

Lesson #1

Coming Forth of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”

Ephesians 4:11-14

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Mosiah 8:15-17

15 And the king said that a seer is greater than a prophet.

16 And Ammon said that a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God.

17 But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known. 26 And it came to pass that Enoch journeyed in the land, among the

people; and as he journeyed, the Spirit of God descended out of heaven, and abode upon him.

Moses 6:26-39

26 And it came to pass that Enoch journeyed in the land, among the people; and as he journeyed, the Spirit of God descended out of heaven, and abode upon him.

27 And he heard a voice from heaven, saying: Enoch, my son, prophesy unto this people, and say unto them—Repent, for thus saith the Lord: I am angry with this people, and my fierce anger is kindled against them; for their hearts have waxed hard, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes cannot see afar off;

28 And for these many generations, ever since the day that I created them, have they gone astray, and have denied me, and have sought their own counsels in the dark; and in their own abominations have they devised murder, and have not kept the commandments, which I gave unto their father, Adam.

29 Wherefore, they have foresworn themselves, and, by their oaths, they have brought upon themselves death; and a hell I have prepared for them, if they repent not;

30 And this is a decree, which I have sent forth in the beginning of the world, from my own mouth, from the foundation thereof, and by the mouths of my servants, thy fathers, have I decreed it, even as it shall be sent forth in the world, unto the ends thereof.

31 And when Enoch had heard these words, he bowed himself to the earth, before the Lord, and spake before the Lord, saying: Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight, and am but a lad, and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech; wherefore am I thy servant?

32 And the Lord said unto Enoch: Go forth and do as I have commanded thee, and no man shall pierce thee. Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled, and I will give thee utterance, for all flesh is in my hands, and I will do as seemeth me good.

33 Say unto this people: Choose ye this day, to serve the Lord God who made you.

34 Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore all thy words will I justify; and the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me.

35 And the Lord spake unto Enoch, and said unto him: Anoint thine eyes with clay, and wash them, and thou shalt see. And he did so.

36 And he beheld the spirits that God had created; and he beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eye; and from thenceforth came the saying abroad in the land: A seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people.

37 And it came to pass that Enoch went forth in the land, among the people, standing upon the hills and the high places, and cried with a loud voice, testifying against their works; and all men were offended because of him.

38 And they came forth to hear him, upon the high places, saying unto the tent-keepers: Tarry ye here and keep the tents, while we go yonder to behold the seer, for he prophesieth, and there is a strange thing in the land; a wild man hath come among us.

39 And it came to pass when they heard him, no man laid hands on him; for fear came on all them that heard him; for he walked with God.

Moses 7:16-21

16 And from that time forth there were wars and bloodshed among them; but the Lord came and

dwelt with his people, and they dwelt in righteousness.

17 The fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the Lord, which was upon his people. And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish.

18 And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.

19 And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion.

20 And it came to pass that Enoch talked with the Lord; and he said unto the Lord: Surely Zion shall dwell in safety forever. But the Lord said unto Enoch: Zion have I blessed, but the residue of the people have I cursed.

21 And it came to pass that the Lord showed unto Enoch all the inhabitants of the earth; and he beheld, and lo, Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Behold mine abode forever.

The Family: A Proclamation to the World, *Ensign* Nov. 2010
[lds.org/topics/family-proclamation.](https://www.lds.org/topics/family-proclamation)

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

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

children. ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose. IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally. THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife. WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God’s eternal plan. HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. “Children are an heritage of the Lord” (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations. THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within

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

**What Matters Most Is What Lasts
Longest**

M. Russell Ballard, *Ensign*, Nov. 2005

As your leaders, we call upon members of the Church everywhere to put family first and to identify specific ways to strengthen their individual families.

Several of the Brethren and I recently visited a few of the refugee centers in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas where devastated and displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina were staying as they began to try to put their lives back together. Their stories and situations are tragic and poignant in many ways, but in all that I heard, what touched me the most was the crying out for family: “Where is my mother?” “I can’t find my son.” “I’ve lost a sister.” These were hungry, frightened people who had lost everything and needed food, medical attention, and help of all kinds, but what they wanted and needed most was their families.

Crisis or transition of any kind reminds us of what matters most. In the routine of life, we often take our families—our parents and children and siblings—for granted. But in times of danger and need and change, there is no question that what we care about most is our families! It will be even more so when we leave this life and enter into the spirit world. Surely the first people we will seek to find there will be father, mother, spouse, children, and siblings.

I believe the mission statement for mortality might be “to build an eternal family.” Here on this earth we strive to become part of extended families with the ability to create and form our own part of those families. That is one of the reasons our Heavenly Father sent us here. Not everyone will find a companion and have a family in mortality, but everyone, regardless of individual circumstances, is a precious member of God’s family.

Brothers and sisters, this year marks the 10th anniversary of the proclamation to the world on the family, which was issued by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1995 (see “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). It was then and is now a clarion call to protect and strengthen families and a stern warning in a world where declining values and

misplaced priorities threaten to destroy society by undermining its basic unit.

The proclamation is a prophetic document, not only because it was issued by prophets but because it was ahead of its time. It warns against many of the very things that have threatened and undermined families during the last decade and calls for the priority and the emphasis families need if they are to survive in an environment that seems ever more toxic to traditional marriage and to parent-child relationships.

The proclamation’s clear and simple language stands in stark contrast to the confused and convoluted notions of a society that cannot even agree on a definition of family, let alone supply the help and support parents and families need. You are familiar with such words from the proclamation as these:

- “Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God.”
- “Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”
- “Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children.”
- “Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity.”
- “The disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.”

And the last words of the proclamation express the simple truth that the family is “the fundamental unit of society.”

Today I call upon members of the Church and on committed parents, grandparents, and extended

family members everywhere to hold fast to this great proclamation, to make it a banner not unlike General Moroni's "title of liberty," and to commit ourselves to live by its precepts. As we are all part of a family, the proclamation applies to everyone.

Public opinion surveys indicate that people everywhere in the world generally consider the family as the highest priority; yet in recent years the broader culture seems to ignore or misdefine the family. Consider some of the changes of the past decade:

- Many larger national and international institutions that used to support and strengthen families now try to supplant and even sabotage the very families they were created to serve.
- In the name of "tolerance," the definition of family has been expanded beyond recognition to the point that "family" can be any individuals of any gender who live together with or without commitment or children or attention to consequence.
- Rampant materialism and selfishness delude many into thinking that families, and especially children, are a burden and a financial millstone that will hold them back rather than a sacred privilege that will teach them to become more like God.

And yet most parents throughout the world continue to know both the importance and the joy that are attached to natural families. Friends of mine who just returned from speaking to families and parents on several continents reported to me that the hopes and concerns of parents are remarkably similar throughout the earth.

In India a concerned Hindu mother said, "All I want is to be a bigger influence on my children than the media and the peer group." And a Buddhist mother in Malaysia said, "I'd like my boys to be able to operate in the world, but I

don't want them to be of the world." Parents from all different cultures and faiths are saying and feeling the same things we are as parents in the Church.

The world needs to know what the proclamation teaches, because the family is the basic unit of society, of the economy, of our culture, and of our government. And as Latter-day Saints know, the family will also be the basic unit in the celestial kingdom.

In the Church, our belief in the overriding importance of families is rooted in restored doctrine. We know of the sanctity of families in both directions of our eternal existence. We know that before this life we lived with our Heavenly Father as part of His family, and we know that family relationships can endure beyond death.

If we live and act upon this knowledge, we will attract the world to us. Parents who place a high priority on their families will gravitate to the Church because it offers the family structure, values, doctrine, and eternal perspective that they seek and cannot find elsewhere.

Our family-centered perspective should make Latter-day Saints strive to be the best parents in the world. It should give us enormous respect for our children, who truly are our spiritual siblings, and it should cause us to devote whatever time is necessary to strengthen our families. Indeed, nothing is more critically connected to happiness—both our own and that of our children—than how well we love and support one another within the family.

President Harold B. Lee spoke of the Church as a crucial "scaffolding" that helps build the individual and the family (see Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 107). The Church is the kingdom of God on earth, but in the kingdom of heaven, families will be both the source of our eternal progress and joy and the order of our Heavenly Father. As we are often reminded, we will be released one day from

our Church callings; but if we are worthy, we will never be released from our family relationships.

Joseph F. Smith said: “There can be no genuine happiness separate and apart from the home, and every effort made to sanctify and preserve its influence is uplifting to those who toil and sacrifice for its establishment. Men and women often seek to substitute some other life for that of the home; they would make themselves believe that the home means restraint; that the highest liberty is the fullest opportunity to move about at will. There is no happiness without service, and there is no service greater than that which converts the home into a divine institution, and which promotes and preserves family life” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith [1998], 382).

Now, one may ask, How do we protect and preserve and strengthen our homes and families in a world pulling so hard in opposite directions? Let me make three simple suggestions:

1. Be consistent in holding daily family prayer and weekly family home evenings. Both of these invite the Lord’s Spirit, which provides the help and power we need as parents and family leaders. The Church curriculum and magazines have many good ideas for family home evening. Also consider holding a family testimony meeting where parents and children can express their beliefs and feelings to each other in a private and personal setting.
2. Teach the gospel and basic values in your home. Establish a love for reading the scriptures together. Too many of our parents are abdicating this responsibility to the Church. While seminary, auxiliaries, and priesthood quorums are important as a supplement to parental gospel instruction, the main responsibility rests in the home. You might want to choose one gospel subject or a family value and then watch for opportunities to teach it. Be wise and do not involve children or

yourselves in so many activities out of the home that you are so busy that the Spirit of the Lord cannot be recognized or felt in giving you the promised guidance for yourself and your family.

3. Create meaningful family bonds that give your children an identity stronger than what they can find with their peer group or at school or anyplace else. This can be done through family traditions for birthdays, for holidays, for dinnertime, and for Sundays. It can also be done through family policies and rules with natural and well-understood consequences. Have a simple family economy where children have specific chores or household duties and receive praise or other rewards commensurate to how well they do. Teach them the importance of avoiding debt and of earning, saving, and wisely spending money. Help them learn responsibility for their own temporal and spiritual self-reliance.

In today’s world, where Satan’s aggression against the family is so prevalent, parents must do all they can to fortify and defend their families. But their efforts may not be enough. Our most basic institution of family desperately needs help and support from the extended family and the public institutions that surround us. Brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandparents and cousins can make a powerful difference in the lives of children. Remember that the expression of love and encouragement from an extended family member will often provide the right influence and help a child at a critical time.

The Church itself will continue to be the first and foremost institution—the “scaffolding,” as it were—to help build strong families. I can assure you that those who lead the Church have great concern about the well-being of your families, and thus you will see increasing efforts to prioritize and to focus on family needs. But as your leaders, we call upon members of the Church everywhere to put family first and to

identify specific ways to strengthen their individual families.

Further, we call upon all public institutions to examine themselves and to do less that might harm families and more that will help them.

We call upon the media to offer more that promotes traditional family values and is uplifting and supportive of families and less that popularizes immorality and materialism.

We call upon government and political leaders to put the needs of children and parents first and to think in terms of family impact in all legislation and policy making.

We call upon Internet providers and Web site creators to become more responsible regarding their potential for influence and to adopt the conscious objective of protecting children from violence, pornography, filth, and sleaze.

We call upon educational entities to teach universal values and family and parenting skills, supporting parents in their responsibility to raise children to become the leaders of families in generations yet to come.

We call upon our own Church members to reach out in love to neighbors and friends of other faiths and include them in the use of the many resources the Church has to help families. Our communities and neighborhoods will be safer and stronger as people of all faiths work together to strengthen families.

It is important to remember that all larger units of society depend on the smallest and most fundamental unit, the family. No matter who or what we are, we help ourselves when we help families.

Brothers and sisters, as we hold up like a banner the proclamation to the world on the family and as we live and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will fulfill the measure of our creation here on earth. We will find peace and happiness here and

in the world to come. We should not need a hurricane or other crisis to remind us of what matters most. The gospel and the Lord's plan of happiness and salvation should remind us. What matters most is what lasts longest, and our families are for eternity. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #2

Prophets and Apostles Solemnly Proclaim

Ezekiel 33:1-7

1 Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman:

3 If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;

4 Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

5 He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.

6 But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

7 ¶So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

Amos 3:6-7

6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?

7 Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

D&C 1:4-5

4 And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.

5 And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them.

D&C 1:11

11 Wherefore the voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth, that all that will hear may hear:

D&C 1:14

14 And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people;

D&C 1:37-38

37 Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.

38 What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass

away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

D&C 90 :1-5

1 Thus saith the Lord, verily, verily I say unto you my son, thy sins are forgiven thee, according to thy petition, for thy prayers and the prayers of thy brethren have come up into my ears.

2 Therefore, thou art blessed from henceforth that bear the keys of the kingdom given unto you; which kingdom is coming forth for the last time.

3 Verily I say unto you, the keys of this kingdom shall never be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come;

4 Nevertheless, through you shall the oracles be given to another, yea, even unto the church.

5 And all they who receive the oracles of God, let them beware how they hold them lest they are accounted as a light thing, and are brought under condemnation thereby, and stumble and fall when the storms descend, and the winds blow, and the rains descend, and beat upon their house.

D&C 124: 125-126

125 I give unto you my servant Joseph to be a presiding elder over all my church, to be a translator, a revelator, a seer, and prophet.

126 I give unto him for counselors my servant Sidney Rigdon and my servant William Law, that these may constitute a quorum and First Presidency, to receive the oracles for the whole church.

Finding Safety in Counsel **Henry B. Eyring, *Ensign*, May 1997**

The Savior has always been the protector of those who would accept His protection. He has said more than once, “How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not” (3 Ne. 10:5).

The Lord expressed the same lament in our own dispensation after describing the many ways in which He calls us to safety:

“How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and by the voice of lightnings, and by the voice of tempests, and by the voice of earthquakes, and great hailstorms, and by the voice of famines and pestilences of every kind, and by the great sound of a trump, and by the voice of judgment, and by the voice of mercy all the day long, and by the voice of glory and honor and the riches of eternal life, and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but ye would not!” (D&C 43:25).

