness that through the Atonement He has overcome all things. May each of us also overcome worldly temptation by coming unto Him and by becoming provident providers both temporally and spiritually for ourselves and others is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

A Tragic Evil among Us Gordon B. Hinckley President of the Church

[Pornography] is like a raging storm, destroying individuals and families, utterly ruining what was once wholesome and beautiful.

My dear brethren, it is good to be with you in this very large priesthood meeting. I suppose this is the largest such gathering of priesthood ever assembled. What a contrast with the occasion described by Wilford Woodruff when all of the priesthood in all the world assembled in one room in Kirtland, Ohio, to receive instruction from the Prophet Joseph.

We have heard excellent counsel tonight, and I commend it to you.

As I offer concluding remarks I rather reluctantly speak to a theme that I have dealt with before. I do it in the spirit of the words of Alma, who said: “This is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance” ([Alma 29:9](#)).

It is in that spirit that I speak to you tonight. What I have to say is not new. I have spoken

on it before. The September issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines carry a talk I gave some years ago on the same subject. Brother Oaks has touched on it tonight. While the matter of which I speak was a problem then, it is a much more serious problem now. It grows increasingly worse. It is like a raging storm, destroying individuals and families, utterly ruining what was once wholesome and beautiful. I speak of pornography in all of its manifestations. I do so because of letters that come to me from broken-hearted wives. I should like to read portions of one received only a few days ago. I do so with the consent of the writer. I have deleted anything that might lead to disclosure of the parties concerned. I have exercised limited editorial liberty in the interest of clarity and flow of language.

I quote now:

“Dear President Hinckley,

“My husband of 35 years died recently. ... He had visited with our good bishop as quickly as he could after his most recent surgery. Then he came to me on that same evening to tell me he had been addicted to pornography. He needed me to forgive him [before he died]. He further said that he had grown tired of living a double life. [He had served in many important] Church callings while knowing [at the same time] that he was in the grips of this ‘other master.’ “I was stunned, hurt, felt betrayed and violated. I could not promise him [forgiveness](#) at that moment but pleaded for time. ... I was able to review my married life [and how] pornography had ... put a stranglehold on our marriage from early on. We had only been married a couple of months when he brought home a [pornographic] magazine. I locked him out of the car because I was so hurt and angry.

...

“For many years in our marriage ... he was most cruel in many of his demands. I was

never good enough for him. ... I felt incredibly beaten down at that time to a point of deep depression. ... I know now that I was being compared to the latest 'porn queen.' ...

"We went to counseling one time and ... my husband proceeded to rip me apart with his criticism and disdain of me. ...

"I could not even get into the car with him after that but walked around the town ... for hours, contemplating suicide. [I thought,] 'Why go on if this is all that my "eternal companion" feels for me?'

"I did go on, but zipped a protective shield around myself. I existed for other reasons than my husband and found joy in my children, in projects and accomplishments that I could do totally on my own. ...

"After his 'deathbed confession' and [after taking time] to search through my life, I [said] to him, 'Don't you know what you have done?' ... I told him I had brought a pure heart into our marriage, kept it pure during that marriage, and intended to keep it pure ever after. Why could he not do the same for me? All I ever wanted was to feel cherished and treated with the smallest of pleasantries ... instead of being treated like some kind of chattel. ...

"I am now left to grieve not only for his being gone but also for a relationship that could have been [beautiful, but was not]. ...

"Please warn the brethren (and sisters). Pornography is not some titillating feast for the eyes that gives a momentary rush of excitement. [Rather] it has the effect of damaging hearts and souls to their very depths, strangling the life out of relationships that should be sacred, hurting to the very core those you should love the most."

And she signs the letter.

What a pathetic and tragic story. I have omitted some of the detail but have read enough that you can sense her depth of feeling. And what of her husband? He has

died a painful death from cancer, his final words a confession of a life laced with sin. And sin it is. It is devilish. It is totally inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, with personal testimony of the things of God, and with the life of one who has been ordained to the holy priesthood.

This is not the only letter I have received. There have been enough that I am convinced this is a very serious problem even among us. It arises from many sources and expresses itself in a variety of ways. Now it is compounded by the Internet. That Internet is available not only to adults but also to young people.

I recently read that pornography has become a \$57 billion industry worldwide. Twelve billion of this is derived in the United States by evil and "conspiring men" (see [D&C 89:4](#)) who seek riches at the expense of the gullible. It is reported that it produces more revenue in the United States than the "combined revenues of all professional football, baseball and basketball franchises or the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC" ("Internet Pornography Statistics: 2003," Internet, <http://www.healthymind.com/5-port-stats.html>).

It robs the workplace of the time and talents of employees. "20% of men admit accessing pornography at work. 13% of women [do so]. ... 10% of adults admit having internet sexual addiction" ("Internet Pornography Statistics: 2003"). That is their admission, but actually the number may be much higher.

The National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families states that "approximately 40 million people in the United States are sexually involved with the Internet. ...

"One in five children ages 10-17 [has] received a sexual solicitation over the Internet. ...

“Three million of the visitors to adult websites in September 2000 were age 17 or younger. ...

“Sex is the number 1 topic searched on the Internet” (NCPCE Online, “Current Statistics,” Internet, <http://www.nationalcoalition.org/stat.html>). I might go on, but you, too, know enough of the seriousness of the problem. Suffice it to say that all who are involved become victims. Children are exploited, and their lives are severely damaged. The minds of youth become warped with false concepts. Continued exposure leads to addiction that is almost impossible to break. Men, so very many, find they cannot leave it alone. Their energies and their interests are consumed in their dead-end pursuit of this raw and sleazy fare.

The excuse is given that it is hard to avoid, that it is right at our fingertips and there is no escape.

Suppose a storm is raging and the winds howl and the snow swirls about you. You find yourself unable to stop it. But you can dress properly and seek shelter, and the storm will have no effect upon you.

Likewise, even though the Internet is saturated with sleazy material, you do not have to watch it. You can retreat to the shelter of the gospel and its teaching of cleanliness and virtue and purity of life. I know that I am speaking directly and plainly. I do so because the Internet has made pornography more widely accessible, adding to what is available on DVDs and videos, on television and magazine stands. It leads to fantasies that are destructive of self-respect. It leads to illicit relationships, often to disease, and to abusive criminal activity. Brethren, we can do better than this. When the Savior taught the multitude, He said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” ([Matt. 5:8](#)).

Could anyone wish for a greater blessing than this? The high road of decency, of self-

discipline, of wholesome living is the road for men, both young and old, who hold the priesthood of God. To the young men I put this question: “Can you imagine John the Baptist, who restored the priesthood which you hold, being engaged in any such practice as this?” To you men: “Can you imagine Peter, James, and John, Apostles of our Lord, engaging in such?”

No, of course not. Now brethren, the time has come for any one of us who is so involved to pull himself out of the mire, to stand above this evil thing, to “look to God and live” ([Alma 37:47](#)). We do not have to view salacious magazines. We do not have to read books laden with smut. We do not have to watch television that is beneath wholesome standards. We do not have to rent movies that depict that which is filthy. We do not have to sit at the computer and play with pornographic material found on the Internet.

I repeat, we can do better than this. We must do better than this. We are men of the priesthood. This is a most sacred and marvelous gift, worth more than all the dross of the world. But it will be amen to the effectiveness of that priesthood for anyone who engages in the practice of seeking out pornographic material.

If there be any within the sound of my voice who are doing so, then may you 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.

Let any who may be in the grip of this vise get upon their knees in the privacy of their closet and plead with the Lord for help to free them from this evil monster. Otherwise, this vicious stain will continue through life and even into eternity. Jacob, the brother of Nephi, taught: “And it shall come to pass that when all men shall have passed from

this first death unto life, insomuch as they have become immortal, ... they who are righteous shall be righteous still, and they who are filthy shall be filthy still” ([2 Ne. 9:15–16](#)).

President Joseph F. Smith, in his vision of the Savior’s visit among the spirits of the dead, saw that “unto the wicked he did not go, and among the ungodly and the unrepentant who had defiled themselves while in the flesh, his voice was not raised” ([D&C 138:20](#)).

Now, my brethren, I do not wish to be negative. I am by nature optimistic. But in such matters as this I am a realist. If we are involved in such behavior, now is the time to change. Let this be our hour of resolution.

Let us turn about to a better way.