There seems to be no end to the Savior’s desire to lead us to safety. And there is constancy in the way He shows us the path. He calls by more than one means so that it will reach those willing to accept it. And those means always include sending the message by the mouths of His prophets whenever people have qualified to have the prophets of God among them. Those authorized servants are always charged with warning the people, telling them the way to safety.

When tensions ran high in northern Missouri in the fall of 1838, the Prophet Joseph Smith called for all the Saints to gather to Far West for protection. Many were on isolated farms or in scattered settlements. He specifically counseled Jacob Haun, founder of a small settlement called Haun’s Mill. A record of that time includes this:

“Brother Joseph had sent word by Haun, who owned the mill, to inform the brethren who were living there to leave and come to Far West, but Mr. Haun did not deliver the message” (Philo Dibble, in “Early Scenes in Church History,” in Four Faith Promoting Classics [1968], 90). Later, the Prophet Joseph recorded in his history: “Up to this day God had given me wisdom to save the people who took counsel. None had ever been killed who [had abided] by my counsel” (History of the Church, 5:137). Then the Prophet recorded the sad truth that innocent lives could have been saved at Haun’s Mill had his counsel been received and followed.

In our own time, we have been warned with counsel of where to find safety from sin and from sorrow. One of the keys to recognizing those warnings is that they are repeated. For instance, more than once in these general conferences, you have heard our prophet say that he would quote a preceding prophet and would therefore be a second witness and sometimes even a third. Each of us who has listened has heard President Kimball give counsel on the importance of a mother in the home and then heard President Benson quote him, and we have heard President Hinckley quote them both. The Apostle Paul wrote that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Cor. 13:1). One of the ways we may know that the warning is from the Lord is that the law of witnesses, authorized witnesses, has been invoked. When the words of prophets seem repetitive, that should rivet our attention and fill our hearts with gratitude to live in such a blessed time.

Looking for the path to safety in the counsel of prophets makes sense to those with strong faith. When a prophet speaks, those with little faith may think that they hear only a wise man giving good advice. Then if his counsel seems comfortable and reasonable, squaring with what they want to do, they take it. If it does not, they

consider it either faulty advice or they see their circumstances as justifying their being an exception to the counsel. Those without faith may think that they hear only men seeking to exert influence for some selfish motive. They may mock and deride, as did a man named Korihor, with these words recorded in the Book of Mormon:

“And thus ye lead away this people after the foolish traditions of your fathers, and according to your own desires; and ye keep them down, even as it were in bondage, that ye may glut yourselves with the labors of their hands, that they durst not look up with boldness, and that they durst not enjoy their rights and privileges” (Alma 30:27).

Korihor was arguing, as men and women have falsely argued from the beginning of time, that to take counsel from the servants of God is to surrender God-given rights of independence. But the argument is false because it misrepresents reality. When we reject the counsel which comes from God, we do not choose to be independent of outside influence. We choose another influence. We reject the protection of a perfectly loving, all-powerful, all-knowing Father in Heaven, whose whole purpose, as that of His Beloved Son, is to give us eternal life, to give us all that He has, and to bring us home again in families to the arms of His love. In rejecting His counsel, we choose the influence of another power, whose purpose is to make us miserable and whose motive is hatred. We have moral agency as a gift of God. Rather than the right to choose to be free of influence, it is the inalienable right to submit ourselves to whichever of those powers we choose.

Another fallacy is to believe that the choice to accept or not accept the counsel of prophets is no more than deciding whether to accept good advice and gain its benefits or to stay where we are. But the choice not to take prophetic counsel changes the very ground upon which we stand. It becomes more dangerous. The failure to take prophetic counsel lessens our power to take inspired counsel in the future. The best time to

have decided to help Noah build the ark was the first time he asked. Each time he asked after that, each failure to respond would have lessened sensitivity to the Spirit. And so each time his request would have seemed more foolish, until the rain came. And then it was too late.

Every time in my life when I have chosen to delay following inspired counsel or decided that I was an exception, I came to know that I had put myself in harm's way. Every time that I have listened to the counsel of prophets, felt it confirmed in prayer, and then followed it, I have found that I moved toward safety. Along the path, I have found that the way had been prepared for me and the rough places made smooth. God led me to safety along a path which was prepared with loving care, sometimes prepared long before.

The account at the beginning of the Book of Mormon is of a prophet of God, Lehi. He was also the leader of a family. He was warned by God to take those he loved to safety. Lehi's experience is a type of what happens as God gives counsel through His servants. Of Lehi's family, only those who had faith and who themselves received confirming revelation saw both the danger and the way to safety. For those without faith, the move into the wilderness seemed not only foolish but dangerous. Like all prophets, Lehi, to his dying day, tried to show his family where safety would lie for them.

He knew that the Savior holds responsible those to whom He delegates priesthood keys. With those keys comes the power to give counsel that will show us the way to safety. Those with keys are responsible to warn even when their counsel might not be followed. Keys are delegated down a line which passes from the prophet through those responsible for ever smaller groups of members, closer and closer to families and to individuals. That is one of the ways by which the Lord makes a stake a place of safety. For instance, I have sat with my wife in a meeting of parents called by our

bishop, our neighbor, so that he could warn us of spiritual dangers faced by our children.

I heard more than the voice of my wise friend. I heard a servant of Jesus Christ, with keys, meeting his responsibility to warn and passing to us, the parents, the responsibility to act. When we honor the keys of that priesthood channel by listening and giving heed, we tie ourselves to a lifeline which will not fail us in any storm.

Our Heavenly Father loves us. He sent His Only Begotten Son to be our Savior. He knew that in mortality we would be in grave danger, the worst of it from the temptations of a terrible adversary. That is one of the reasons why the Savior has provided priesthood keys so that those with ears to hear and faith to obey could go to places of safety.

Having listening ears requires humility. You remember the Lord's warning to Thomas B. Marsh. He was then the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The Lord knew that President Marsh and his brethren of the Twelve would be tested. He gave counsel about taking counsel. The Lord said, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers" (D&C 112:10).

The Lord added a warning that is applicable to any who follow a living prophet: "Exalt not yourselves; rebel not against my servant Joseph; for verily I say unto you, I am with him, and my hand shall be over him; and the keys which I have given unto him, and also to youward, shall not be taken from him till I come" (D&C 112:15).

God offers us counsel not just for our own safety, but for the safety of His other children, whom we should love. There are few comforts so sweet as to know that we have been an instrument in the hands of God in leading someone else to safety. That blessing generally requires the faith to follow counsel when it is hard to do. An example from Church history is that of Reddick Newton Allred. He was one of the rescue party sent out by

Brigham Young to bring in the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies. When a terrible storm hit, Captain Grant, captain of the rescue party, decided to leave some of the wagons by the Sweetwater River as he pressed ahead to find the handcart companies. With the blizzards howling and the weather becoming life-threatening, two of the men left behind at the Sweetwater decided that it was foolish to stay. They thought that either the handcart companies had wintered over somewhere or had perished. They decided to return to the Salt Lake Valley and tried to persuade everyone else to do the same.

Reddick Allred refused to budge. Brigham had sent them out and his priesthood leader had told him to wait there. The others took several wagons, all filled with needed supplies, and started back. Even more tragic, each wagon they met coming out from Salt Lake they turned back as well. They turned back 77 wagons, returning all the way to Little Mountain, where President Young learned what was happening and turned them around again. When the Willie Company was finally found, and had made that heartrending pull up and over Rocky Ridge, it was Reddick Allred and his wagons that waited for them. (See Rebecca Bartholomew and Leonard J. Arrington, *Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies* [1992], 29, 33–34.)

In this conference you will hear inspired counsel, for instance, to reach out to the new members of the Church. Those with the faith of Reddick Newton Allred will keep offering friendship even when it seems not to be needed or to have no effect. They will persist. When some new member reaches the point of spiritual exhaustion, they will be there offering kind words and fellowship. They will then feel the same divine approval Brother Allred felt when he saw those handcart pioneers struggling toward him, knowing he could offer them safety because he had followed counsel when it was hard to do.

While the record does not prove it, I am confident that Brother Allred prayed while he waited. I am confident that his prayers were answered. He then knew that the counsel to stand fast was from God. We must pray to know that. I promise you answers to such prayers of faith.

Sometimes we will receive counsel that we cannot understand or that seems not to apply to us, even after careful prayer and thought. Don't discard the counsel, but hold it close. If someone you trusted handed you what appeared to be nothing more than sand with the promise that it contained gold, you might wisely hold it in your hand awhile, shaking it gently. Every time I have done that with counsel from a prophet, after a time the gold flakes have begun to appear and I have been grateful.

We are blessed to live in a time when the priesthood keys are on the earth. We are blessed to know where to look and how to listen for the voice that will fulfill the promise of the Lord that He will gather us to safety. I pray for you and for me that we will have humble hearts, that we will listen, that we will pray, that we will wait for the deliverance of the Lord which is sure to come as we are faithful. I testify that God, our Heavenly Father, lives and loves us. This is the Church of Jesus Christ. He lives and loves us. He is the head of the Church, and He is our Savior. I testify that Gordon B. Hinckley holds all the keys of the priesthood of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #3

Our Divine Potential

Genesis 1:27

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Isaiah 55:8-9

8 ¶For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Acts 17:29

29 For as much then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

Romans 8:16-17

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

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

Hebrews 12:9

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

1 John 3:1-2

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

1 John 4:8-9

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

1 Nephi 9:6

6 But the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words. And thus it is. Amen.

2 Nephi 9:20

20 O how great the holiness of our God! For he knoweth all things, and there is not anything save he knows it.

3 Nephi 12:48

48 Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.

Moroni 8:18

18 For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity.

D&C 76:4

4 From eternity to eternity he is the same, and his years never fail.

D&C 88:41

41 He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever.

D&C 130:22

22 The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.

Gospel Topics, **"Becoming Like God," [lds.org/topics](https://www.lds.org/topics).**

Becoming Like God

One of the most common images in Western and Eastern religions alike is of God as a parent and of human beings as God's children. Billions pray to God as their parent, invoke the brotherhood and sisterhood of all people to promote peace, and reach out to the weary and troubled out of deep conviction that each of God's children has great worth.

But people of different faiths understand the parent-child relationship between God and humans in significantly different ways. Some understand the phrase "child of God" as an honorary title reserved only for those who believe in God and accept His guidance as they might accept a father's. Many see parent-child descriptions of God's relationship to humanity as metaphors to express His love for His creations and their dependence on His sustenance and protection.

Latter-day Saints see all people as children of God in a full and complete sense; they consider every person divine in origin, nature, and potential. Each has an eternal core and is "a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents."¹ Each possesses seeds of divinity and must choose whether to live in harmony or tension with that divinity. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all people may "progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny."² Just as a child can develop the attributes of his or her parents over time, the divine nature that humans inherit can be developed to become like their Heavenly Father's.

The desire to nurture the divinity in His children is one of God's attributes that most inspires, motivates, and humbles members of the Church. God's loving parentage and guidance can help each willing, obedient child of God receive of His fulness and of His glory. This knowledge transforms the way Latter-day Saints see their fellow human beings. The teaching that men and women have the potential to be exalted to a state of godliness clearly expands beyond what is understood by most contemporary Christian churches and expresses for the Latter-day Saints a yearning rooted in the Bible to live as God lives, to love as He loves, and to prepare for all that our loving Father in Heaven wishes for His children.

What does the Bible say about humans' divine potential?

Several biblical passages intimate that humans can become like God. The likeness of humans to

God is emphasized in the first chapter of Genesis: “God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”³ After Adam and Eve partook of the fruit of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” God said they had “become as one of us,”⁴ suggesting that a process of approaching godliness was already underway. Later in the Old Testament, a passage in the book of Psalms declares, “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.”⁵

New Testament passages also point to this doctrine. When Jesus was accused of blasphemy on the grounds that “thou, being a man, makest thyself God,” He responded, echoing Psalms, “Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?”⁶ In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commanded His disciples to become “perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”⁷ In turn, the Apostle Peter referred to the Savior’s “exceeding great and precious promises” that we might become “partakers of the divine nature.”⁸ The Apostle Paul taught that we are “the offspring of God” and emphasized that as such “we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”⁹ The book of Revelation contains a promise from Jesus Christ that “to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”¹⁰

These passages can be interpreted in different ways. Yet by viewing them through the clarifying lens of revelations received by Joseph Smith, Latter-day Saints see these scriptures as straightforward expressions of humanity’s divine nature and potential. Many other Christians read the same passages far more metaphorically because they experience the Bible through the lens of doctrinal interpretations that developed over time after the period described in the New Testament.

How have ideas about divinity shifted over Christian history?

Latter-day Saint beliefs would have sounded more familiar to the earliest generations of Christians than they do to many modern Christians. Many church fathers (influential theologians and teachers in early Christianity) spoke approvingly of the idea that humans can become divine. One modern scholar refers to the “ubiquity of the doctrine of deification”—the teaching that humans could become God—in the first centuries after Christ’s death.¹¹ The church father Irenaeus, who died about A.D. 202, asserted that Jesus Christ “did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be what He is Himself.”¹² Clement of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 150–215) wrote that “the Word of God became man, that thou mayest learn from man how man may become God.”¹³ Basil the Great (A.D. 330–379) also celebrated this prospect—not just “being made like to God,” but “highest of all, the being made God.”¹⁴

What exactly the early church fathers meant when they spoke of becoming God is open to interpretation,¹⁵ but it is clear that references to deification became more contested in the late Roman period and were infrequent by the medieval era. The first known objection by a church father to teaching deification came in the fifth century.¹⁶ By the sixth century, teachings on “becoming God” appear more limited in scope, as in the definition provided by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (ca. A.D. 500): “Deification ... is the attaining of likeness to God and union with him so *far as is possible*.”¹⁷

Why did these beliefs fade from prominence? Changing perspectives on the creation of the world may have contributed to the gradual shift toward more limited views of human potential. The earliest Jewish and Christian commentaries on the Creation assumed that God had organized the world out of preexisting materials, emphasizing the goodness of God in shaping such a life-sustaining order.¹⁸ But the incursion of new philosophical ideas in the second century led to

the development of a doctrine that God created the universe ex nihilo—“out of nothing.” This ultimately became the dominant teaching about the Creation within the Christian world.¹⁹ In order to emphasize God’s power, many theologians reasoned that nothing could have existed for as long as He had. It became important in Christian circles to assert that God had originally been completely alone.

Creation ex nihilo widened the perceived gulf between God and humans. It became less common to teach either that human souls had existed before the world or that they could inherit and develop the attributes of God in their entirety in the future.²⁰ Gradually, as the depravity of humankind and the immense distance between Creator and creature were increasingly emphasized, the concept of deification faded from Western Christianity,²¹ though it remains a central tenet of Eastern Orthodoxy, one of the three major branches of Christianity.²²

How were ideas about deification introduced to Latter-day Saints?

The earliest Latter-day Saints came from a society dominated by English-speaking Protestants, most of whom accepted both ex nihilo creation and the Westminster Confession’s definition of God as a being “without body, parts, or passions.”²³ They likely knew little or nothing about the diversity of Christian beliefs in the first centuries after Jesus Christ’s ministry or about early Christian writings on deification. But revelations received by Joseph Smith diverged from the prevailing ideas of the time and taught doctrine that, for some, reopened debates on the nature of God, creation, and humankind.

Early revelations to Joseph Smith taught that humans are created in the image of God and that God cares intimately for His children. In the Book of Mormon, a prophet “saw the finger of the Lord” and was astonished to learn that human physical forms were truly made in the image of God.²⁴ In another early revelation, Enoch (who “walked with God” in the Bible²⁵) witnessed God

weeping over His creations. When Enoch asked, “How is it thou canst weep?” he learned that God’s compassion toward human suffering is integral to His love.²⁶ Joseph Smith also learned that God desires that His children receive the same kind of exalted existence of which He partakes. As God declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”²⁷

In 1832, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon experienced a vision of the afterlife. In the vision, they learned that the just and unjust alike would receive immortality through a universal resurrection, but only those “who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise” would receive the fulness of God’s glory and be “gods, even the sons of God.”²⁸ Another revelation soon confirmed that “the saints shall be filled with his glory, and receive their inheritance and be made equal with him.”²⁹ Latter-day Saints use the term exaltation to describe the glorious reward of receiving one’s full inheritance as a child of Heavenly Father, which is available through the Atonement of Christ, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.³⁰

This striking view of each human’s potential future was accompanied by revealed teachings on humanity’s past. As Joseph Smith continued to receive revelations, he learned that the light or intelligence at the core of each human soul “was not created or made, neither indeed can be.” God is the Father of each human spirit, and because only “spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy,” He presented a plan for human beings to receive physical bodies and progress through their mortal experience toward a fulness of joy. Earthly birth, then, is not the beginning of an individual’s life: “Man was also in the beginning with God.”³¹ Likewise, Joseph Smith taught that the material world has eternal roots, fully repudiating the concept of creation ex nihilo. “Earth, water &c—all these had their existence in an elementary State from Eternity,” he said in an 1839 sermon.³² God organized the universe out of existing elements.

Joseph Smith continued to receive revelation on the themes of divine nature and exaltation during the last two years of his life. In a revelation recorded in July 1843 that linked exaltation with eternal marriage, the Lord declared that those who keep covenants, including the covenant of eternal marriage, will inherit “all heights and depths.” “Then,” says the revelation, “shall they be gods, because they have no end.” They will receive “a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.”³³

The following April, feeling he was “never in any nearer relationship to God than at the present time,”³⁴ Joseph Smith spoke about the nature of God and the future of humankind to the Saints, who had gathered for a general Church conference. He used the occasion in part to reflect upon the death of a Church member named King Follett, who had died unexpectedly a month earlier. When he rose to speak, the wind was blowing, so Joseph asked his listeners to give him their “profound attention” and to “pray that the L[ord] may strengthen my lungs” and stay the winds until his message had been delivered.³⁵ “What kind of a being is God?” he asked. Human beings needed to know, he argued, because “if men do not comprehend the character of God they do not comprehend themselves.”³⁶ In that phrase, the Prophet collapsed the gulf that centuries of confusion had created between God and humanity. Human nature was at its core divine. God “was once as one of us” and “all the spirits that God ever sent into the world” were likewise “susceptible of enlargement.” Joseph Smith preached that long before the world was formed, God found “himself in the midst” of these beings and “saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself”³⁷ and be “exalted” with Him.³⁸

Joseph told the assembled Saints, “You have got to learn how to be a god yourself.”³⁹ In order to do that, the Saints needed to learn godliness, or to be more like God. The process would be ongoing and would require patience, faith, continuing repentance, obedience to the commandments of the gospel, and reliance on

Christ. Like ascending a ladder, individuals needed to learn the “first prin[ciples] of the Gospel” and continue beyond the limits of mortal knowledge until they could “learn the last prin[ciples] of the Gospel” when the time came.⁴⁰ “It is not all to be comprehended in this world,” Joseph said.⁴¹ “It will take a long time after the grave to understand the whole.”⁴²

That was the last time the Prophet spoke in a general conference. Three months later, a mob stormed Carthage Jail and martyred him and his brother Hyrum.

What has been taught in the Church about divine nature since Joseph Smith?

Since that sermon, known as the King Follett discourse, the doctrine that humans can progress to exaltation and godliness has been taught within the Church. Lorenzo Snow, the Church’s fifth President, coined a well-known couplet: “As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be.”⁴³ Little has been revealed about the first half of this couplet, and consequently little is taught. When asked about this topic, Church President Gordon B. Hinckley told a reporter in 1997, “That gets into some pretty deep theology that we don’t know very much about.” When asked about the belief in humans’ divine potential, President Hinckley responded, “Well, as God is, man may become. We believe in eternal progression. Very strongly.”⁴⁴

Eliza R. Snow, a Church leader and poet, rejoiced over the doctrine that we are, in a full and absolute sense, children of God. “I had learned to call thee Father, / Thru thy Spirit from on high,” she wrote, “But, until the key of knowledge / Was restored, I knew not why.” Latter-day Saints have also been moved by the knowledge that their divine parentage includes a Heavenly Mother as well as a Heavenly Father. Expressing that truth, Eliza R. Snow asked, “In the heav’ns are parents single?” and answered with a resounding no: “Truth eternal / Tells me I’ve a mother there.”⁴⁵ That knowledge plays an important role in Latter-day Saint belief. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote, “Our theology begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them.”⁴⁶

Humankind’s divine nature and potential for exaltation have been repeatedly taught in general conference addresses, Church magazines, and other Church materials. “Divine nature” is one of eight core values in the Church’s Young Women program. Teaching on human beings’ divine parentage, nature, and potential features prominently in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” Divine nature and exaltation are essential and beloved teachings in the Church.

Does belief in exaltation make Latter-day Saints polytheists?

For some observers, the doctrine that humans should strive for godliness may evoke images of ancient pantheons with competing deities. Such images are incompatible with Latter-day Saint doctrine. Latter-day Saints believe that God’s children will always worship Him. Our progression will never change His identity as our Father and our God. Indeed, our exalted, eternal relationship with Him will be part of the “fulness of joy” He desires for us.

Latter-day Saints also believe strongly in the fundamental unity of the divine. They believe that God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost, though distinct beings, are unified in purpose and doctrine.⁴⁷ It is in this light that Latter-day Saints understand Jesus’s prayer for His disciples through the ages: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”⁴⁸

If humans live out of harmony with God’s goodness, they cannot grow into God’s glory. Joseph Smith taught that “the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only [except] upon the principles of righteousness.” When humans abandon God’s selfless purposes and standards, “the heavens withdraw themselves [and] the Spirit of the Lord is grieved.”⁴⁹ Pride is

incompatible with progress; disunity is impossible between exalted beings.

How do Latter-day Saints envision exaltation?

Since human conceptions of reality are necessarily limited in mortality, religions struggle to adequately articulate their visions of eternal glory. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”⁵⁰ These limitations make it easy for images of salvation to become cartoonish when represented in popular culture. For example, scriptural expressions of the deep peace and overwhelming joy of salvation are often reproduced in the well-known image of humans sitting on their own clouds and playing harps after death. Latter-day Saints’ doctrine of exaltation is often similarly reduced in media to a cartoonish image of people receiving their own planets.

A cloud and harp are hardly a satisfying image for eternal joy, although most Christians would agree that inspired music can be a tiny foretaste of the joy of eternal salvation. Likewise, while few Latter-day Saints would identify with caricatures of having their own planet, most would agree that the awe inspired by creation hints at our creative potential in the eternities.

Latter-day Saints tend to imagine exaltation through the lens of the sacred in mortal experience. They see the seeds of godhood in the joy of bearing and nurturing children and the intense love they feel for those children, in the impulse to reach out in compassionate service to others, in the moments they are caught off guard by the beauty and order of the universe, in the grounding feeling of making and keeping divine covenants. Church members imagine exaltation less through images of what they will get and more through the relationships they have now and how those relationships might be purified and elevated. As the scriptures teach, “That same sociality which exists among us here will exist

among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy.”⁵¹

How important are teachings about exaltation to Latter-day Saint beliefs overall?

The teaching that human beings have a divine nature and future shapes the way Latter-day Saints view fundamental doctrine. Perhaps most significantly, belief in divine nature helps us more deeply appreciate the Atonement of Jesus Christ. While many Christian theologians have expressed the magnitude of the Savior’s Atonement by emphasizing human depravity, Latter-day Saints understand the magnitude of the Atonement of Christ in terms of the vast human potential it makes possible. Christ’s Atonement not only provides forgiveness from sin and victory over death, it also redeems imperfect relationships, heals the spiritual wounds that stifle growth, and strengthens and enables individuals to develop the attributes of Christ.⁵² Latter-day Saints believe that it is only through the Atonement of Jesus Christ that we can have a sure hope of eternal glory and that the power of His Atonement is fully accessed only by faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end in following the instruction and example of Christ.⁵³ Thus, those who become like God and enter into a fulness of His glory are described as people who have been “made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.”⁵⁴

An awareness of humans’ divine potential also influences Latter-day Saints’ understanding of gospel principles such as the importance of divine commandments, the role of temples, and the sanctity of individual moral agency. Belief that human beings are actually God’s children also changes Latter-day Saints’ behavior and attitudes. For example, even in societies where casual and premarital sex are considered acceptable, Latter-day Saints retain a deep reverence for the God-given procreative and bonding powers of human sexual intimacy and remain committed to a higher

standard in the use of those sacred powers. Studies suggest that Latter-day Saints place an exceptionally high priority on marriage and parenthood,⁵⁵ a consequence in part of a strong belief in heavenly parents and a commitment to strive for that divinity.

Conclusion

All human beings are children of loving heavenly parents and possess seeds of divinity within them. In His infinite love, God invites His children to cultivate their eternal potential by the grace of God, through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁶ The doctrine of humans’ eternal potential to become like their Heavenly Father is central to the gospel of Jesus Christ and inspires love, hope, and gratitude in the hearts of faithful Latter-day Saints.

Resources

1. [“The Family: A Proclamation to the world,”](#) *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
2. [“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,”](#) 129.
3. [Genesis 1:26–27.](#)
4. [Genesis 2:17; 3:22.](#)
5. [Psalm 82:6.](#)
6. [John 10:33–34.](#)
7. [Matthew 5:48.](#) The word *perfect* in Matthew 5:48 can also be translated *whole* or *complete*, implying a distant objective and ongoing, concerted effort (see Russell M. Nelson, [“Perfection Pending,”](#) *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 86).
8. [2 Peter 1:4.](#)
9. [Acts 17:29; Romans 8:16–17.](#)
10. [Revelation 3:21.](#)
11. Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (2004), 6.
12. Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Father Down to A.D. 325* (1977), 1:526.
13. Clement, “Exhortation to the Heathen,” in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:174.

14. Saint Basil the Great, "On the Spirit," in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd series (1994), 8:16.
15. There are likely important differences as well as similarities between the thinking of the church fathers and Latter-day Saint teachings. For a discussion of similarities and differences between exaltation as understood by Latter-day Saints and modern Eastern Orthodox understanding of statements by church fathers on deification, see Jordan Vajda, "Partakers of the Divine Nature: A Comparative Analysis of Patristic and Mormon Doctrines of Divinization," Occasional Papers Series, no. 3 (2002), available at maxwellinstitute.byu.edu.
16. See Vladimir Kharlamov, "Rhetorical Application of *Theosis* in Greek Patristic Theology," in Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung, eds., *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (2008), 115.
17. Quoted in Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 1; italics added.
18. As the second-century church father Justin Martyr said, "We have been taught that He in the beginning did of His goodness, for man's sake, create all things out of unformed matter" (*The First Apology of Justin*, in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:165; see also Frances Young, "'Creatio Ex Nihilo': A Context for the Emergence of the Christian Doctrine of Creation," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44, no. 1 [1991]: 139–51; Markus Bockmuehl, "Creation Ex Nihilo in Palestinian Judaism and Early Christianity," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 66, no. 3 [2012]: 253–70).
19. For information on the second-century context that gave birth to creation ex nihilo, see Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation out of Nothing' in Early Christian Thought* (2004).
20. See Terryl L. Givens, *When Souls Had Wings: Pre-Mortal Existence in Western Thought* (2010).
21. A minor resurgence of the doctrine of deification within Western Christianity occurred at the hands of a group of 17th-century English clergymen-scholars, called the Cambridge Platonists. (See Benjamin Whichcote, "The Manifestation of Christ and the Deification of Man," in C. A. Patrides, ed., *The Cambridge Platonists* [1980], 70.)
22. In "The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology," Andrew Louth describes Eastern Orthodoxy as focused on a "greater arch, leading from creation to deification" and feels that Catholic and Protestant theologies have focused on a partial "lesser arch, from Fall to redemption" to the exclusion of that whole (in Christensen and Wittung, *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 35).
23. Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. 2 (1646). The Westminster Confession was drawn up by the Westminster Assembly of 1646 as a standard for the doctrine, worship, and government of the Church of England. Its contents have guided the worship of a number of Protestant churches since the time of its writing.
24. [Ether 3:6](#); see also [Doctrine and Covenants 130:22](#); [Moses 6:8–9](#). On Joseph Smith's teachings on the embodiment of God, see David L. Paulsen, "The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives," *BYU Studies* 35, no. 4 (1995–96): 13–39, available at byustudies.byu.edu.
25. [Genesis 5:22](#).
26. See [Moses 7:31–37](#). On the profundity of this image, see Terryl Givens and Fiona Givens, *The God Who Weeps: How Mormonism Makes Sense of Life* (2012).
27. [Moses 1:39](#).
28. [Doctrine and Covenants 76:53, 58](#).
29. [Doctrine and Covenants 88:107](#).
30. See Dallin H. Oaks, "No Other Gods," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013; Russell M. Nelson, "Salvation and Exaltation," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008; see also [Articles of Faith 1:3](#).
31. [Doctrine and Covenants 93:29, 33](#).
32. Joseph Smith, remarks, delivered before Aug. 8, 1839, in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W.

- Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (1980), 9; also available at josephsmithpapers.org.
33. [Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20](#).
 34. Wilford Woodruff journal, Apr. 6, 1844, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
 35. Discourse, Apr. 7, 1844, as reported by William Clayton, available at josephsmithpapers.org. While the King Follett discourse represents Joseph Smith’s most detailed known discussion of divine nature and exaltation, it is important to note that because of the wind on the day the sermon was delivered and the limitations of transcription techniques, we are left without certainty about Joseph Smith’s exact or complete wording during the sermon. The partial accounts of four witnesses and an early published account give us a record, if only an imperfect one, of what Joseph Smith taught on the occasion, and what he taught gives us insight into the meaning of numerous passages of scripture. But the surviving sermon text is not canonized and should not be treated as a doctrinal standard in and of itself. For the accounts of Willard Richards, William Clayton, Thomas Bullock, Wilford Woodruff, and the August 15, 1844, *Times and Seasons*, see “[Accounts of the ‘King Follett Sermon’](#)” on the Joseph Smith Papers website.
 36. Discourse, Apr. 7, 1844, as reported by Willard Richards, available at josephsmithpapers.org, spelling modernized.
 37. Discourse, Apr. 7, 1844, as reported by William Clayton, available at josephsmithpapers.org.
 38. Discourse, Apr. 7, 1844, as reported by Wilford Woodruff, available at josephsmithpapers.org, spelling modernized.
 39. Discourse, Apr. 7, 1844, as reported by William Clayton, available at josephsmithpapers.org.
 40. Discourse, Apr. 7, 1844, as reported by Thomas Bullock, available at josephsmithpapers.org.
 41. Discourse, Apr. 7, 1844, as reported by William Clayton, available at josephsmithpapers.org.
 42. Discourse, Apr. 7, 1844, as reported by Wilford Woodruff, available at josephsmithpapers.org.
 43. Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (1884), 46. The couplet, which has never been canonized, has been formulated in slightly different ways. For others, see *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 1–9.
 44. Don Lattin, “Musings of the Main Mormon,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Apr. 13, 1997; see also David Van Biema, “Kingdom Come,” *Time*, Aug. 4, 1997, 56.
 45. First published as a poem, this later became a popular hymn. (Eliza R. Snow, “My Father in Heaven,” *Times and Seasons*, Nov. 15, 1845, 1039; “O My Father,” *Hymns*, no. 292; see also Jill Mulvay Derr, “The Significance of ‘O My Father’ in the Personal Journey of Eliza R. Snow,” *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 [1996–97]: 84–126, available at byustudies.byu.edu.) For Latter-day Saint thought on Mother in Heaven, see David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, “‘A Mother There’: A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven,” *BYU Studies* 50, no. 1 (2011): 70–97, available at byustudies.byu.edu.
 46. Dallin H. Oaks, “[Apostasy and Restoration](#),” *Ensign*, May 1995, 84.
 47. See [Doctrine and Covenants 130:22](#).
 48. [John 17:21](#).
 49. [Doctrine and Covenants 121:36–37](#).
 50. [1 Corinthians 2:9](#).
 51. [Doctrine and Covenants 130:2](#).
 52. See [Alma 7:11–12](#).
 53. See [2 Nephi 31:20](#); [Articles of Faith 1:4](#).
 54. [Doctrine and Covenants 76:69](#).
 55. See “Mormons in America—Certain in Their Beliefs, Uncertain of Their Place in Society,” Pew Research, Religion and Public Life Project, Jan. 12, 2012, available at pewforum.org.
 56. [Moroni 10:32–33](#); Bible Dictionary, “[Grace](#).” The Church acknowledges the contribution of scholars to the content presented in this article; their work is used with permission.

Spiritual Impression, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the lesson:

Lesson #4

The Family and the Great Plan of Happiness

Moses 1:27-39

27 And it came to pass, as the voice was still speaking, Moses cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it; and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the Spirit of God.

28 And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof, and there was not a soul which he beheld not; and he discerned them by the Spirit of God; and their numbers were great, even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore.

29 And he beheld many lands; and each land was called earth, and there were inhabitants on the face thereof.

30 And it came to pass that Moses called upon God, saying: Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so, and by what thou madest them?

31 And behold, the glory of the Lord was upon Moses, so that Moses stood in the presence of God, and talked with him face to face. And the Lord God said unto Moses: For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom and it remaineth in me.

32 And by the word of my power, have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth.

33 And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten.

34 And the first man of all men have I called Adam, which is many.

35 But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you. For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them.

36 And it came to pass that Moses spake unto the Lord, saying: Be merciful unto thy servant, O God, and tell me concerning this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, and also the heavens, and then thy servant will be content.

37 And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying: The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine.

38 And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words.

39 For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

Moses 3:16-17

16 And I, the Lord God, commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat,

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Moses 5:6-12

6 And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

7 And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth.

8 Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore.

9 And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will.

10 And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

11 And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.

12 And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters.

2 Nephi 2:19-25

19 And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the Garden of Eden, to till the earth.

20 And they have brought forth children; yea, even the family of all the earth.

21 And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents.

22 And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.

23 And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin.

24 But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

25 Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.

2 Nephi 9:6-12

6 For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of

transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord.

7 Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.

8 O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more.

9 And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness.

10 O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit.

11 And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave.

12 And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the

other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel.

D&C 49:15-17

15 And again, verily I say unto you, that whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man.

16 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;

17 And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made.

Teaching the Doctrine of the Family **Julie B. Beck, *Ensign*, Mar. 2011**

Teaching the Doctrine of the Family

As I meet with young single adults around the world, I ask them, “Why does the First Presidency care so much about you and provide so many resources for you?” These are some of the answers I get: “We are future Church leaders.” “We need training so we can stay strong.” “Our testimonies are strengthened in our seminary and institute classes.” “We need to meet other great Latter-day Saint youth.” “We are the hope of the future.” I have rarely heard, “So I will someday be a better father or a better mother.” Their responses are generally about self, because this is the time of life they are in.

Nevertheless, parents, teachers, and leaders of youth need to teach the rising generation the doctrine of the family. It is essential to help them achieve eternal life (see Moses 1:39). They need to know that the theology of the family is based on the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement.

They need to understand the threats to the family so they will know what they are fighting against and can prepare. They need to understand clearly that the fulness of the gospel is realized in temple ordinances and covenants.

The Theology of the Family

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have a theology of the family that is based on the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement. The Creation of the earth provided a place where families could live. God created a man and a woman who were the two essential halves of a family. It was part of Heavenly Father's plan that Adam and Eve be sealed and form an eternal family.

The Fall provided a way for the family to grow. Adam and Eve were family leaders who chose to have a mortal experience. The Fall made it possible for them to have sons and daughters.

The Atonement allows for the family to be sealed together eternally. It allows for families to have eternal growth and perfection. The plan of happiness, also called the plan of salvation, was a plan created for families. The rising generation need to understand that the main pillars of our theology are centered in the family.

When we speak of qualifying for the blessings of eternal life, we mean qualifying for the blessings of eternal families. This was Christ's doctrine, and it was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3:

“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.”

This scripture is talking about temple blessings—ordinances and covenants without which “the whole earth [is] utterly wasted.”

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” was written to reinforce that the family is central to the Creator's plan.¹ Without the family, there is no plan; there is no reason for mortal life.

Threats to the Family

In addition to understanding the theology of the family, we all need to understand the threats to the family. If we don't, we can't prepare for the battle. Evidence is all around us that the family is becoming less important. Marriage rates are declining, the age of marriage is rising, and divorce rates are rising. Out-of-wedlock births are growing. Abortion is rising and becoming increasingly legal. We see lower birth rates. We see unequal relationships between men and women, and we see cultures that still practice abuse within family relationships. Many times a career gains importance over the family.

Many of our youth are losing confidence in the institution of families. They're placing more and more value on education and less and less importance on forming an eternal family. Many don't see forming families as a faith-based work. For them, it's a selection process much like shopping. Many also distrust their own moral strength and the moral strength of their peers. Because temptations are so fierce, many are not sure they can be successful in keeping covenants.

Many youth also have insufficient and underdeveloped social skills, which are an impediment to forming eternal families. They are increasingly adept at talking to someone 50 miles (80 km) away and less able to carry on conversations with people in the same room. That makes it difficult for them to socialize with each other.

We also face the problem that we read about in Ephesians 6:12: “For we wrestle not against flesh

and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Public policies are being made every day that are antifamily, and the definition of family is changing legally around the world. Pornography is rampant. For those who create pornography, their new target audience is young women. Parents are being portrayed as inept and out of touch. Antifamily media messages are everywhere. Youth are being desensitized about the need to form eternal families.

We see how this can happen when we read the words of Korihor, an anti-Christ: “Thus he did preach unto them, leading away the hearts of many, causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness, yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms” (Alma 30:18). Satan knows that he will never have a body; he will never have a family. So he targets young women, who will create the bodies for the future generations.

Korihor was an anti-Christ. Anti-Christ is antifamily. Any doctrine or principle our youth hear from the world that is antifamily is also anti-Christ. It’s that clear. If our youth cease to believe in the righteous traditions of their fathers as did the people described in Mosiah 26, if our youth don’t understand their part in the plan, they could be led away.

Teaching the Rising Generation

What is it we hope this rising generation will understand and do because of what we teach them? The answers to that question as well as the key elements of the doctrine of the family are found in the family proclamation. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said that the proclamation was “a declaration and reaffirmation of standards, doctrines, and practices” that this Church has always had.²

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) said, “This 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 ... is the only means by which we can one day see the face of God and live.”³

The rising generation need to understand that the command to “multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28) remains in force. Bearing children is a faith-based work. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) said, “It is an act of extreme selfishness for a married couple to refuse to have children when they are able to do so.”⁴ Motherhood and fatherhood are eternal roles. Each carries the responsibility for either the male or the female half of the plan. Youth is the time to prepare for those eternal roles and responsibilities.

Parents, teachers, and leaders can help young people prepare for the blessings of Abraham. What are those blessings? Abraham tells us in Abraham 1:2. He says he wanted “the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer; ... to be one who possessed great knowledge, ... to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers.”

Where are these blessings Abraham received? They come only to those who have a temple sealing and marriage. A man cannot become a “father of many nations” without being sealed to his wife. Likewise, Abraham could not hold the right belonging to the fathers without a wife who had the right belonging to the mothers.

The stories of Abraham and Sarah and of Isaac and Rebekah are found in Genesis. Abraham and Sarah had only one son, Isaac. If Abraham was to be the “father of many nations,” how important was Isaac’s wife, Rebekah? She was so important that he sent his servant hundreds of miles to find the right young woman—one who would keep

her covenants, one who understood what it meant to form an eternal family.

In Genesis 24:60, Rebekah is blessed to be “the mother of thousands of millions.” Where do we find those kinds of blessings? They are received in the temple.

The story of Isaac and Rebekah is an example of the man, who has the keys, and the woman, who has the influence, working together to ensure the fulfillment of their blessings. Their story is pivotal. The blessings of the house of Israel depended on a man and a woman who understood their place in the plan and their responsibilities to form an eternal family, to bear children, and to teach them.

In our day we have the responsibility to send “Isaac” and “Rebekah” forth from our homes and classrooms. Every young man and young woman should understand his or her role in this great partnership—that they are each an “Isaac” or a “Rebekah.” Then they will know with clarity what they have to do.

Live the Hope of Eternal Life

Parents, teachers, and leaders: live in your homes, in your families, in your marriages so that youth will develop hope for eternal life from watching you. Live and teach with so much clarity that what you teach will cut through all the noise youth are hearing and so that it will pierce their hearts and touch them.

Live in your home so that you’re brilliant in the basics, so that you’re intentional about your roles and responsibilities in the family. Think in terms of precision not perfection. If you have your goals and you are precise in how you go about them in your homes, youth will learn from you. They will learn that you pray, study the scriptures together, have family home evening, make a priority of mealtimes, and speak respectfully of your marriage partner. Then from your example the rising generation will gain great hope.

This I Know

We are preparing our youth for the temple and for eternal families. Many threats are coming to them that can discourage them from forming an eternal family. Our role in this is to teach them so they don’t misunderstand. We must be very clear on key points of doctrine, which we find in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”

This generation will be called upon to defend the doctrine of the family as never before. If they don’t know it, they can’t defend it. They need to understand temples and priesthood.

President Kimball 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 moral society is going through. We are free to resist those moves which downplay the significance of the family and which play up the significance of selfish individualism. We know the family to be eternal.”⁵

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

that through His Atonement we have the promise of eternal life in families.

The Family Is Eternal, Elder Robert D. Hales

“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.”

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” in Dawn Hall Anderson, ed., *Clothed with Charity: Talks from the 1996 Women’s Conference* (1997), 134.

To Teachers, President J. Reuben Clark Jr.

“Your chief interest, your essential and all but sole duty, is to teach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as that has been revealed in these latter days. You are to teach this gospel using as your sources and authorities the standard works of the Church and the words of those whom God has called to lead His people in these last days.”

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. (1871–1961), *First Counselor in the First Presidency, The Charted Course of the Church in Education*, rev. ed. (1994), 10; see also *Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook for CES Teachers and Leaders* (2001), 4.

Using “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”

- Hang a copy of the proclamation in your home or classroom.
- Encourage youth to keep a copy of the proclamation in their scriptures.
- Link key statements in the proclamation to lessons taught from the scriptures.