Said the Lord: “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever” ([D&C 121:45–46](#)).

How could any man wish for more? These supernal blessings are promised to those who walk in virtue before the Lord and before all men.

How wonderful are the ways of our Lord. How glorious His promises. When tempted we can substitute for thoughts of evil thoughts of Him and His teachings. He has said: “And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.

“Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days

will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you” ([D&C 88:67–68](#)).

To you deacons and teachers and priests who are with us tonight, you wonderful young men who have to do with the sacrament, the Lord has said, “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord” ([D&C 133:5](#)).

To all of the priesthood the statement of revelation is clear and unequivocal: “The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness” ([D&C 121:36](#)).

Now I know, my brethren, that most of you are not afflicted with this evil. I ask your pardon for taking your time in dwelling on it. But if you are a stake president or a bishop, a district or branch president, you may very well have to assist those who are affected. May the Lord grant you wisdom, guidance, inspiration, and love for those who so need it.

And to all of you, young or old, who are not involved, I congratulate you and leave my blessing with you. How beautiful is the life that is patterned after the teachings of the gospel of Him who was without sin. Such a man walks with unblemished brow in the sunlight of virtue and strength.

May heaven’s blessings attend you, my dear brethren. May all of us reach out to any who need help, I pray, in the sacred name of [Jesus Christ](#), amen.

Earthly Debts, Heavenly Debts **Joseph B. Wirthlin** **Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

We have earthly debts and heavenly debts. Let us be wise in dealing with each of them. My beloved brethren and sisters, what a glorious event it is to attend conference. We

find that the words spoken are words of inspiration, and it's a joy to be present. I would like to talk about our heavenly debts and earthly debts. The Gospels record that nearly everywhere the Savior went, He was surrounded by multitudes of people. Some hoped that He would heal them; others came to hear Him speak. Others came for practical advice. Toward the end of His mortal ministry, some came to mock and ridicule Him and to clamor for His crucifixion. One day a man approached the Savior and asked Him to intervene in a [family](#) dispute. "Master, speak to my brother," he pleaded, "that he divide the inheritance with me." The Savior refused to take sides on this issue, but He did teach an important lesson. "Beware of covetousness," He told him, "for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."¹

Brothers and sisters, beware of covetousness. It is one of the great afflictions of these latter days. It creates greed and resentment. Often it leads to bondage, heartbreak, and crushing, grinding debt.

The number of marriages that have been shattered over money issues is staggering. The amount of heartbreak is great. The stress that comes from worry over money has burdened families, caused sickness, depression, and even premature death.

Earthly Debts

In spite of the teachings of the Church from its earliest days until today, members sometimes fall victim to many unwise and foolish financial practices. Some continue to spend, thinking that somehow the money will become available. Somehow they will survive.

Far too often, the money hoped for does not appear.

Remember this: debt is a form of bondage. It is a financial termite. When we make purchases on credit, they give us only an

illusion of prosperity. We think we own things, but the reality is, our things own us. Some debt—such as for a modest home, expenses for education, perhaps for a needed first car—may be necessary. But never should we enter into financial bondage through consumer debt without carefully weighing the costs.

We have often heard that interest is a good servant but a terrible master. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. described it this way: "Interest never sleeps nor sickens nor dies; it never goes to the hospital; it works on Sundays and holidays; it never takes a vacation. ... Once in debt, interest is your companion every minute of the day and night; you cannot shun it or slip away from it; you cannot dismiss it; it yields neither to entreaties, demands, or orders; and whenever you get in its way or cross its course or fail to meet its demands, it crushes you."²

The counsel from other inspired prophets in our time on this subject is clear, and what was true 50 or 150 years ago is also true today.

President Heber J. Grant said, "From my earliest recollections, from the days of Brigham Young until now, I have listened to men standing in the pulpit ... urging the people not to run into debt; and I believe that the great majority of all our troubles today is caused through the failure to carry out that counsel."³

President Ezra Taft Benson said, "Do not leave yourself or your family unprotected against financial storms. ... Build up savings."⁴

President Harold B. Lee taught, "Not only should we teach men to get out of debt but we should teach them likewise to stay out of debt."⁵

President Gordon B. Hinckley declared: "Many of our people are living on the very edge of their incomes. In fact, some are living on borrowings. ...

“... I urge you to be modest in your expenditures; discipline yourselves in your purchases to avoid debt to the extent possible. Pay off debt as quickly as you can, and free yourselves from bondage.”⁶

My brothers and sisters, many have heeded this prophetic counsel. They live within their means, they honor the debts they have incurred, and they strive to reduce the burden they owe to others. We congratulate those who are doing so, for the day will come when they will reap the blessings of their efforts and understand the value of this inspired counsel.

However, others struggle when it comes to finances. Some are victims of adverse and often unforeseen events that have financially damaged them. Others are in financial bondage because they have not learned to discipline themselves and control their impulses to spend. Consequently, they have made unwise financial choices.

May I suggest five key steps to financial freedom for your consideration.

First, pay your tithing. Do you want the windows of heaven opened to you? Do you wish to receive blessings so great there is not room enough to receive them?⁷ Always pay your tithing and leave the outcome in the hands of the Lord.

Obedience to God’s commandments is the foundation for a happy life. Surely we will be blessed with the gifts of heaven for our obedience. Failure to pay tithing by those who know the principle can lead to heartache in this life and perhaps sorrow in the next.

Second, spend less than you earn. This is simple counsel but a powerful secret for financial happiness. All too often a family’s spending is governed more by their *yearning* than by their *earning*. They somehow believe that their life will be better if they surround themselves with an abundance of things. All too often all they are left with is avoidable anxiety and distress.

Those who live safely within their means know how much money comes in each month, and even though it is difficult, they discipline themselves to spend less than that amount.

Credit is so easy to obtain. In fact, it is almost thrust upon us. Those who use credit cards to overspend unwisely should consider eliminating them. It is much better that a plastic credit card should perish than a family dwindle and perish in debt.

Third, learn to save. Remember the lesson of Joseph of Egypt. During times of prosperity, save up for a day of want.⁸

Too often, people assume that they probably never will be injured, get sick, lose their jobs, or see their investments evaporate. To make matters worse, often people make purchases today based upon optimistic predictions of what they hope will happen tomorrow.

The wise understand the importance of saving today for a rainy day tomorrow. They have adequate insurance that will provide for them in case of illness or death. Where possible, they store a year’s supply of food, water, and other basic necessities of life. They set aside money in savings and investment accounts. They work diligently to reduce the debt they owe to others and strive to become debt free.

Brothers and sisters, the preparations you make today may one day be to you as the stored food was to the Egyptians and to Joseph’s father’s family.

Fourth, honor your financial obligations. From time to time, we hear stories of greed and selfishness that strike us with great sorrow. We hear of fraud, defaulting on loan commitments, financial deceptions, and bankruptcies.

We hear of fathers who financially neglect their own families. We say to men and women everywhere, if you bring children into the world, it is your solemn obligation to do all within your power to provide for

them. No man is fit to be called a man who gathers around himself cars, boats, and other possessions while neglecting the sacred financial obligations he has to his own wife and children.

We are a people of integrity. We believe in honoring our debts and being honest in our dealings with our fellow men.

Let me tell you the story of one man who sacrificed greatly to maintain his own financial integrity and honor.

In the 1930s Fred Snowberger opened the doors of a new pharmacy in northeastern Oregon. It had been his dream to own his own business, but the economic turnaround he had hoped for never materialized. Eight months later, Fred closed the doors of his pharmacy for the last time.

Even though his business had failed, Fred was determined to repay the loan he had secured. Some wondered why he insisted on repaying the debt. Why didn't he simply declare bankruptcy and have the debt legally forgiven?

But Fred did not listen. He had said he would repay the loan, and he was determined to honor his word. His family made many of their own clothes, grew much of their food in their garden, and used everything they had until it was thoroughly worn out or used up. Rain or shine, Fred walked to and from his work each day. And every month, Fred paid what he could on the loan.

Years passed and finally the wonderful day arrived when Fred made the last payment. He delivered it in person. The man who had loaned him the money wept and with tears streaming down his face, said, "You not only paid back every penny, but you taught me what a man of character and honesty is." To this day, nearly 70 years after Fred signed his name to that note, descendants of Fred and Erma Snowberger still tell this story with pride. This act of honor and

nobility has lived through the decades as a cherished example of family integrity.