- Study and refer to the proclamation in family home evening.

We have a theology of the family that is based on the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement.

We are preparing our youth for the temple and for eternal families.

Among the threats to the family is divorce, which is on the rise.

Parents, as well as leaders and teachers of youth, should teach the doctrine of the family to the rising generation as found in the scriptures and the family proclamation.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #5

The Conditions of Mortality

2 Nephi 2:27-29

27 Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

28 And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit;

29 And not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom.

Mosiah 3:19

19 For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.

Mosiah 16:3-6

3 For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them; yea, even that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil.

4 Thus all mankind were lost; and behold, they would have been endlessly lost were it not that God redeemed his people from their lost and fallen state.

5 But remember that he that persists in his own carnal nature, and goes on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, remaineth in his fallen state and the devil hath all power over him. Therefore he is as though there was no redemption made, being an enemy to God; and also is the devil an enemy to God.

6 And now if Christ had not come into the world, speaking of things to come as though they had already come, there could have been no redemption.

Moses 6:49

49 Behold Satan hath come among the children of men, and tempteth them to worship him; and men have become carnal, sensual, and devilish, and are shut out from the presence of God.

Moses 6:53-55

53 And our father Adam spake unto the Lord, and said: Why is it that men must repent and be baptized in water? And the Lord said unto Adam: Behold I have forgiven thee thy transgression in the Garden of Eden.

54 Hence came the saying abroad among the people, that the Son of God hath atoned for original guilt, wherein the sins of the parents cannot be answered upon the heads of the children, for they are whole from the foundation of the world.

55 And the Lord spake unto Adam, saying: Inasmuch as thy children are conceived in sin, even so when they begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good.

Abraham 3:25

25 And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality

David A. Bednar, *Ensign*, April 2012

The grand objective of the Savior’s gospel was summarized succinctly by President David O. McKay (1873–1970): “The purpose of the gospel is ... to make bad men good and good men better, and to change human nature.”¹ Thus, the journey of mortality is to progress from bad to good to better and to experience the mighty change of heart—to have our fallen natures changed (see Mosiah 5:2).

The Book of Mormon is our handbook of instructions as we travel the pathway from bad to good to better and strive to have our hearts changed. King Benjamin teaches about the journey of mortality and the role of the Atonement in navigating successfully that journey: “For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and *putteth off the natural man*

and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (Mosiah 3:19; emphasis added).

I draw your attention to two specific phrases. First—“*putteth off the natural man.*” The journey from bad to good is the process of putting off the natural man or the natural woman in each of us. In mortality we all are tempted by the flesh. The very elements out of which our bodies were created are by nature fallen and ever subject to the pull of sin, corruption, and death. But we can increase our capacity to overcome the desires of the flesh and temptations “through the atonement of Christ.” When we make mistakes, as we transgress and sin, we can repent and become clean through the redeeming power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Second—“*becometh a saint.*” This phrase describes the continuation and second phase of life’s journey to make “good men better” or, in other words, to become more like a saint. This second part of the journey, this process of going from good to better, is a topic about which we do not study or teach frequently enough nor understand adequately.

I suspect that many Church members are much more familiar with the nature of the redeeming and cleansing power of the Atonement than they are with the strengthening and enabling power. It is one thing to know that Jesus Christ came to earth to *die* for us—that is fundamental and foundational to the doctrine of Christ. But we also need to appreciate that the Lord desires, through His Atonement and by the power of the Holy Ghost, to *live* in us—not only to direct us but also to empower us.

Most of us know that when we do wrong things, we need help to overcome the effects of sin in our lives. The Savior has paid the price and made it possible for us to become clean through His redeeming power. Most of us clearly understand that the Atonement is for sinners. I am not so sure, however, that we know and understand that the Atonement is also for saints—for good men and women who are obedient, worthy, and

conscientious and who are striving to become better and serve more faithfully. We may mistakenly believe we must make the journey from good to better and become a saint all by ourselves, through sheer grit, willpower, and discipline, and with our obviously limited capacities.

The gospel of the Savior is not simply about avoiding bad in our lives; it also is essentially about doing and becoming good. And the Atonement provides help for us to overcome and avoid bad and to do and become good. Help from the Savior is available for the entire journey of mortality—from bad to good to better and to change our very nature.

I am not suggesting that the redeeming and enabling powers of the Atonement are separate and discrete. Rather, these two dimensions of the Atonement are connected and complementary; they *both* need to be operational during all phases of the journey of life. And it is eternally important for all of us to recognize that both of these essential elements of the journey of mortality—both putting off the natural man and becoming a saint, both overcoming bad and becoming good—are accomplished through the power of the Atonement. Individual willpower, personal determination and motivation, effective planning and goal setting are necessary but ultimately insufficient for us to triumphantly complete this mortal journey. Truly, we must come to rely upon “the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8).

Grace and the Enabling Power of the Atonement

In the Bible Dictionary we learn that the word *grace* frequently is used in the scriptures to connote enabling power:

“[*Grace* is] a word that occurs frequently in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul. The main idea of the word is *divine means of help or strength*, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ.

“It is through the grace of the Lord Jesus, made possible by his atoning sacrifice, that mankind will be raised in immortality, every person receiving his body from the grave in a condition of everlasting life. *It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals*, through faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, *receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power* that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts.”²

Grace is the divine assistance or heavenly help each of us desperately needs to qualify for the celestial kingdom. Thus, the enabling power of the Atonement strengthens us to do and be good and to serve beyond our own individual desire and natural capacity.

In my personal scripture study, I often insert the term “enabling power” whenever I encounter the word *grace*. Consider, for example, this verse with which we are all familiar: “We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). I believe we can learn much about this vital aspect of the Atonement if we will insert “enabling and strengthening power” each time we find the word *grace* in the scriptures.

Illustrations and Implications

The journey of mortality is to go from bad to good to better and to have our very natures changed. The Book of Mormon is replete with examples of disciples and prophets who knew, understood, and were transformed by the enabling power of the Atonement in making that journey. As we come to better understand this sacred power, our gospel perspective will be greatly enlarged and enriched. Such a perspective will change us in remarkable ways.

Nephi is an example of one who knew, understood, and relied upon the enabling power of the Savior. Recall that the sons of Lehi had returned to Jerusalem to enlist Ishmael and his

household in their cause. Laman and others in the party traveling with Nephi from Jerusalem back to the wilderness rebelled, and Nephi exhorted his brethren to have faith in the Lord. It was at this point in their journey that Nephi's brothers bound him with cords and planned his destruction. Please note Nephi's prayer: "O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren; yea, even *give me strength that I may burst these bands* with which I am bound" (1 Nephi 7:17; emphasis added).

Do you know what I likely would have prayed for if I had been tied up by my brothers? "Please get me out of this mess NOW!" It is especially interesting to me that Nephi did not pray to have his circumstances changed. Rather, he prayed for the strength to change his circumstances. And I believe he prayed in this manner precisely because he knew, understood, and had experienced the enabling power of the Atonement.

I do not think the bands with which Nephi was bound just magically fell from his hands and wrists. Rather, I suspect he was blessed with both persistence and personal strength beyond his natural capacity, that he then "in the strength of the Lord" (Mosiah 9:17) worked and twisted and tugged on the cords, and ultimately and literally was enabled to break the bands.

The implication of this episode for each of us is straightforward. As you and I come to understand and employ the enabling power of the Atonement in our personal lives, we will pray and seek for strength to change our circumstances rather than praying for our circumstances to be changed. We will become agents who act rather than objects that are acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:14).

Consider the example in the Book of Mormon as Alma and his people are persecuted by Amulon. The voice of the Lord came to these good people in their affliction and indicated:

"I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs. ...

"And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, *the Lord did strengthen them* that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord" (Mosiah 24:14–15; emphasis added).

What was changed in this episode? It was not the burden that changed; the challenges and difficulties of persecution were not immediately removed from the people. But Alma and his followers were strengthened, and their increased capacity and strength made the burdens they bore lighter. These good people were empowered through the Atonement to *act* as agents and *impact* their circumstances. And "in the strength of the Lord" Alma and his people were then directed to safety in the land of Zarahemla.

You legitimately may be wondering, "What makes the episode with Alma and his people an example of the enabling power of the Atonement?" The answer is found in a comparison of Mosiah 3:19 and Mosiah 24:15.

"And putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and *becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father*" (Mosiah 3:19; emphasis added).

As we progress in the journey of mortality from bad to good to better, as we put off the natural man or woman in each of us, and as we strive to become saints and have our very natures changed, then the attributes detailed in this verse increasingly should describe the type of person you and I are becoming. We will become more childlike, more submissive, more patient, and more willing to submit.

Now compare these characteristics in Mosiah 3:19 with those used to describe Alma and his people: “And they did *submit* cheerfully and *with patience to all the will of the Lord*” (Mosiah 24:15; emphasis added).

I find the parallels between the attributes described in these verses striking and an indication that Alma’s good people were becoming a better people through the enabling power of the Atonement of Christ the Lord.

Recall the story of Alma and Amulek contained in Alma 14. In this incident many faithful Saints had been put to death by fire, and these two servants of the Lord had been imprisoned and beaten. Consider this petition offered by Alma as he prayed in prison: “O Lord, *give us strength* according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance” (Alma 14:26; emphasis added).

Here again we see Alma’s understanding of and confidence in the enabling power of the Atonement reflected in his request. And note the result of this prayer:

“And they [Alma and Amulek] broke the cords with which they were bound; and when the people saw this, they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them. ...

“And Alma and Amulek came forth out of the prison, and they were not hurt; for *the Lord had granted unto them power*, according to their faith which was in Christ” (Alma 14:26, 28; emphasis added).

Once again the enabling power is evident as good people struggle against evil and strive to become even better and serve more effectively “in the strength of the Lord.”

Another example from the Book of Mormon is instructive. In Alma 31, Alma is directing a mission to reclaim the apostate Zoramites, who, after building their Rameumptom, offer a prescribed and prideful prayer.

Notice the plea for strength in Alma’s personal prayer: “O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me *that I may have strength*, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people” (Alma 31:31; emphasis added).

Alma also prays that his missionary companions will receive a similar blessing: “Wilt thou grant unto them *that they may have strength*, that they may bear their afflictions which shall come upon them because of the iniquities of this people” (Alma 31:33; emphasis added).

Alma did not pray to have his afflictions removed. He knew he was an agent of the Lord, and he prayed for the power to act and affect his situation.

The key point of this example is contained in the final verse of Alma 31: “[The Lord] gave them strength, that they should suffer no manner of afflictions, *save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ*. Now this was according to the prayer of Alma; and this because he prayed in faith” (verse 38; emphasis added).

The afflictions were not removed. But Alma and his companions were strengthened and blessed through the enabling power of the Atonement to “suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ.” What a marvelous blessing. And what a lesson each of us should learn.

Examples of the enabling power are not found only in the scriptures. Daniel W. Jones was born in 1830 in Missouri, and he joined the Church in California in 1851. In 1856 he participated in the rescue of handcart companies that were stranded in Wyoming by severe snowstorms. After the rescue party had found the suffering Saints, provided what immediate comfort they could, and made arrangements for the sick and the feeble to be transported to Salt Lake City, Daniel and several other young men volunteered to remain with and safeguard the company’s possessions. The food and supplies left with

Daniel and his colleagues were meager and rapidly expended. The following quote from Daniel Jones's personal journal describes the events that followed.

"Game soon became so scarce that we could kill nothing. We ate all the poor meat; one would get hungry eating it. Finally that was all gone, nothing now but hides were left. We made a trial of them. A lot was cooked and eaten without any seasoning and it made the whole company sick. ...

"Things looked dark, for nothing remained but the poor raw hides taken from starved cattle. We asked the Lord to direct us what to do. The brethren did not murmur, but felt to trust in God. ... Finally I was impressed how to fix the stuff and gave the company advice, telling them how to cook it; for them to scorch and scrape the hair off; this had a tendency to kill and purify the bad taste that scalding gave it. After scraping, boil one hour in plenty of water, throwing the water away which had extracted all the glue, then wash and scrape the hide thoroughly, washing in cold water, then boil to a jelly and let it get cold, and then eat with a little sugar sprinkled on it. This was considerable trouble, but we had little else to do and it was better than starving.

"We asked the Lord to bless our stomachs and *adapt them to this food*. ... On eating now all seemed to relish the feast. We were three days without eating before this second attempt was made. We enjoyed this sumptuous fare for about six weeks."³

In those circumstances I probably would have prayed for something else to eat: "Heavenly Father, please send me a quail or a buffalo." It likely would not have occurred to me to pray that my stomach would be strengthened and adapted to the food we had. What did Daniel W. Jones know? He knew about the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. He did not pray that his circumstances would be changed. He prayed that he would be strengthened to deal with his circumstances. Just as Alma and his people, Amulek, and Nephi were strengthened, Daniel W.

Jones had the spiritual insight to know what to ask for in that prayer.

The enabling power of the Atonement of Christ strengthens us to do things we could never do on our own. Sometimes I wonder if in our latter-day world of ease—in our world of microwave ovens and cell phones and air-conditioned cars and comfortable homes—we ever learn to acknowledge our daily dependence upon the enabling power of the Atonement.

Sister Bednar is a remarkably faithful and competent woman, and I have learned important lessons about the strengthening power from her quiet example. I watched her persevere through intense and continuous morning sickness—literally sick all day every day for eight months—during each of her three pregnancies. Together we prayed that she would be blessed, but that challenge was never removed. Instead, she was enabled to do physically what she could not do in her own power. Over the years I have also watched how she has been magnified to handle the mocking and scorn that come from a secular society when a Latter-day Saint woman heeds prophetic counsel and makes the family and the nurturing of children her highest priorities. I thank and pay tribute to Susan for helping me to learn such invaluable lessons.

The Savior Knows and Understands

In Alma chapter 7 we learn how and why the Savior is able to provide the enabling power:

"He shall go forth, suffering *pains* and *afflictions* and *temptations* of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the *pains* and the *sicknesses* of his people.

"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their *infirmities*, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh

how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11–12; emphasis added).