Fifth, teach your children to follow your example. Too many of our youth get into

financial difficulty because they never learned proper principles of financial common sense at home. Teach your children while they are young. Teach them that they cannot have something merely because they want it. Teach them the principles of hard work, frugality, and saving.

If you don't consider yourself informed well enough to teach them, all the more reason for you to begin learning. Abundant resources are available—from classes, to books, to other resources.

There are those among us who have been blessed abundantly with enough and to spare. Our Heavenly Father expects that we do more with our riches than build larger barns to hold them. Will you consider what more you can do to build the kingdom of God? Will you consider what more you can do to bless the lives of others and bring light and hope into their lives?

Heavenly Debts

We have spoken of earthly debts and our duty to repay them. But there are other debts—debts more eternal in nature—that are not so easy to repay. In fact, we will never be able to repay some of them. These are heavenly debts.

Our mothers and fathers gave us life and brought us into this world. They gave us the opportunity to obtain mortal bodies and experience the joys and sorrows of this bounteous earth. In many cases, they set their own dreams and desires aside for the sake of their children. How fitting it is that we honor them and show by word and deed our love for them and our [gratitude](#).

We also have a great debt to our ancestors who have preceded us and who wait beyond the veil for those ordinances that will allow them to continue their eternal progression.

This is a debt we can repay for them in our temples.

What a debt we owe to the Lord for restoring His divine Church and true gospel in these latter-days through the Prophet [Joseph Smith](#). From his youth until his Martyrdom, he devoted his days to bringing to mankind the gospel of [Jesus Christ](#) that had been lost. We owe our deepest gratitude to him and to all men in this sacred calling who have been given the mantle to preside over His Church.

How can we ever repay the debt we owe to the Savior? He paid a debt He did not owe to free us from a debt we can never pay.

Because of Him, we will live forever. Because of His infinite Atonement, our sins can be swept away, allowing us to experience the greatest of all the gifts of God: eternal life.⁹

Can such a gift have a price? Can we ever make compensation for such a gift? The Book of Mormon prophet King Benjamin taught “that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess ... [and] serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants.”¹⁰

We have earthly debts and heavenly debts. Let us be wise in dealing with each of them and ever keep in mind the words of the Savior. The scriptures tell us, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”¹¹ The riches of this world are as dust compared to the riches that await the faithful in the mansions of our Heavenly Father. How foolish is he who spends his days in the pursuit of things that rust and fade away. How wise is he who spends his days in the pursuit of eternal life.

Know within your hearts that Jesus the [Christ](#) lives. Be at peace, for as you draw near to Him, He will draw near to you. Let

not your hearts be weary, but rejoice. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the gospel is restored once again. The heavens are not sealed. As in ancient days, we have a man who communicates with the Infinite. A prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, walks the earth in our day and at this time. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Courageous Parenting **[Larry R. Lawrence](#)** **Of the Seventy**

What the world really needs is courageous parenting from mothers and fathers who are not afraid to speak up and take a stand. I would like to speak today to the parents of teenagers. Your bright and energetic youth are the future of the Church, and for that reason they are a prime target of the adversary. Many of you faithful mothers and fathers are listening to conference today, praying for answers to help you guide your children through these important years. My oldest grandchildren have recently become teens, so the subject is near to my heart. There are no perfect parents and no easy answers, but there are principles of truth that we can rely on.

The Young Men and Young Women Mutual theme for 2010 was taken from the book of Joshua. It begins, “Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid” ([Joshua 1:9](#)). This phrase from the scriptures would be a good theme for parents as well. In these last days, what the world really needs is courageous parenting from mothers and fathers who are not afraid to speak up and take a stand. Imagine for a moment that your daughter was sitting on the railroad tracks and you heard the train whistle blowing. Would you warn her to get off the tracks? Or would you hesitate, worried that she might think you were being overprotective? If she ignored

your warning, would you quickly move her to a safe place? Of course you would! Your love for your daughter would override all other considerations. You would value her life more than her temporary goodwill. Challenges and temptations are coming at our teenagers with the speed and power of a freight train. As we are reminded in the [family](#) proclamation, parents are responsible for the protection of their children.¹ That means spiritually as well as physically. In the Book of Mormon, we read about Alma the Younger counseling his wayward son. Corianton had made some serious mistakes while serving a mission among the Zoramites. Alma loved him enough to speak very directly to the problem. He expressed his deep disappointment that his son had been immoral and explained to him the serious consequences of sin.

I am inspired every time I read these courageous words from Alma: “And now the Spirit of the Lord doth say unto me: Command thy children to do good . . . ; therefore I command you, my son, in the fear of God, that ye refrain from your iniquities” ([Alma 39:12](#)). This early intervention by his father became a turning point for Corianton. He repented and served faithfully thereafter (see [Alma 42:31](#); [43:1–2](#)).

Contrast Alma’s example with that of another father from the scriptures, Eli in the Old Testament. Eli served as the high priest in Israel during the childhood of Samuel the prophet. The scriptures explain that the Lord rebuked him severely “because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” ([1 Samuel 3:13](#)). Eli’s sons never did repent, and all of Israel suffered because of their folly. The story of Eli teaches us that parents who love their children cannot afford to be intimidated by them.

Several years ago at general conference, Elder Joe J. Christensen reminded us that “parenting is not a popularity contest.”² In

the same spirit, Elder Robert D. Hales has observed, “Sometimes we are afraid of our children—afraid to counsel with them for fear of offending them.”³

Years ago our 17-year-old son wanted to go on a weekend trip with his friends, who were all good boys. He asked for permission to go. I wanted to say yes, but for some reason I felt uncomfortable about the trip. I shared my feelings with my wife, who was very supportive. “We need to listen to that warning voice,” she said.

Of course, our son was disappointed and asked why we didn’t want him to go. I answered honestly that I didn’t know why. “I just don’t feel good about it,” I explained, “and I love you too much to ignore these feelings inside.” I was quite surprised when he said, “That’s OK, Dad. I understand.” Young people understand more than we realize because they too have the gift of the Holy Ghost. They are trying to recognize the Spirit when He speaks, and they are watching our example. From us they learn to pay attention to their promptings—that if they “don’t feel good about something,” it’s best not to pursue it.

It’s so important for husbands and wives to be united when making parenting decisions. If either parent doesn’t feel good about something, then permission should not be granted. If either feels uncomfortable about a movie, a television show, a video game, a party, a dress, a swimsuit, or an Internet activity, have the courage to support each other and say no.

I would like to share with you a letter from a heartbroken mother. Her teenage son gradually lost the Spirit and drifted away from Church activity. She explained how this happened: “All throughout my son’s teenage years, I worried and tried to stop him from playing violent video games. I talked to my husband and showed him articles in the *Ensign* and in the newspaper that cautioned about these games. But my

husband felt it was OK. He said that our son wasn't out using drugs and that I should stop worrying. There were times that I would hide the controllers, and my husband would give them back. It began to be easier for me to give in ... than to fight it. I really feel that gaming is just as addictive as drugs. I would do anything to prevent other parents from going through this experience."

Brothers and sisters, if your spouse doesn't feel good about something, show respect for those feelings. When you take the easy way out by saying and doing nothing, you may be enabling destructive behavior.

Parents can prevent a lot of heartache by teaching their children to postpone romantic relationships until the time comes when they are ready for marriage. Prematurely pairing off with a boyfriend or girlfriend is dangerous. Becoming a "couple" creates emotional intimacy, which too often leads to physical intimacy. Satan knows this sequence and uses it to his advantage. He will do whatever he can to keep young men from serving missions and to prevent temple marriages.

It is vital that parents have the courage to speak up and intervene before Satan succeeds. President Boyd K. Packer has taught that "when morality is involved, we have both the *right* and the *obligation* to raise a warning voice."⁴

I have always believed that nothing really good happens late at night and that young people need to know what time they are expected to come home.

There is a great deal of wisdom displayed when parents stay up and wait for their children to return home. Young men and women make far better choices when they know their parents are waiting up to hear about their evening and to kiss them good night.

May I express my personal warning about a practice that is common in many cultures. I am referring to sleepovers, or spending the

night at the home of a friend. As a bishop I discovered that too many youth violated the Word of Wisdom or the law of chastity for the first time as part of a sleepover. Too often their first exposure to pornography and even their first encounter with the police occurred when they were spending the night away from home.

Peer pressure becomes more powerful when our children are away from our influence and when their defenses are weakened late at night. If you have ever felt uneasy about an overnight activity, don't be afraid to respond to that warning voice inside.

Always be prayerful when it comes to protecting your precious children.

Courageous parenting does not always involve saying no. Parents also need courage to say yes to the counsel of modern-day prophets. Our Church leaders have counseled us to establish righteous patterns in our homes. Consider five fundamental practices that have the power to fortify our youth: family prayer, family scripture study, family home evening, family dinner together, and regular one-on-one interviews with each child.

It takes courage to gather children from whatever they're doing and kneel together as a family. It takes courage to turn off the television and the computer and to guide your family through the pages of the scriptures every day. It takes courage to turn down other invitations on Monday night so that you can reserve that evening for your family. It takes courage and willpower to avoid overscheduling so that your family can be home for dinner.

One of the most effective ways we can influence our sons and daughters is to counsel with them in private interviews. By listening closely, we can discover the desires of their hearts, help them set righteous goals, and also share with them the spiritual impressions that we have received about them. Counseling requires courage.

Try to imagine what the rising generation could become if these five righteous patterns were practiced consistently in every home. Our young people could be like Helaman's army: invincible (see [Alma 57:25--26](#)). Parenting teenagers in the latter days is a very humbling assignment. Satan and his followers are striving to bring this generation down; the Lord is counting on valiant parents to bring them up. Parents, "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid" ([Joshua 1:9](#)). I know that God hears and will answer your prayers. I testify that the Lord supports and blesses courageous parents. In the name of [Jesus Christ](#), amen.

Slow to Anger
Gordon B. Hinckley
President of the Church

May the Lord bless you and inspire you to walk without anger. My beloved brethren, wherever you may be, here in the Conference Center or in a Church hall far away across the seas, what a remarkable thing it is that we can speak in this Conference Center and that you can hear what we say in a place as far away as Cape Town, South Africa. I have chosen tonight to speak to the subject of anger. I realize that this is a little unusual, but I think it is timely. A proverb in the Old Testament states: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" ([Proverbs 16:32](#)). It is when we become angry that we get into trouble. The road rage that affects our highways is a hateful expression of anger. I dare say that most of the inmates of our prisons are there because they did something when they were angry. In their wrath they swore, they lost control of themselves, and terrible things followed, even murder. There

were moments of offense followed by years of regret. This story is told concerning Charles W. Penrose. He was a convert to the Church and served as a missionary in England for some 11 years. When he was released, he sold some of his belongings to pay for his trip to Zion. Some of the Saints observing him said that he was taking Church property. This angered him so, that he went upstairs in his residence, sat down, and wrote these verses, which are familiar to you. (See Karen Lynn Davidson, *Our Latter-day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages* [1988], 323.)

*School thy feelings, O my brother;
Train thy warm, impulsive soul.
Do not its emotions smother,
But let wisdom's voice control.
School thy feelings; there is power
In the cool, collected mind.
Passion shatters reason's tower,
Makes the clearest vision blind. ...
School thy feelings; condemnation
Never pass on friend or foe,
Though the tide of accusation
Like a flood of truth may flow.
Hear defense before deciding,
And a ray of light may gleam,
Showing thee what filth is hiding
Underneath the shallow stream.
School thy feelings, O my brother;
Train thy warm, impulsive soul.
Do not its emotions smother,
But let wisdom's voice control.*

Many years ago I worked for one of our railroads. A switchman was aimlessly strolling about the platform one day. I asked him to move a car to another track. He exploded. He threw his cap on the pavement and jumped up and down on it, swearing like a drunken sailor. I stood there and laughed at his childish behavior. Noting my laughter, he began to laugh at his own foolishness. He then quietly climbed on the

switch engine, drove it over to the empty car, and moved it to an empty track.

I thought of a verse from Ecclesiastes: “Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools” ([Ecclesiastes 7:9](#)).

Anger is the mother of a whole brood of evil actions.

I clipped from the morning newspaper a story that led off with this statement: “More than half the Americans who might have celebrated their 25th wedding anniversaries since 2000 were divorced, separated or widowed before reaching that milestone” (Sam Roberts, “Most U.S. Marriages Don’t Get to Silver,” *Deseret Morning News*, Sept. 20, 2007, p. A1).

Widowhood of course is beyond the control of the parties, but divorce and separation are not.

Divorce too often is the bitter fruit of anger.

A man and a woman fall in love, as they say; each is wonderful in the sight of the other; they feel romantic affection for no one else; they stretch their finances to buy a diamond ring; they marry. All is bliss—that is, for a season. Then little inconsequential activities lead to criticism. Little flaws are magnified into great torrents of faultfinding; they fall apart, they separate, and then with rancor and bitterness they divorce.

It is the cycle which is repeated again and again in thousands of cases. It is tragic, and, as I have said, it is in most cases the bitter fruit of anger.

I think of my own marriage. My eternal companion passed away three and a half years ago. But we lived together for 67 years. I have no recollection of ever having a quarrel with her. She traveled with me and spoke on every continent, pleading for the exercise of restraint, kindness, and love.

A small publication that came to me some years ago carried the following:

Once a man who had been slandered by a newspaper came to Edward Everett asking

what to do about it. Said Everett, “Do nothing! Half the people who bought the paper never saw the article. Half of those who saw it, did not read it. Half of those who read it, did not understand it. Half of those who understood it, did not believe it. Half of those who believed it are of no account anyway” (“Sunny Side of the Street,” Nov. 1989; see also Zig Ziglar, *Staying Up, Up, Up in a Down, Down World* [2000], 174).

So many of us make a great fuss of matters of small consequence. We are so easily offended. Happy is the man who can brush aside the offending remarks of another and go on his way.

Grudges, if left to fester, can become serious maladies. Like a painful ailment they can absorb all of our time and attention. Guy de Maupassant has written an interesting chronicle that illustrates this.

It concerns Master Hauchecome, who on market day went to town. He was afflicted with rheumatism, and as he stumbled along he noticed a piece of string on the ground in front of him. He picked it up and carefully put it in his pocket. He was seen doing so by his enemy, the harness maker.

At the same time it was reported to the mayor that a pocketbook containing money had been lost. It was assumed that what Hauchecome had picked up was the pocketbook, and he was accused of taking it. He vehemently denied the charge. A search of his clothing disclosed only the piece of string, but the slander against him had so troubled him that he became obsessed with it. Wherever he went he bothered to tell people about it. He became such a nuisance that they cried out against him. It sickened him.

“His mind kept growing weaker and about the end of December he took to his bed.

“He passed away early in January, and, in the ravings of [his] death agony, he protested his innocence, repeating:

“A little [piece] of string—a little [piece] of string. See, here it is, [Mister Mayor.]” (See “The Piece of String,” <http://www.online-literature.com/Maupassant/270/>.)

The story is told that reporters were interviewing a man on his birthday. He had reached an advanced age. They asked him how he had done it.

He replied, “When my wife and I were married we determined that if we ever got in a quarrel one of us would leave the house. I attribute my longevity to the fact that I have breathed good fresh air throughout my married life.”

Anger may be justified in some circumstances. The scriptures tell us that Jesus drove the moneychangers from the temple, saying, “My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” ([Matthew 21:13](#)).

But even this was spoken more as a rebuke than as an outburst of uncontrolled anger. Now, my dear brethren, in closing I plead with you to control your tempers, to put a smile upon your faces, which will erase anger; speak out with words of love and peace, appreciation, and respect. If you will do this, your lives will be without regret. Your marriages and [family](#) relationships will be preserved. You will be much happier. You will do greater good. You will feel a sense of peace that will be wonderful. May the Lord bless you and inspire you to walk without anger, without bitterness of any kind, but to reach out to others with expressions of friendship, appreciation, and love. This is my humble prayer, in the name of [Jesus Christ](#), amen.

More Diligent and Concerned at Home

[David A. Bednar](#)
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

We can become more diligent and concerned at home as we are more faithful in learning, living, and loving the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

In 1833 the Prophet [Joseph Smith](#) received a revelation that contained a strong rebuke to several leading brethren of the Church to set their families in order (see [D&C 93:40–50](#)).

A specific phrase from this revelation provides the theme for my message—“more diligent and concerned at home” ([verse 50](#)).