The Savior has suffered not just for our iniquities but also for the inequality, the unfairness, the pain, the anguish, and the emotional distresses that so frequently beset us. There is no physical pain, no anguish of soul, no suffering of spirit, no infirmity or weakness that you or I ever experience during our mortal journey that the Savior did not experience first. You and I in a moment of weakness may cry out, “No one understands. No one knows.” No human being, perhaps, knows. But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He felt and bore our burdens before we ever did. And because He paid the ultimate price and bore that burden, He has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy in so many phases of our life. He can reach out, touch, succor—literally run to us—and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which we could never do through relying upon only our own power.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

I declare my witness of and appreciation for the infinite and eternal sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know the Savior lives. I have experienced both His redeeming power and His enabling power, and I testify that these powers are real and available to each of us. Indeed, “in the strength of the Lord” we can do and overcome all things as we press forward on our journey of mortality.

Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:

Lesson #6

The Family Is Central to Heavenly Father's Plan

D&C 93:39-50

39 And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.

40 But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.

41 But verily I say unto you, my servant Frederick G. Williams, you have continued under this condemnation;

42 You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your affliction.

43 And now a commandment I give unto you—if you will be delivered you shall set in order your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house.

44 Verily, I say unto my servant Sidney Rigdon, that in some things he hath not kept the commandments concerning his children; therefore, first set in order thy house.

45 Verily, I say unto my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., or in other words, I will call you friends, for you are my friends, and ye shall have an inheritance with me—

46 I called you servants for the world's sake, and ye are their servants for my sake—

47 And now, verily I say unto Joseph Smith, Jun.—You have not kept the commandments, and must needs stand rebuked before the Lord;

48 Your family must needs repent and forsake some things, and give more earnest heed unto your sayings, or be removed out of their place.

49 What I say unto one I say unto all; pray always lest that wicked one have power in you, and remove you out of your place.

50 My servant Newel K. Whitney also, a bishop of my church, hath need to be chastened, and set in order his family, and see that they are more diligent and concerned at home, and pray always, or they shall be removed out of their place.

The Eternal Family

Robert D. Hales, *Ensign*, Nov. 1996

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

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

Proclamation to the World,” Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With the restoration of these keys and priesthood authority comes the opportunity for all who are worthy to receive the blessings of eternal families. “Yea the hearts of thousands and tens of

thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out, and the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house” (D&C 110:9).

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

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

As taught in this scripture, an eternal bond doesn’t just happen as a result of sealing covenants we make in the temple. How we conduct ourselves in this life will determine what we will be in all the eternities to come. To receive the blessings of the sealing that our Heavenly Father has given to us, we have to keep the commandments and conduct ourselves in such a way that our families will want to live with us in the eternities. The family relationships we have here on this earth are important, but they are much more important for their effect on our families for generations in mortality and throughout all eternity.

By divine commandment, spouses are required to love each other above all others. The Lord clearly

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

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

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

While our individual salvation is based on our individual obedience, it is equally important that we understand that we are each an important and integral part of a family and the highest blessings can be received only within an eternal family. When families are functioning as designed

by God, the relationships found therein are the most valued of mortality. The plan of the Father is that family love and companionship will continue into the eternities. Being one in a family carries a great responsibility of caring, loving, lifting, and strengthening each member of the family so that all can righteously endure to the end in mortality and dwell together throughout eternity. It is not enough just to save ourselves. It is equally important that parents, brothers, and sisters are saved in our families. If we return home alone to our Heavenly Father, we will be asked, “Where is the rest of the family?” This is why we teach that families are forever. The eternal nature of an individual becomes the eternal nature of the family.

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

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

Some of the greatest lessons of gospel principles about the eternal nature of the family are learned

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

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

My friend came to accept the phrase "Thy will be done" as he faced his own poignant trials and tribulations. As a faithful member of the Church, he was now confronted with some sobering concerns. Particularly touching were his questions, "Have I done all that I need to do to faithfully endure to the end?" "What will death be like?" "Will my family be prepared to stand in faith and be self-reliant when I am gone?"

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

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

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

The fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ brings great comfort in stressing times of mortality. It brings light where there is darkness and a calming influence where there is turmoil. It gives eternal hope where there is mortal despair. It is more than just beautiful doctrine. It is a reality in our lives that if we can be obedient and obtain the eternal rewards that God grants us, if we will draw nigh unto Him and embrace the eternal doctrine, we will be blessed.

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

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

The knowledge and understanding of the doctrine that God lives and Jesus is the Christ and that we have an opportunity to be resurrected and live in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, makes it possible to endure otherwise tragic events. This doctrine brings a brightness of hope into an otherwise dark and dreary world. It

answers the simple questions of where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. These are truths that must be taught and practiced in our homes.

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

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #7

Marriage between a Man and a Woman is Ordained of God

Mormon 9:9

9 For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?

D&C 49:15-17

5 And again, verily I say unto you, that whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man.

16 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;

17 And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made.

Moses 3:18-25

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Moses 5:1-16

1 And it came to pass that after I, the Lord God, had driven them out, that Adam began to till the earth, and to have dominion over all the beasts of the field, and to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow, as I the Lord had commanded him. And Eve, also, his wife, did labor with him.

2 And Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth.

3 And from that time forth, the sons and daughters of Adam began to divide two and two in the land, and to till the land, and to tend flocks, and they also begat sons and daughters.

4 And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence.

5 And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

6 And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

7 And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth.

8 Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore.

9 And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will.

10 And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

11 And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.

12 And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters.

13 And Satan came among them, saying: I am also a son of God; and he commanded them, saying: Believe it not; and they believed it not,

and they loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish.

14 And the Lord God called upon men by the Holy Ghost everywhere and commanded them that they should repent;

15 And as many as believed in the Son, and repented of their sins, should be saved; and as many as believed not and repented not, should be damned; and the words went forth out of the mouth of God in a firm decree; wherefore they must be fulfilled.

16 And Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God. And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain, and said: I have gotten a man from the Lord; wherefore he may not reject his words. But behold, Cain hearkened not, saying: Who is the Lord that I should know him?

The Divine Institution of Marriage **Mormonnewsroom.org/article/the-** **divine-institution-of-marriage.**

Introduction

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

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

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

The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be

reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity.^[1]

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

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

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

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

The Vital Importance of Marriage

Marriage is sacred and was ordained of God from before the foundation of the world. Jesus Christ affirmed the divine origins of marriage: “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and

mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”^[2]

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

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

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

It is true that some couples who marry will not have children, either by choice or because of infertility. The special status granted marriage is nevertheless closely linked to the inherent powers and responsibilities of procreation and to the innate differences between the genders. By

contrast, same-sex marriage is an institution no longer linked to gender—to the biological realities and complementary natures of male and female. Its effect is to decouple marriage from its central role in creating life, nurturing time-honored values, and fostering family bonds across generations.

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

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

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

Threats to Marriage and Family

Our modern era has seen traditional marriage and family—defined as a husband and wife with children in an intact marriage—come increasingly under assault, with deleterious consequences. In

2012, 40% of all births in the United States were to unwed mothers.^[8] More than 50% of births to mothers under age 30 were out of wedlock. Further, the marriage rate has been declining since the 1980s. These trends do not bode well for the development of the rising generation.

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

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

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

Unchanging Standards of Morality

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that God has established clear standards of morality for His children, who are accountable

before Him for their behavior. Such standards cannot be changed by the reasoning, emotions, personal interests, or opinions of mortal beings.^[10] Without the higher authority of God, as revealed in scripture and by His prophets, secular society will flounder and drift.

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

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

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

How Would Same-Sex Marriage Affect Religious Freedom?

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

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

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

Similar limitations on religious freedom have already become the social and legal reality in several European nations, and the European Parliament has recommended that laws protecting the status of same-sex couples be

made uniform across the European Union.^[17] Where same-sex marriage becomes a recognized civil right, it inevitably conflicts with the rights of believers, and religious freedom is diminished.

How Would Same-Sex Marriage Affect Society?

The possible diminishing of religious freedom is not the only societal implication of legalizing same-sex marriage. Perhaps the most common argument that proponents of same-sex marriage make is that it is essentially harmless and will not affect the institution of traditional heterosexual marriage in any way. “It won’t affect your marriage, so why should you care?” is the common refrain. While it may be true that allowing same-sex marriage will not immediately and directly affect existing marriages, the real question is how it will affect society as a whole over time, including the rising generation and future generations.

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

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

taking into account the long-term consequences for children.

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

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

Civility and Kindness

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

The Church has advocated for legal protection for same-sex couples regarding “hospitalization and medical care, fair housing and employment rights,

or probate rights, so long as these do not infringe on the integrity of the traditional family or the constitutional rights of churches.”^[23] In Salt Lake City, for example, the Church supported ordinances to protect gay residents from discrimination in housing and employment.^[24]

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

Conclusion

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

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

The final words in the Church’s proclamation on the family are an admonition to the world from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.”^[26]

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[11] Dallin H. Oaks, “Weightier Matters,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 17.

[12] John 8:11.

[13] See Douglas Laycock, Anthony R. Picarello Jr., and Robin F. Wilson, eds., *Same-Sex Marriage and Religious Liberty, Emerging Conflicts* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

[14] See uscbb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/fortnight-for-freedom/upload/Catholic-Adoption-Services.pdf

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[26] "The Family: A Proclamation to the World,"
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**Spiritual Impression, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #8

Gender and Eternal Identity

Matthew 7:12

12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

John 8:1-11

1 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.

2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

John 15:12

12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

D&C 76:24

24 That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God.

Moses 2:27

27 And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them.

2nd paragraph of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”, Ensign, 2010.

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.

**Helping Those Who Struggle with
Same-Gender Attraction.**
Jeffrey R. Holland, *Ensign*, Oct. 2007

A pleasant young man in his early 20s sat across from me. He had an engaging smile, although he didn't smile often during our talk. What drew me in was the pain in his eyes.

"I don't know if I should remain a member of the Church," he said. "I don't think I'm worthy."

"Why wouldn't you be worthy?" I asked.

"I'm gay."

I suppose he thought I would be startled. I wasn't. "And ... ?" I inquired.

A flicker of relief crossed his face as he sensed my continued interest. "I'm not attracted to women. I'm attracted to men. I've tried to ignore these feelings or change them, but ..."

He sighed. "Why am I this way? The feelings are very real."

I paused, then said, "I need a little more information before advising you. You see, same-gender attraction is not a sin, but acting on those feelings is—just as it would be with heterosexual feelings. Do you violate the law of chastity?"

He shook his head. "No, I don't."

This time I was relieved. "Thank you for wanting to deal with this," I said. "It takes courage to talk about it, and I honor you for keeping yourself clean.

"As for why you feel as you do, I can't answer that question. A number of factors may be involved, and they can be as different as people are different. Some things, including the cause of your feelings, we may never know in this life. But knowing why you feel as you do isn't as important as knowing you have not transgressed. If your life is in harmony with the commandments, then you

are worthy to serve in the Church, enjoy full fellowship with the members, attend the temple, and receive all the blessings of the Savior's Atonement."

He sat up a little straighter. I continued, "You serve yourself poorly when you identify yourself primarily by your sexual feelings. That isn't your only characteristic, so don't give it disproportionate attention. You are first and foremost a son of God, and He loves you.

"What's more, I love you. My Brethren among the General Authorities love you. I'm reminded of a comment President Boyd K. Packer made in speaking to those with same-gender attraction. 'We *do not* reject you,' he said. '... We *cannot* reject you, for you are the sons and daughters of God. We *will not* reject you, because we love you.'" ¹

We talked for another 30 minutes or so. Knowing I could not be a personal counselor to him, I directed him to his local priesthood leaders. Then we parted. I thought I detected a look of hope in his eyes that had not been there before. Although he yet faced challenges to work through—or simply endure—I had a feeling he would handle them well.

God Loveth His Children

When an angel asked Nephi a question about God, Nephi answered, "I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things" (1 Nephi 11:17). I too affirm that God loves *all* His children and acknowledge that many questions, including some related to same-gender attraction, must await a future answer, perhaps in the next life.

Unfortunately, some people believe they have all the answers now and declare their opinions far and wide. Fortunately, such people do not speak for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Although I believe members are eager to extend compassion to those different from themselves, it is human nature that when confronted with a situation we don't understand, we tend to withdraw. This is particularly true of same-gender attraction. We have so little reliable information about it that those wanting to help are left feeling a bit unsteady. Admitting my own inadequacy in this regard but wanting to assist, let me offer some suggestions to help those who have loved ones or friends who are attracted to the same gender.

Our Father's Plan of Happiness

First, let's be absolutely clear on what God wants for each of us. He wants us to have all of the blessings of eternal life. He wants us to become like Him. To help us do that, He has given us a plan. This plan is based on eternal truths and is not altered according to the social trends of the day.

At the heart of this plan is the begetting of children, one of the crucial reasons Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden (see 2 Nephi 2:19–25; Moses 5:10–12). They were commanded to “be fruitful, and multiply” (Moses 2:28), and they chose to keep that commandment. We are to follow them in marrying and providing physical bodies for Heavenly Father's spirit children. Obviously, a same-gender relationship is inconsistent with this plan.

For various reasons, marriage and children are not immediately available to all. Perhaps no offer of marriage is forthcoming. Perhaps even after marriage there is an inability to have children. Or perhaps there is no present attraction to the opposite gender. Whatever the reason, God's richest blessings will eventually be available to all of His children if they are clean and faithful.

Through the exercise of faith, individual effort, and reliance upon the power of the Atonement, some may overcome same-gender attraction in

mortality and marry. Others, however, may never be free of same-gender attraction in this life.

As fellow Church members, families, and friends, we need to recognize that those attracted to the same gender face some unique restrictions regarding expression of their feelings. While same-gender attraction is real, there must be no physical expression of this attraction. The desire for physical gratification does not authorize immorality by anyone. Such feelings can be powerful, but they are never so strong as to deprive anyone of the freedom to choose worthy conduct.

In saying this, let me make it clear that attractions alone, troublesome as they may be, do not make one unworthy. The First Presidency has stated, “There is a distinction between immoral thoughts and feelings and participating in either immoral heterosexual or any homosexual behavior.”² If you do not act on temptations, you have not transgressed.