I want to suggest three ways each of us can become more diligent and concerned in our homes. I invite you to listen both with ears that hear and with hearts that feel, and I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to be with all of us.

Suggestion Number One: Express Love—and Show It

We can begin to become more diligent and concerned at home by telling the people we love that we love them. Such expressions do not need to be flowery or lengthy. We simply should sincerely and frequently express love.

Brethren and sisters, when was the last time you took your eternal companion in your arms and said, “I love you”? Parents, when was the last time you sincerely expressed love to your children? Children, when was the last time you told your parents that you love them?

Each of us already knows we should tell the people we love that we love them. But what we know is not always reflected in what we do. We may feel unsure, awkward, or even perhaps a bit embarrassed.

As disciples of the Savior, we are not merely striving to know more; rather, we need to consistently do more of what we know is right and become better.

We should remember that saying “I love you” is only a beginning. We need to say it, we need to mean it, and most importantly we need consistently to show it. We need to both express and demonstrate love.

President Thomas S. Monson recently counseled: “Often we assume that [the people around us] *must* know how much we love them. But we should never assume; we should let them know. . . . We will never regret the kind words spoken or the affection shown. Rather, our regrets will come if such things are omitted from our relationships with those who mean the most to us”

(“Finding Joy in the Journey,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 86).

Sometimes in a sacrament meeting talk or testimony, we hear a statement like this: “I know I do not tell my spouse often enough how much I love her. Today I want her, my children, and all of you to know that I love her.”

Such an expression of love may be appropriate. But when I hear a statement like this, I squirm and silently exclaim that the spouse and children should not be hearing this apparently rare and private communication in public at church!

Hopefully the children hear love expressed and see love demonstrated between their parents in the regular routine of daily living. If, however, the public statement of love at church is a bit surprising to the spouse or the children, then indeed there is a need to be more diligent and concerned at home.

The relationship between love and appropriate action is demonstrated repeatedly in the scriptures and is highlighted by the Savior’s instruction to His Apostles: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” ([John 14:15](#)). Just as our love of and for the Lord is evidenced by walking ever in His ways (see [Deuteronomy 19:9](#)), so our love for spouse, parents, and children is reflected most powerfully in our

thoughts, our words, and our deeds (see [Mosiah 4:30](#)).

Feeling the security and constancy of love from a spouse, a parent, or a child is a rich blessing. Such love nurtures and sustains faith in God. Such love is a source of strength and casts out fear (see [1 John 4:18](#)). Such love is the desire of every human soul. We can become more diligent and concerned at home as we express love—and consistently show it.

Suggestion Number Two: Bear Testimony—and Live It

We also can become more diligent and concerned at home by bearing testimony to those whom we love about the things we know to be true by the witness of the Holy Ghost. The bearing of testimony need not be lengthy or eloquent. And we do not need to wait until the first Sunday of the month to declare our witness of things that are true. Within the walls of our own homes, we can and should bear pure testimony of the divinity and reality of the Father and the Son, of the great plan of happiness, and of the Restoration.

Brethren and sisters, when was the last time you bore testimony to your eternal companion? Parents, when was the last time you declared your witness to your children about the things you know to be true? And children, when was the last time you shared your testimony with your parents and [family](#)?

Each of us already knows we should bear testimony to the people we love the most. But what we know is not always reflected in what we do. We may feel unsure, awkward, or even perhaps a bit embarrassed.

As disciples of the Savior, we are not merely striving to know more; rather, we need to consistently do more of what we know is right and become better.

We should remember that bearing a heartfelt testimony is only a beginning. We need to bear testimony, we need to mean it, and

most importantly we need consistently to live it. We need to both declare and live our testimonies.

The relationship between testimony and appropriate action is emphasized in the Savior’s instruction to the Saints in Kirtland: “That which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do” ([D&C 46:7](#)). Our testimony of gospel truth should be reflected both in our words and in our deeds. And our testimonies are proclaimed and lived most powerfully in our own homes. Spouses, parents, and children should strive to overcome any hesitancy, reluctance, or embarrassment about bearing testimony. We should both create and look for opportunities to bear testimony of gospel truths—and live them.

A testimony is what we know to be true in our minds and in our hearts by the witness of the Holy Ghost (see [D&C 8:2](#)). As we profess truth rather than admonish, exhort, or simply share interesting experiences, we invite the Holy Ghost to confirm the verity of our words. The power of pure testimony (see [Alma 4:19](#)) does not come from sophisticated language or effective presentation; rather, it is the result of revelation conveyed by the third member of the Godhead, even the Holy Ghost.

Feeling the power, the edification, and the constancy of testimony from a spouse, a parent, or a child is a rich blessing. Such testimony fortifies faith and provides direction. Such testimony generates light in a world that grows increasingly dark. Such testimony is the source of an eternal perspective and of enduring peace.

We can become more diligent and concerned at home as we bear testimony—and consistently live it.

Suggestion Number Three: Be Consistent

As our sons were growing up, our family did what you have done and what you now do. We had regular family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. Now, I am

sure what I am about to describe has never occurred in your home, but it did in ours. Sometimes Sister Bednar and I wondered if our efforts to do these spiritually essential things were worthwhile. Now and then verses of scripture were read amid outbursts such as “He’s touching me!” “Make him stop looking at me!” “Mom, he’s breathing my air!” Sincere prayers occasionally were interrupted with giggling and poking. And with active, rambunctious boys, family home evening lessons did not always produce high levels of edification. At times Sister Bednar and I were exasperated because the righteous habits we worked so hard to foster did not seem to yield immediately the spiritual results we wanted and expected.

Today if you could ask our adult sons what they remember about family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening, I believe I know how they would answer. They likely would not identify a particular prayer or a specific instance of scripture study or an especially meaningful family home evening lesson as the defining moment in their spiritual development. What they would say they remember is that as a family we were consistent.

Sister Bednar and I thought helping our sons understand the content of a particular lesson or a specific scripture was the ultimate outcome. But such a result does not occur each time we study or pray or learn together. The consistency of our intent and work was perhaps the greatest lesson—a lesson we did not fully appreciate at the time.

In my office is a beautiful painting of a wheat field. The painting is a vast collection of individual brushstrokes—none of which in isolation is very interesting or impressive. In fact, if you stand close to the canvas, all you can see is a mass of seemingly unrelated and unattractive streaks of yellow and gold and brown paint. However, as you gradually move away from the canvas, all of the

individual brushstrokes combine together and produce a magnificent landscape of a wheat field. Many ordinary, individual brushstrokes work together to create a captivating and beautiful painting. Each family prayer, each episode of family scripture study, and each family home evening is a brushstroke on the canvas of our souls. No one event may appear to be very impressive or memorable. But just as the yellow and gold and brown strokes of paint complement each other and produce an impressive masterpiece, so our consistency in doing seemingly small things can lead to significant spiritual results. “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” ([D&C 64:33](#)). Consistency is a key principle as we lay the foundation of a great work in our individual lives and as we become more diligent and concerned in our own homes. Being consistent in our homes is important for another reason. Many of the Savior’s harshest rebukes were directed to hypocrites. Jesus warned His disciples concerning the scribes and Pharisees: “Do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” ([Matthew 23:3](#)). This strong admonition is sobering given the counsel to “express love—and show it,” to “bear testimony—and live it,” and to “be consistent.”

The hypocrisy in our lives is most readily discerned and causes the greatest destruction within our own homes. And children often are the most alert and sensitive when it comes to recognizing hypocrisy.

A public statement of love when the private actions of love are absent at home is hypocrisy—and weakens the foundation of a great work. Publicly declaring testimony when faithfulness and obedience are missing within our own homes is hypocrisy—and undermines the foundation of a great work. The commandment “Thou shalt not bear false witness” ([Exodus 20:16](#)) applies most

pointedly to the hypocrite in each of us. We need to be and become more consistent.

“But be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” ([1 Timothy 4:12](#)).

As we seek the Lord’s help and in His strength, we can gradually reduce the disparity between what we say and what we do, between expressing love and consistently showing it, and between bearing testimony and steadfastly living it. We can become more diligent and concerned at home as we are more faithful in learning, living, and loving the restored gospel of [Jesus Christ](#).

Testimony

“Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and ... the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). For these and other eternally important reasons, we should be more diligent and concerned at home.

May every spouse, every child, and every parent be blessed to communicate and receive love, to bear and be edified by strong testimony, and to become more consistent in the seemingly small things that matter so much.

In these important pursuits we will never be left alone. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son live. They love us and know our circumstances, and They will help us to become more diligent and concerned at home. Of these truths I testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus [Christ](#), amen.

Love at Home—Counsel from Our Prophet

[By President Thomas S. Monson](#)

Love at Home

Blessed [Family Life](#)

“When we have sampled much and have wandered far and have seen how fleeting and sometimes superficial a lot of the world is, our [gratitude](#) grows for the privilege of being part of something we can count on—home and family and the loyalty of loved ones. We come to know what it means to be bound together by duty, by respect, by belonging. We learn that nothing can fully take the place of the blessed relationship of family life.”¹

Sharing Our Love

“Give your child a compliment and a hug; say, ‘I love you’ more; always express your thanks. Never let a problem to be solved become more important than a person to be loved. Friends move away, children grow up, loved ones pass on. It’s so easy to take others for granted, until that day when they’re gone from our lives and we are left with feelings of ‘what if’ and ‘if only.’ ... “Let us relish life as we live it, find joy in the journey and share our love with friends and family. One day, each of us will run out of tomorrows. Let us not put off what is most important.”²

Showing Our Love

“Brethren, let’s treat our wives with dignity and with respect. They’re our eternal companions. Sisters, honor your husbands. They need to hear a good word. They need a friendly smile. They need a warm expression of true love. ...

“To you who are parents, I say, show love to your children. You know you love them, but make certain they know it as well. They are so precious. Let them know. Call upon our Heavenly Father for help as you care for their needs each day and as you deal with the challenges which inevitably come with

parenthood. You need more than your own wisdom in rearing them.”³

Expressing Our Love

“To you parents, express your love to your children. Pray for them that they may be able to withstand the evils of the world. Pray that they may grow in faith and testimony. Pray that they may pursue lives of goodness and of service to others.

“Children, let your parents know you love them. Let them know how much you appreciate all they have done and continue to do for you.”⁴

What Is Most Important

“What is most important almost always involves the people around us. Often we assume that they must know how much we love them. But we should never assume; we should let them know. Wrote William Shakespeare, ‘They do not love that do not show their love.’ We will never regret the kind words spoken or the affection shown. Rather, our regrets will come if such things are omitted from our relationships with those who mean the most to us.”⁵

Bringing Heaven Closer

“May our families and homes be filled with love: love of each other, love of the gospel, love of our fellowman, and love of our Savior. As a result, heaven will be a little closer here on earth.

“May we make of our homes sanctuaries to which our family members will ever want to return.”⁶

A Prayer for Families

“Inasmuch as the family unit is under attack in the world today, and many things long held sacred are ridiculed, we ask Thee, our Father, to make us equal to the challenges we face, that we may stand strong for truth and righteousness. May our homes be havens of peace, of love and of spirituality.”⁷

Nourishing and Protecting the Family

Julie B. Beck

This address was given Friday, May 1, 2009, at the BYU Women’s Conference

Since we met together last year, we have met with many thousands of sisters throughout the world, and it has been at times very emotional to see you. I feel emotional now as I look in your faces and realize that among you are women who have had experiences that span all possible mortal experiences. You are each unique and precious, and Heavenly Father is teaching and preparing you for the blessings of eternal life.

In our presidency, we have talked about three lifelong responsibilities that Latter-day Saint women have to help them prepare for the blessings of eternal life. First, we are to increase faith and personal righteousness. We have heard much about that at this women’s conference. Second, we have a responsibility to strengthen families and homes, and third, we have a responsibility to seek out and help those who have needs—any kind of needs. We are a *relief* society and that is what we do. We provide relief from all that hinders the joy and progress of women and all of Heavenly Father’s children.

As I have pondered this assignment for many months now, I have read and studied more than you want to know about—maybe you do want to know. I have a fat folder full of ideas and thoughts, and many of these things I scribbled down in the middle of the night, reminding myself not to forget to say this. I have a big stack of books, talks, and messages from prophets that I have studied and pondered to learn how to nurture my own daughters and help others nurture their families. We will focus today on families and how to nourish and defend them. I have

thought about my own daughters and my daughter-in-law, about how hard they work and what their assignment is, and about my granddaughters, who will be growing up before very long. Our oldest granddaughter is about to turn 12, and that means she will enter the Young Women program and start preparing to be a woman. That happens fast. I have thought of a lesson my mother taught me. She actually learned it from the Winder family—Sister Susan W. Tanner’s family. The Winder family was a dairy family, and one time when my mother was visiting at the Winder farm, they were displaying a new strain of milk cows to their visitors.

They said, “We got these wonderful Jersey cows, and our aim is that every mother produces a superior daughter.” My mother caught hold of that idea. She said, “That’s the job of a mother. Every mother should produce a superior daughter.” I don’t think I am superior to my mother, but I know my daughters are superior to me. They seem to have so much understanding.

Today I would like to focus on the doctrine of the family and then talk about some of the things that are threatening the family. I will then discuss some of the responsibilities that Latter-day Saint women have regarding the family in our day. When I think of this responsibility, I am not thinking only of those who are married or have children or those who have children now in their homes. When it comes to the family, we have responsibilities similar to those of sailors on a ship in a storm—it’s all hands on deck. That is what we need in our day. First of all, let’s talk about the doctrine. We have “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” which was read in a general Relief Society meeting in 1995 by President Gordon B. Hinckley, who was representing the First Presidency. This proclamation summarizes the doctrine in a very succinct way, but a

study of it reveals a rich depth of understanding in regard to the doctrine of the family. At the time when the proclamation was given, President Hinckley said that it was a declaration and reaffirmation of standards, doctrines, and practices relative to the family, and that prophets, seers, and revelators of this Church have repeatedly taught these things throughout the history of the Church. So when the proclamation was read, it was not anything new. It was a restatement and reaffirmation, and the doctrines are tied to the very beginning of the Restoration.

In this Church, in the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have a theology of the family.

We call it the plan of salvation, the plan of happiness. It is a theology of the family, and that is important for us to know. I will tell you about the three pillars of that theology. First is the Creation, the time when the family unit was formed. The Creation was not just about creating an earth—it was about creating an earth upon which a family could dwell. In the family unit was a male and a female—Adam and Eve. The scriptures call her “our glorious Mother Eve” (D&C 138:39). Adam and Eve were each given specific responsibilities in the Father’s plan.

The second pillar of our theology is the Fall. The Fall provided a way for the family to grow— not just in numbers, but in experience, which would help them increase their faith and righteousness. The third pillar of our theology regarding family is the Atonement, which ties families together forever and gives us an opportunity for eternal growth and perfection. That is our theology. That is the Restoration. Families were in it from the beginning.

If we know our theology, we know who we are. In the proclamation on the family, we learn that “all human beings—male and

female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents. . . . 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.”¹ That is a key part of our doctrine, and key words are *parents*, *sons*, and *daughters*.

President Spencer W. Kimball said, “We have always understood that the foundations of the family, as an eternal unit, were laid even before this earth was created.”² We know that we received our “first lessons in the world of spirits,” as the Doctrine and Covenants tells us (D&C 138:56). We were prepared to come to earth for this experience. We knew about the plan of the family before we were born.

Now I want to talk about another important part of the proclamation on the family, which is marriage. The proclamation states 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.”³ Soon after the proclamation was read, Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles came to BYU to speak to a women’s conference. This is what he said: “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.”⁴ Isn’t that a beautiful teaching? Both Adam and Eve had leadership roles in their family. They received their responsibilities by virtue of their celestial marriage and sealing.

President Ezra Taft Benson said that this was an order of the priesthood: “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. . . . 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.”⁵ So that marriage was an order of the priesthood, and they needed that marriage in order to one day see the face of God and live (see D&C 84:22). They were preparing for the blessings of eternal life as they began their family.

Now some people wonder about the responsibility of Eve in that order of the priesthood and that marriage. Elder Dallin H. Oaks said of Eve: “Her act . . . [was] eternally a glorious necessity to open the doorway toward eternal life. . . . Some Christians condemn Eve for her act, concluding that she and her daughters are somehow flawed by it. Not the Latter-day Saints! Informed by revelation, we celebrate Eve’s act and honor her wisdom and courage in the great episode called the Fall.”⁶ Eve had a leadership role in choosing to bring children to the earth in order to teach them and give other children opportunities for the blessings of eternal life.