The failure to see that distinction sometimes leads to despair. I ache for those who do not understand that every blessing offered by God is available to anyone who obeys the laws upon which those blessings are predicated (see D&C 130:20–21). No one who lives the gospel should despair. Hope and peace come from the Comforter, and the answer to despair is to invite the Holy Ghost into our lives.

Ways to Help

Let's assume you are the family member or friend of someone with same-gender attraction who comes to you for help. What do you say? What do you do?

I'd begin by recognizing the courage that brought your son, daughter, sibling, or friend to you. I'd recognize the trust that person has extended. Discussing the issue with someone of trust is a healthy first step to dealing with confusing

feelings, and it is imperative that these first steps be met with compassion.

Next, if you are a parent of one with same-gender attraction, don't assume you are the reason for those feelings. No one, including the one struggling, should try to shoulder blame. Nor should anyone place blame on another—including God. Walk by faith, and help your loved one deal the best he or she can with this challenge.

In doing so, recognize that marriage is not an all-purpose solution. Same-gender attractions run deep, and trying to force a heterosexual relationship is not likely to change them. We are all thrilled when some who struggle with these feelings are able to marry, raise children, and achieve family happiness. But other attempts have resulted in broken hearts and broken homes.

Above all, keep your lines of communication open. Open communication between parents and children is a clear expression of love, and pure love, generously expressed, can transform family ties. But love for a family member does not extend to condoning unrighteous behavior. Your children are welcome to stay in your home, of course, but you have every right to exclude from your dwelling any behavior that offends the Spirit of the Lord.

The Garden Principle

Next, consider a principle learned in gardening. Someone said that if we plant a garden with good seed, there will not be so much need of the hoe. Likewise, if we fill our lives with spiritual nourishment, we can more easily gain control over inclinations. This means creating a positive environment in our homes in which the Spirit is abundantly evident. A positive environment includes consistent private and public worship, prayer, fasting, scripture reading, service, and exposure to uplifting conversation, music, literature, and other media.

This same environment extends to experiences at church. Some with same-gender attractions have unresolved fears and are offended at church when no offense is intended. On the other hand, some members exclude from their circle of fellowship those who are different. When our actions or words discourage someone from taking full advantage of Church membership, we fail them—and the Lord. The Church is made stronger as we include every member and strengthen one another in service and love (see D&C 84:110).

You may feel prompted to encourage the one you are trying to help to visit with a priesthood leader who holds the keys of inspired counsel. Please do so, knowing that the First Presidency has asked Church leaders to discuss these matters confidentially and in a spirit of Christlike love.³

In the Lord's Hands

Not long ago I received a letter from a man in his early 30s who struggles with same-gender attraction. His struggle has not been easy, and he has not yet married. But, he wrote, "the Lord has helped me face my current circumstances, and I am content to do my best and leave my life in His hands."

I weep with admiration and respect at the faith and courage of such a man who is living with a challenge I have never faced. I love him and the thousands like him, male or female, who "fight the good fight" (1 Timothy 6:12). I commend his attitude to all who struggle with—or who are helping others who struggle with—same-gender attraction.

Additional Information

Some of the ideas and language in this article come from a booklet prepared by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for those attracted to the same gender. It is titled *God Loveth His Children* (item no. 04824). If the booklet is available in your language, you can obtain a copy from your local distribution center

or download it from www.lds.org/same-gender-attraction.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #9

The Divine Roles and Responsibilities of Men

Matthew 2:13-16

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

16 ¶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

Ephesians 5:23, 25

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

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

1 Timothy 5:8

8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

D&C 75:28

28 And again, verily I say unto you, that every man who is obliged to provide for his own family, let him provide, and he shall in nowise lose his crown; and let him labor in the church.

D&C 83:2, 4

2 Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken; and if they are not found transgressors they shall have fellowship in the church.

4 All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age.

D&C 121:36-46

36 That 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.

37 That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.

38 Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God.

39 We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they

suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.

40 Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

41 No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

42 By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

43 Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reprov'd, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

44 That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.

45 Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

46 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.

Let Us Be Men

D. Todd Christofferson, *Ensign*, Nov. 2006

Years ago, when my brothers and I were boys, our mother had radical cancer surgery. She came very close to death. Much of the tissue in her neck and shoulder had to be removed, and for a long time it was very painful for her to use her right arm.

One morning about a year after the surgery, my father took Mother to an appliance store and asked the manager to show her how to use a machine he had for ironing clothes. The machine was called an Ironrite. It was operated from a chair by pressing pedals with one's knees to lower a padded roller against a heated metal surface and turn the roller, feeding in shirts, pants, dresses, and other articles. You can see that this would make ironing (of which there was a great deal in our family of five boys) much easier, especially for a woman with limited use of her arm. Mother was shocked when Dad told the manager they would buy the machine and then paid cash for it. Despite my father's good income as a veterinarian, Mother's surgery and medications had left them in a difficult financial situation.

On the way home, my mother was upset: "How can we afford it? Where did the money come from? How will we get along now?" Finally Dad told her that he had gone without lunches for nearly a year to save enough money. "Now when you iron," he said, "you won't have to stop and go into the bedroom and cry until the pain in your arm stops." She didn't know he knew about that. I was not aware of my father's sacrifice and act of love for my mother at the time, but now that I know, I say to myself, "There is a man."

The prophet Lehi pled with his rebellious sons, saying, "Arise from the dust, my sons, *and be men*" (2 Nephi 1:21; emphasis added). By age, Laman and Lemuel were men, but in terms of character and spiritual maturity they were still as children. They murmured and complained if asked to do anything hard. They didn't accept anyone's authority to correct them. They didn't value spiritual things. They easily resorted to violence, and they were good at playing the victim.

We see some of the same attitudes today. Some act as if a man's highest goal should be his own pleasure. Permissive social mores have "let men off the hook" as it were, so that many think it

acceptable to father children out of wedlock and to cohabit rather than marry.¹ Dodging commitments is considered smart, but sacrificing for the good of others, naive. For some, a life of work and achievement is optional. A psychologist studying the growing phenomenon of what he calls “young men stuck in neutral” describes this scenario:

“Justin goes off to college for a year or two, wastes thousands of dollars of his parents’ money, then gets bored and comes home to take up residence in his old room, the same bedroom where he lived when he was in high school. Now he’s working 16 hours a week at Kinko’s or part time at Starbucks.

“His parents are pulling their hair out. ‘Justin, you’re 26 years old. You’re not in school. You don’t have a career. You don’t even have a girlfriend. What’s the plan? When are you going to get a life?’

“‘What’s the problem?’ Justin asks. ‘I haven’t gotten arrested for anything, I haven’t asked you guys for money. Why can’t you just chill?’”²

How’s that for ambition?

We who hold the priesthood of God cannot afford to drift. We have work to do (see Moroni 9:6). We must arise from the dust of self-indulgence and be men! It is a wonderful aspiration for a boy to become a man—strong and capable; someone who can build and create things, run things; someone who makes a difference in the world. It is a wonderful aspiration for those of us who are older to make the vision of true manhood a reality in our lives and be models for those who look to us for an example.

In large measure, true manhood is defined in our relationship to women. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have given us the ideal to pursue in these words:

“The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. ... By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families.”³

Over the years, I have visited members of the Church in many countries, and despite differences in circumstances and cultures, everywhere I have been impressed with the faith and capacity of our women, including some of the very young. So many of them possess a remarkable faith and goodness. They know the scriptures. They are poised and confident. I ask myself, Do we have men to match these women? Are our young men developing into worthy companions that such women can look up to and respect?

President Gordon B. Hinckley, speaking in this meeting in April 1998, gave specific counsel for young men:

“The girl you marry will take a terrible chance on you. ... [You] will largely determine the remainder of her life. ...

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

Integrity is fundamental to being men. Integrity means being truthful, but it also means accepting responsibility and honoring commitments and covenants. President N. Eldon Tanner, a former counselor in the First Presidency and a man of integrity, told of someone who sought his advice:

“A young man came to me not long ago and said, ‘I made an agreement with a man that requires

me to make certain payments each year. I am in arrears, and I can't make those payments, for if I do, it is going to cause me to lose my home. What shall I do?'

"I looked at him and said, 'Keep your agreement.'

"Even if it costs me my home?'

"I said, 'I am not talking about your home. I am talking about your agreement; and I think your wife would rather have a husband who would keep his word, meet his obligations, ... and have to rent a home than to have a home with a husband who will not keep his covenants and his pledges.'" ⁵

Good men sometimes make mistakes. A man of integrity will honestly face and correct his mistakes, and that is an example we can respect. Sometimes men try but fail. Not all worthy objectives are realized despite one's honest and best efforts. True manhood is not always measured by the fruits of one's labors but by the labors themselves—by one's striving. ⁶

Though he will make some sacrifices and deny himself some pleasures in the course of honoring his commitments, the true man leads a rewarding life. He gives much, but he receives more, and he lives content in the approval of his Heavenly Father. The life of true manhood is the good life.

Most importantly, when we consider the admonition to be men, we must think of Jesus Christ. When Pilate brought Jesus forth wearing a crown of thorns, he declared, "Behold the man!" (see John 19:4–5). Pilate may not have fully understood the significance of his own words, but the Lord indeed stood before the people then as He stands today—the highest ideal of manhood. Behold the man!

The Lord asked His disciples what manner of men they should be and then answered, "Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27; see also 3

Nephi 18:24). That is our ultimate quest. What did He do that we can emulate as men?

Jesus rejected temptation. When confronted by the great tempter himself, Jesus "[yielded] not to the temptation" (Mosiah 15:5). He countered with scripture: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Gospel commandments and standards are our protection also, and like the Savior, we may draw strength from the scriptures to resist temptation.

The Savior was obedient. He forsook completely the "natural man" (Mosiah 3:19) and yielded His will to the Father (see Mosiah 15:7). He was baptized to show "that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments" (2 Nephi 31:7).

Jesus "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). He employed the divine powers of the holy priesthood to bless those in need, "such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases" (Mosiah 3:5). Jesus told His Apostles: "Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:44–45). As His fellow servants, we may become great in His kingdom through love and service.

The Savior was fearless in opposing evil and error. "Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple ... and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matthew 21:12–13). He called upon all to repent (see Matthew 4:17) and be forgiven (see John 8:11; Alma 5:33). So might we stand firm in defending sacred things and in raising the warning voice.

He gave His life to redeem mankind. Surely we can accept responsibility for those He entrusts to our care.

Brethren, let us be men, even as He is. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #10

The Divine Roles and Responsibilities of Women

2 Timothy 1:5

5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

2 Timothy 3:14-15

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Alma 56:47-48

47 Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death; and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.

48 And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it.

Alma 57:21

21 Yea, and they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto

them; and I did remember the words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them.

D&C 25:1-3

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

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

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

D&C 25:10

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

D&C 25: 13-16

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

14 Continue in the spirit of meekness, and beware of pride. Let thy soul delight in thy husband, and the glory which shall come upon him.

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

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

Understand the Divine Roles of Women
Ensign, Feb. 2009

Understand the Divine Roles of Women

Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president: “I have a testimony gained from pondering and studying the scriptures of a plan of happiness given to us by our Father in Heaven. That plan has a part for His daughters. We have the female half to take care of, and if we don’t do our part, no one else is going to do it for us. The half of our Father’s plan that creates life, that nurtures souls, that promotes growth, that influences everything else was given to us. We can’t delegate it. We can’t pass it off to anyone. It’s ours. We can refuse it, we can deny it, but it’s still our part, and we’re accountable for it. There will come a day when we will all remember what we knew before we were born. We will remember that we fought in a great conflict for this privilege. How do we meet this responsibility? We daily put our energies into the work that is uniquely ours to do.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “The basic doctrinal purpose for the Creation of the earth is to provide for God’s spirit children the continuation of the process of exaltation and eternal life. ...

“... Although there is simply not a more significant contribution you can make to society, to the Church, or to the eternal destiny of our Father’s children than what you will do as a mother or father, motherhood and fatherhood are not the only measures of goodness or of one’s acceptance before the Lord. ...

“Every sister in this Church who has made covenants with the Lord has a divine mandate to help save souls, to lead the women of the world, to strengthen the homes of Zion, and to build the kingdom of God” (“Women of Righteousness,” Liahona, Dec. 2002, 36, 39; Ensign, Apr. 2002, 68, 70).

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “By divine design, men and women are intended to progress together toward perfection and a fulness of glory. Because of their distinctive temperaments and capacities, males and females each bring to a marriage relationship unique perspectives and experiences. The man and the woman contribute differently but equally to a oneness and a unity that can be achieved in no other way” (“Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan,” Liahona, June 2006, 51–52; Ensign, June 2006, 83–84).

Silvia H. Allred, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency: “The Lord has blessed women with divine attributes of love, compassion, kindness, and charity. Through our monthly visits as visiting teachers, we have the power to bless each sister as we extend our arms of love and kindness and give the gifts of compassion and charity. No matter what our individual circumstances are, we all have the opportunity to edify and nurture others” (“Feed My Sheep,” Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2007, 113).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985): “To be a righteous woman during the winding up scenes on this earth, before the second coming of our Savior, is an especially noble calling. The righteous woman’s strength and influence today can be tenfold what it might be in more tranquil times” (“Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” Ensign, Nov. 1978, 103).

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #11

Preparing for Eternal Marriage

Mark 5:35-36

35 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

D&C 6:22-23, 36

22 Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things.

23 Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?

36 Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

D&C 8:2-3

2 Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

3 Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground.

D&C 9:7-9

7 Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

8 But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

9 But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me.

D&C 11:12-14

12 And now, verily, verily, I say unto thee, put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit.

13 Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy;

14 And then shall ye know, or by this shall you know, all things whatsoever you desire of me, which are pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive.

D&C 88:40

40 For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy hath compassion on mercy and claimeth her own; justice continueth its course and claimeth its own; judgment goeth before the face of him who sitteth upon the throne and governeth and executeth all things.

The Reflection in the Water
Dieter F. Uchtdorf, (Church
Educational System devotional, Nov.
1, 2009), lds.org/media-library

Following is complete text of talk given by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, second counselor in the First Presidency, on November 1, 2009 as a CES fireside for young adults at Brigham Young University.