Elder David A. Bednar taught us two reasons why marriage is essential: “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. . . . 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.”⁷ These are two important reasons why marriage is absolutely essential to fulfilling God’s plan for His children.

I love what President Boyd K. Packer said about this plan: “The great plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8, 16) revealed to prophets is the plan for a happy family. It is the love story between husband and wife, parents and children, that renews itself through the ages.”⁸ He also said, “Nothing is more important to the Church and to civilization itself than the family!”⁹ I want my daughters and my granddaughters to know why we teach and talk about families. We have a granddaughter in middle school in California, and she had some experiences this last year in learning about the family and learning to defend the doctrine of the family. It was a beginning for her—sometimes painful—but she learned things that are essential for her to know.

How early did the Prophet Joseph Smith know about the doctrine of the family? Was it something that was revealed to him as he went along? If you have your scriptures, we can turn to section 2 of the Doctrine and Covenants. These words were given to 17-year-old Joseph Smith on the evening of September 21, 1823, when Moroni visited him. These are the only words from that visit that are included in the Doctrine and Covenants. Other teachings of Moroni are included in Joseph Smith’s history, but these words Joseph Smith formalized and put essentially as the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Section 1 is an introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants. So the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants and the first principle recorded there is as follows: “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. 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” (D&C 2:1).

What priesthood was the Lord revealing by the hand of Elijah the prophet? It was the priesthood that prophets, seers, and revelators have taught us about. It was the priesthood that seals a man and a woman together and prepares them for the blessings of eternal life. If it were not so, the whole earth would be wasted. This points directly to the temple. Joseph Smith was taught about the blessings of the temple when he was 17 years old. Isn’t that wonderful? He started right off knowing the whole picture about the theology of the family.

Now let’s review briefly some of the things that are threatening the family. In Ephesians chapter 6, it says, “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” (verse 12). That is what we are fighting against. President Thomas S. Monson recently taught: “Just a few short generations ago, one could not have imagined the world in which we now live and the problems it presents.”¹⁰

We see evidence everywhere of the decline in the importance of the family. We know that marriage rates have declined. There is an increase in unmarried couples living together. Divorce has increased. Out-of-wedlock births have increased. One quarter of pregnancies worldwide— and this was a number of years ago—end in abortion. One fourth! There are probably more abortions now. Low birthrates are reported, and they are dropping every day. Children are less valued; families are less valued.

Marriage and family are all about “us” and “we.” The doctrines being preached by the world today are about “I” and “me.” These worldly teachings are not new. If you look in Alma chapter 1, you read about a man named Nehor, who caused a lot of trouble

by teaching a doctrine about “me,” that I am important and that I should get paid for what I do. He taught that it does not really matter what we do, as long as we make ourselves happy. One of the people who believed him was Korihor. Korihor was called an antichrist because he said there would be no Christ. As recorded in Alma, he asked: “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” (Alma 30:13).

Does this sound familiar? Have you heard these kinds of things preached? Have you read them in popular writings? Korihor also said: “These things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers. 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. Ye look forward and say that ye see a remission 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. 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; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime” (Alma 30:14–17).

I hear this all the time. This is the gospel that is being preached popularly in the world. In Book of Mormon times, Korihor led away “the hearts of many, causing them to lift up their heads in wickedness, yea, leading away many women” (Alma 30:18). I

found that interesting—“many women.” This is the doctrine about “me” and “I” and what I do doesn’t affect you—I should be able to do what I want. Why would I want to tie myself down with a family? After all, a family is a burden to society. We hear these kinds of phrases in the world today.

Now, Nehor and Korihor thought they were originals, and the people who are preaching these things today also think they are being original and clever. They are not original or clever; their teachings are pirated from the leader of darkness and are taught by failed leaders. Nehor and Korihor were failed leaders who did not prosper. They are called “antichrists.” We should never forget, sisters, that antichrist teachings and principles are always anti-family. And anti-family teachings and policies are also antichrist. We believe in Christ and we testify of Him. We are baptized into a covenant with Him. We support and sustain His doctrine and His theology, that He came to this earth to provide for us.

I found a talk given by President Spencer W. Kimball in 1980. It was chilling to me. He said: “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. “. . . There are those who would define the family in such a nontraditional way that they would define it out of existence. . . . “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 mortal 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.”¹¹

We are in those times when we are the ones who must preserve our families amid the gathering evil around us. How do we do that? How do Latter-day Saint women do that? We do that by keeping our focus clearly on the blessings of eternal life. It is our responsibility to help ourselves and our families and our loved ones prepare for the blessings of eternal life. The Lord said, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). For this purpose the worlds were created and we were created. We need to keep our focus on that.

We know that we are involved in God’s work every day, and that changes everything. It changes the way we think. It changes our decisions. It changes the way we dress. It changes the way we talk. It changes the way we live. We have the responsibility and the challenge from the prophet to believe deeply and actively in the family. We will need to do that in order to preserve our families. That means we have to be intentional about everything we do. Our life is not just happenstance. We know where we are going and what we have to do.

Now, my mother has given me permission to tell another story about her. She came today to hear it, and if it is wrong, we will correct it in the written text, Mother. My mother was an older single and living and loving life. She had golf clubs, a tennis racket, her own car, a bowling ball, and skis. She had a university education and a career, and she was having a great time. She was introduced to my father, who was a young bishop and a widower with three children. She said, “When we met each other, all five of us fell

in love with each other at once.” And so within a short time, her life changed. She was a woman who knew the plan, believed in it, and had taught and defended it. She had been a school nurse and worked in schools and hospitals. She had had a lot of great experiences. Now all of a sudden she was a mother to three beautiful children. As she and Daddy were traveling along on their honeymoon, she wanted to talk about how they were going to proceed with this family. What are our goals? What is our family going to be like? How are we going to do things in our family? She started writing the answers and their goals, she said, on a paper sack. It was the only paper she had. As they were talking, they said, “What do we want for our children? Are our children going to be married in the temple? Yes, they are. Okay, if we want our children to be married in the temple, what kinds of things do we have to teach them in our home? Well, we will have to have scripture study.” So they wrote that down.

“How about family prayer?” Daddy said. “We already have family prayer. That is our habit.”

“How about going to church?” Going to church every week was on the list. They wrote down things such as manners. “Are we going to teach our children to be polite?” That was a challenge for some of us. They made a goal about who was going to serve a mission. They certainly wanted their sons to serve missions and their daughters to serve missions if they had a desire.

They made goals about education, university education, and so on. But Dad said, “Well, I’m not going to pay for it.” So Mother said, “Okay, then we’ll teach them to work.” So they wrote “work” after that.

And they began to develop the culture of their family, which was a Latter-day Saint culture.

They were preparing their family to make the covenants and receive the ordinances

they needed to prepare them for eternal life, and they knew that there were things their family had to do every day. They wanted children who could contribute and build the kingdom—that is why they wanted their children to get an education. That is why they wanted to have them learn things.

They did not know that their family would grow to have ten children and that teaching table manners to ten children all at once was going to be a process, not an event. They did not know they were going to be in the university business for 25 years, helping children find jobs and save money. But they started out with family prayer, family scripture study, family home evening, and preparing children. I am so grateful for parents who were intentional about preparing a family.

They created a personalized family plan for our family. Part of the responsibility that women have—Latter-day Saint women who know—is to bear children. We have been taught through the family proclamation and the prophets that the commandment to multiply and replenish the earth has never been rescinded. President Spencer W. Kimball said a lot of great things that were very direct. He said, “It is an act of extreme selfishness for a married couple to refuse to have children when they are able to do so.”¹²

Bringing children into the world is the work of creation, as President Dieter F. Uchtdorf said: “If you are a mother, you participate with God in His work of creation—not only by providing physical bodies for your children but also by teaching and nurturing them. If you are not a mother now, the creative talents you develop will prepare you for that day, in this life or the next.”¹³ He also said, “You are spirit daughters of the most creative Being in the universe. . . . [Creating] is your opportunity in this life

and your destiny in the life to come.”¹⁴

I think that there is a special sadness for the sisters who desire to bring children into this world and do not have that blessing—because they are not married or were not given that blessing in this life. I remember visiting with my former Laurel adviser, Cleo Sheppard, just before she passed away last year. Cleo was in her eighties and I had loved her since I was a teenager. She was known for her exceptional friendliness, cheerful attitude, and welcoming nature. In Cleo’s long life, she had many experiences, which included not being able to have children. She eventually did adopt five children; one of those children passed away as a young adult. By the time Cleo passed away, she had lost a daughter and a husband, and now she was suffering from cancer. She had had such a variety of experiences, and I asked her to tell me about her life. She said, “Oh, it has been a wonderful life. I have had a magnificent life.” Then she paused and said, “All except for those ten years when we couldn’t have children.” That gave me great insight into that special pain. With all the challenges and the losses that Cleo had had, that challenge still hurt. I think that happens to righteous women who know, as President Uchtdorf said, that creating is your blessing, now and in the eternities.

Many women in these days do not desire children. They think babies are a lot of trouble. I have even talked to couples who say, “Well, we decided to get a dog instead.” I know that a baby does not pay you compliments or ask you how your day is going, but it is one of our blessings to bring spirits into the world.

When the Lord sends children into our family, we have the responsibility to prepare them to receive the ordinances and covenants of baptism and the temple. In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 68, we

learn that the Lord commanded parents to teach their children the gospel and prepare them for baptism and for temple covenants.

I am wearing my Young Women medallion today. Why? Because I am helping my family and myself prepare for the blessings of eternal life. I do not want to take my eyes off the temple. I earned the medallion. It taught me much about the temple and preparing for the temple. That is what we are teaching our young girls. When they come into the Young Women program, we are not just preparing them to go to camp and have a good time. We are preparing them for the blessings of the temple, which will be theirs if they are worthy.

And so we work on worthiness. We have a huge problem in our families with pornography and the influence that it is having in our families. The powerful feeling that has been coming over me is, “Sisters, fight—fight, sisters.” You have the responsibility in your homes. Many of our women are being drawn into this behavior also. At our last general conference, President Thomas S. Monson gave “a word of caution to all—both young and old, both male and female.”¹⁵ This is our responsibility. The Church has given us many helps in this fight. We cannot sit and act like victims. This is the work of a determined adversary, and we have to take responsibility for defending our homes. We must teach our families everywhere—in family home evenings, in prayer and scripture study, and at mealtimes. We must create opportunities to teach. This will require limiting activities that take us to and fro. We need to use our opportunities to teach in formal and less formal settings.

Years ago when we were driving our children back and forth to piano lessons, someone said, “Don’t you get tired of driving your children to piano lessons?” I

said, “Are you kidding? What a great opportunity I have. My children are captive in my car. I have them and we can talk, teach, and ask questions.” That was a wonderful opportunity that allowed us to discuss true principles.

My children could not run away from me or be busy. Today, probably all your children have cell phones. Mine did not, so we did not have that distraction. But do your best to create formal and informal opportunities to teach and help your children.

Family home evening is so important. Here is what the First Presidency said about teaching in home evenings. They sent a letter, and we all listened to it as we sat in sacrament meetings and we nodded our heads, but do we believe it? They said: “We call upon parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles that 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.”¹⁶

They sent another letter in which they reminded us that Monday nights are reserved for family home evenings throughout the Church, which means everywhere in the world where the Church is established.¹⁷ Where practical, members may want to encourage community and school leaders to avoid scheduling activities on Monday evenings. Other interruptions to family home evenings should be avoided. I think sometimes we get in the practice of saying, “Well, we are going to use the time we have on Sunday to teach our children.” That is great—we should use more time on Sundays for being with our families and teaching them. That was the plan when the consolidated meeting schedule was established. But Monday nights are reserved for family home evenings. And we should be the proactive ones defending that time.

Why wouldn't we want Monday, in addition to Sunday, to teach our families? President Boyd K. Packer said, "The establishment of family home evening . . . is, in a sense, the sounding of an alarm to all parents . . . to prepare themselves and strengthen themselves against the challenges which now face us."¹⁸

Our closing song in this session will be about love at home, and I would like to talk about this principle. I read something from President Joseph F. Smith that I found very touching. He lost his mother at a young age, and he said this: "No love in all the world can equal the love of a true mother. . . . It was life to me; it was strength; it was encouragement; it was love that begat love or liking in myself. I knew she loved me with all her heart. She loved her children with all her soul. . . . Whenever . . .

temptations became most alluring and most tempting to me, the first thought that arose in my soul was this: Remember the love of your mother. Remember how she strove for your welfare. Remember how willing she was to sacrifice her life for your good. . . . This feeling toward my mother became a defense, a barrier between me and temptation."

He also said: "If you wish your children to be taught in the principles of the gospel, if you wish them to love the truth and understand it, if you wish them to be obedient to and united with you, love them! . . . You can't do it any other way. You can't do it by unkindness; you cannot do it by driving. . . . You can coax them; you can lead them, by holding out inducements to them, and by speaking kindly to them, but you can't drive them; they won't be driven. . . . You can't force your boys, nor your girls into heaven. You may force them to hell, by using harsh words in the efforts to make them good, when you yourselves are not as good as you should be. . . . You can only correct your children by love, in kindness,

by love unfeigned, by persuasion, and reason."¹⁹

Our homes, because we know we are building for eternity, should be homes based on love. The proclamation on the family declares that we have a sacred duty to love our husbands and children. Husbands need to be loved. I love section 25 of the Doctrine and Covenants, in which Emma Smith is told to be a comfort to her husband in a spirit of meekness. That creates a feeling and climate of faith, hope, and charity in a home, which the world does not teach. It is okay for a wife to cook for her husband. I have a niece who was married recently, and her mother said, "It's okay for you to cook for your husband. You should do it. It's a sign of your love for him and of how you want to take care of him and nurture him." The world would not teach you that, but the gospel does. Love at home creates a climate of faith, hope, and charity. We have to work for it and strive for it.

Now, we will need the Spirit of the Lord with us in greater abundance in times to come than we have ever had. We need to be the ones seeking every day to qualify for the Spirit, to recognize the voice of the Spirit, and to follow the voice of the Spirit because other voices will lead us in the wrong ways. We are preparing for the blessings of eternal life. Anytime we are teaching the rising generation in Sunday School, Primary, Young Women, seminary, or institute, we should remember that we are preparing them for the blessings of eternal life.

This is a faith-based work. The family and the work of women—Latter-day Saint women—is a faith-based work, and we have to call upon our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His restored gospel and the principles He taught on the earth. We have to follow Him with all our hearts. We have to have faith in who we are and where we came from, and we have to fulfill our responsibilities on this earth and qualify for

eternal blessings.

As we are doing this, we are having a mortal experience. Difficult challenges are coming. I love the teaching in Moses chapter 5, which describes the feelings of Adam and Eve as they were reviewing the blessings of mortality. They could have stayed in the garden—they had a choice.

Everything was provided for them there. They wanted the blessings of eternal life, and the only way to have those blessings was to pass through a mortal experience. Adam said, “Because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God. And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression [what she is saying is—were it not for our mortal experience] we never should have had seed.” In other words, she would not have had children. All of her children were not perfect, but she was not sorry. She was glad she was a mother. She continued, “[We] never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption [that we can be redeemed and blessed by the Atonement of Christ], and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient. And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all these things known unto their sons and their daughters” (Moses 5:10–12).

I testify to you that these are truths of the restored gospel and that we are sons and daughters of Heavenly Parents. Eliza R. Snow, a former general Relief Society president, wrote, “In the heav’ns are parents single? No, the thought makes reason stare!”²⁰ That is eternal life. I testify to you of our Savior Jesus Christ, who came to earth to provide us the opportunity to return to God so we could have the blessings of an eternal family. I testify of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the Restoration, who restored these teachings to the earth in their purity and through whom

the priesthood was restored to earth so that the saving ordinances and covenants can be ours. What a blessing!

I testify of our living prophet today, President Thomas S. Monson, who continues to be a clear voice declaring these same principles and doctrines. If we follow him, we will be safe and we do not need to worry. We owe everything to the Lord. We are so blessed to be involved in a faithbased work, a work in which we can create families, support families, defend families, teach families, and prepare them for the blessings of eternal life—and love them, love them, love them.

I bear you my testimony of these truths and leave with you my great appreciation, my confidence that the women of the Church will be the defenders of right and truth, and that you will be seen as lights in the world to those who were taught these principles before they were born. They will recognize them as you teach them.

This I leave with you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.