My dear brothers and sisters, if we take the two hymns that we have just heard — "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" and "Do What Is Right" — and make them the motto of our lives, we will be in good shape on our way back to our Heavenly Father. What a wonderful sight you are! In my mind's eye I can imagine many other beautiful faces like yours — youthful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in all the nations throughout the world. You may not all look exactly alike, but you have so much in common. I consider this a choice assignment, and I'm grateful to President Monson for providing me this opportunity to spend a few minutes with you.

The Ugly Duckling

One of the most beloved storytellers of all time was the Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen. In one of his stories, "The Ugly Duckling," a mother duck discovers that one of her newly hatched chicks is unusually large and very ugly. At first the mother wonders if she has hatched a turkey egg, but the ugly child can swim as well as her other children. And so she comes to the conclusion that the poor thing is simply abnormal and disfigured.

The other ducklings, however, cannot leave the ugly child alone. They punish him mercilessly, pecking at him and teasing him and making him miserable. Finally, the ugly duckling decides it would be better for everyone if he left his family, and he runs away. During the bitter cold of his first winter on his own, the poor duckling nearly freezes to death, but somehow he survives. In spite of his privations, he feels himself getting

stronger, and he loves spreading his wings and taking flight even though he's alone.

Then one day he sees flying overhead a flock of majestic birds, white as snow, graceful in their movements, with beautiful long necks and wide, elegant wings. Oh, what glorious and happy creatures! The ugly duckling longs to fly with them. He is afraid that they might kill him because he is so ugly. But then he decides that would be better than being pecked at by the other animals forever or freezing to death in the winter. And so he takes flight and follows them to a beautiful lake where they settle onto the water.

As he lands, the ugly duckling looks into the water and sees the reflection of a magnificent swan. Gradually, unable to believe it at first, the ugly duckling realizes that the reflection is his own! To his surprise the other swans welcome him, and they even agree that he is the most beautiful, most majestic of all the swans. At last he has discovered who he really is.

The Great Questions

Like this young swan, most of us have felt at one time or another that we don't quite fit in. Much of the confusion we experience in this life comes from simply not understanding who we are. Too many go about their lives thinking they are of little worth when, in reality, they are elegant and eternal creatures of infinite value with potential beyond imagination.

Discovering who we really are is part of this great adventure called life. Mankind's greatest minds have wrestled endlessly with these questions: Where did we come from? Why are we here? What happens after we die? And how does all this fit together — how does it make sense?

Once we begin to understand the answers to these questions — not with the mind only, but with the heart and the soul — we will begin to understand who we are, and we will feel like the wanderer who is finally finding home. We will feel

like the young swan who has discovered at last who he really is. Everything finally makes sense.

The challenge is that the answers to these questions are simply beyond man's earthly capacity to logically determine. Questions that reach into spiritual things require spiritual answers. Those who reject revelation and insist on tangible evidence can only speculate or deny that there is life before or after this mortal sphere. Consequently, they may never understand who they really are or what true purpose life has.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, however, we have been blessed with the answers to these questions, and we freely share them with all who will listen. We know them not because of someone's educated guess or because we found a scientific explanation. We have the answers because heavenly messengers revealed these mysteries to man. That same knowledge is available to anyone on this planet Earth who is honest in heart, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is no small thing. Throughout history, emperors and philosophers would have offered a king's ransom for what God has given freely in our time. Because He is merciful and loves His children, God has given again in these latter-days the truth about where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going.

My dear young friends, this knowledge allows you to see your own reflection in the water. It assures you that you are not ordinary, rejected, or ugly. You are something divine — more beautiful and glorious than you can possibly imagine. This knowledge changes everything. It changes your present. It can change your future. And it can change the world.

We are profoundly aware, my precious young friends in the Church, wherever you may be, that you face many challenges in your young lives. Through your leaders and contacts with you individually, I have learned about the scope of

your concerns. I've chosen from among the many questions I have received just a few that I think are among the harder and more troubling ones affecting you young Saints all around the globe. Today I hope to impress upon your mind and heart how a knowledge of who you really are can help you to successfully conquer the most difficult issues in life.

To Be or Not to Be

Here is the first question: "I'm unhappy and depressed. Sometimes it seems like the world would be a better place if I weren't in it. Why should I go on living?"

Allow me to be clear: severe depression and thoughts of suicide are not trivial matters and should be taken seriously. I urge those who suffer from depression or thoughts of suicide to seek help from trusted professionals and Church leaders. If you know someone who is thinking of suicide, be a true friend and make sure he or she gets help. Please know that we love you and want you to be successful and happy in life.

That being said, most people have felt sad or inadequate at one time or another. It's natural to have times of self-doubt or unhappiness. The question "Why should I go on living?" is simply another wording of the age-old phrase penned by William Shakespeare 400 years ago and uttered by millions of Hamlets the world over since that time: "To be, or not to be: that is the question." But Shakespeare was wrong — "To be, or not to be" is not the question at all. There are other options beyond that simple contradiction. For my taste, I'd have Hamlet turn to the audience and say: "Knowing that I am a child of God, what need I do and be to live up to this potential? That is the question." Now, I understand that such an edit would hopelessly ruin one of the greatest literary masterpieces of all time. Nevertheless, if I were writing a script for you, that is how I would word it.

Think of where you came from. You are sons and daughters of the greatest, most glorious being in

the universe. He loves you with an infinite love. He wants the best for you. Do you think our Father in Heaven wants you to feel depressed and sad? He wants no such thing. He has provided the commandments, which are the royal road to a life of purpose, peace, and joy. All we need to do is follow it. Knowing and living God's commandments really do lead to fulfillment and to joy.

Our destiny is greater than we can imagine. If only we understood who we are and what is in store for us, our hearts would overflow with such gratitude and happiness that it would enlighten even the darkest sorrows with the light and love of God, our Heavenly Father. The next time you feel unhappy, remember where you came from and where you are going. Rather than focus on things that dampen your thoughts with sorrow, choose to focus on those things that fill your soul with hope. You will realize that these things are always connected to serving God and our fellowmen. Remember that the Lord has given you His word in the scriptures. Pray earnestly to Him; talk with Him daily. Learn of Him, and walk in His way. Serve God and serve your fellowmen.

Remember that there is "a time to weep" but also "a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance." If your heart has been heavy for a while, perhaps it is time to allow the light of the Son of God into your heart. I plead with you — just look into the water and see your true reflection! Realize the purpose for which you were created! Lift your face toward the far horizon!

It is well for you to laugh! It is well for you to be happy! Lift up your voices and "praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving."

I cannot imagine a heaven filled only with somber beings who never speak up or who do not enjoy music and visiting with each other. That is not heaven for me. I am certain that you were not created to spend the hours and days of your lives isolated from each other in worry or despair. You were created to have joy, so let's celebrate the

merciful blessings of a joyful and loving Heavenly Father!

You don't need to wait for permission to fill your hearts with thanksgiving and happiness. You can do this nicely on your own. Get together as young people — in your wards or branches, but also with those in neighboring stakes and districts. Dance together, study the gospel together, work together, serve your fellowmen together — and have fun doing it. It is my earnest prayer that the knowledge of who you are and what you may become will fill your souls with the peaceable love of God and that this will ignite within you a happiness worthy of your true heritage, for in truth you are princes and princesses, kings and queens.

Will I Ever Find My Soul Mate?

A second question we hear from you young people is "I'm so lonely. Will I ever find my soul mate?" I have a number of things I want to say on this subject, but let's start with the concept of finding the one person you were meant to be with — the one person who is perfect for you.

There is an old story about a young woman on an archaeological excavation who discovers an ancient-looking lamp. When she rubs it, a genie appears, offering her one wish. She thinks for a moment and asks for world peace — that people would love each other and live in harmony forever.

The genie contemplates her request and finally says: "What you are asking for is impossible. The division among the peoples of the world is too deep and has existed for too long. Please ask for something else. Anything but that."

The young lady thinks again and says: "Somewhere out there is the one person I was meant to be with. I want to find him — someone who is handsome, thoughtful, and has a sense of humor; someone who will help around the house, loves kids, doesn't watch sports all the time, has a great job, and thinks first about my happiness;

someone who will go shopping with me and who can get along with my family."

The genie considers her request for a moment, sighs deeply, and then replies, "Let me see what I can do about world peace."

I know this may be a disappointment for some of you, but I don't believe there is only one right person for you. I think I fell in love with my wife, Harriet, from the first moment I saw her. Nevertheless, had she decided to marry someone else, I believe I would have met and fallen in love with someone else. I am eternally grateful that this didn't happen, but I don't believe she was my one chance at happiness in this life, nor was I hers.

Another error you might easily make in dating is expecting to find perfection in the person you are with. The truth is, the only perfect people you might know are those you don't know very well. Everyone has imperfections. Now, I'm not suggesting you lower your standards and marry someone with whom you can't be happy. But one of the things I've realized as I've matured in life is that if someone is willing to accept me — imperfect as I am — then I should be willing to be patient with others' imperfections as well. Since you won't find perfection in your partner, and your partner won't find it in you, your only chance at perfection is in creating perfection together.

There are those who do not marry because they feel a lack of "magic" in the relationship. By "magic" I assume they mean sparks of attraction. Falling in love is a wonderful feeling, and I would never counsel you to marry someone you do not love. Nevertheless — and here is another thing that is sometimes hard to accept — that magic sparkle needs continuous polishing. When the magic endures in a relationship, it's because the couple made it happen, not because it mystically appeared due to some cosmic force.

Frankly, it takes work. For any relationship to survive, both parties bring their own magic with them and use that to sustain their love. Although I

have said that I do not believe in a one-and-only soul mate for anyone, I do know this: once you commit to being married, your spouse becomes your soul mate, and it is your duty and responsibility to work every day to keep it that way. Once you have committed, the search for a soul mate is over. Our thoughts and actions turn from looking to creating.

But what about those who despair of ever finding an eternal companion? First, don't give up. Go to activities, meet people, and do all you can. I know that dating can be rough. Rejection is one of the most painful things we can experience. Trust me, I know how this feels. I fell in love with Harriet long before she fell in love with me.

But this didn't stop me — not at all. I found ways to be in the same place she was. When I was administering the sacrament at church, I arranged to pass it to her family. I was doing the best I could to impress her, but I think she found me a little immature. The sparks simply weren't there for her. I despaired of ever convincing her that I could be anything more than a friend.

I went away, joined the Air Force, and then traveled half a world away to attend pilot training in the United States. It wasn't until I returned to Germany having completed my training as a fighter pilot — years after I had first met her — that this beautiful young woman looked at me and said those magical words I had been longing to hear: "You have matured since the last time I saw you."

I moved quickly after that, and within a few months I married the woman I had loved for a long, long time.

So don't give up, brothers and sisters. Just because you have been rejected a time or two — or three or four, or a couple hundred times — don't despair. Brethren, the secret to finding the girl of your dreams is to get to know many of them and then, when you fall in love and it feels right, ask her to marry you. If she says no, you continue to search and to pray until finally you

will arrive with that young woman at the altar of the temple. Just don't give up.

Now, sisters, be gentle. It's all right if you turn down requests for dates or proposals for marriage. But please do it gently. And brethren, please start asking! There are too many of our young women who never go on dates. Don't suppose that certain girls would never go out with you. Sometimes they are wondering why no one asks them out. Just ask, and be prepared to move on if the answer is no.

One of the trends we see in some parts of the world is our young people only "hanging out" in large groups rather than dating. While there is nothing wrong with getting together often with others your own age, I don't know if you can really get to know individuals when you're always in a group. One of the things you need to learn is how to have a conversation with a member of the opposite sex. A great way to learn this is by being alone with someone — talking without a net, so to speak.

Dates don't have to be — and in most cases shouldn't be — expensive and over-planned affairs. When my wife and I moved from Germany to Salt Lake City, one of the things that most surprised us was the elaborate and sometimes stressful process young people had developed of asking for and accepting dates.

Relax. Find simple ways to be together. One of my favorite things to do when I was young and looking for a date was to walk a young lady home after a Church meeting. Remember, your goal should not be to have a video of your date get a million views on YouTube. The goal is to get to know one individual person and learn how to develop a meaningful relationship with the opposite sex.

Now, there are those among you fine young members of the Church who might never marry. Although they are worthy in every way, they may never find someone to whom they will be sealed in the temple of the Lord in this life. There is no

way for those who have not experienced this despair to truly understand the loneliness and pain they might feel. I know of many women who want more than anything else to be a wife and a mother, and they cannot understand why their prayers have never been answered. There are many single men who, for whatever reason, also find themselves alone.

First, let me tell you that your prayers are heard. Your Father in Heaven knows the desires of your heart. I cannot tell you why one individual's prayers are answered one way while someone else's are answered differently. But this I can tell you: the righteous desires of your hearts will be fulfilled.

Sometimes it can be difficult to see anything beyond the path immediately before us. We are impatient and do not want to wait for a future fulfillment of our greatest desires. Nevertheless, the brief span of this life is nothing in comparison with eternity. And if only we can hope and exercise faith and joyfully endure to the end — and I say joyfully endure to the end — there, in that great heavenly future, we will have the fulfillment of the righteous desires of our hearts and so very much more that we can scarcely comprehend now.

In the meantime, do not wait for someone else to make your life complete. Stop second-guessing yourself and wondering if you are defective. Instead, seek to reach your potential as a child of God. Seek learning. Become engaged in a meaningful career, and seek fulfillment in service to others. Use your time, your talents, and your resources to improve yourself and bless those around you. All of this is part of your preparation for having a family. Immerse yourself in your ward or branch and seek to magnify your callings, no matter what they may be.

The great purpose of this mortal existence is to learn to fully love our Heavenly Father and our neighbor as ourselves. If we do this with all our might, mind, and strength, our eternal destiny will be glorious and grand beyond our capacity to

imagine. Be faithful, and things will work out for you. That is His eternal promise to all who love and honor Him.

Can I Remain Faithful?

A third question young people have is "Can I remain faithful?" There are those who have doubts about God or the Church. Others give in to temptation that lures them away from the safety of the straight and narrow pathway of discipleship.

When I was a pilot, I often saw an interesting weather phenomenon as I flew between Europe and Africa. It is called the intertropical convergence zone — a band of thunderstorms that moves north and south across the equator, filling the horizon with billowing, menacing columns of clouds.

I could scarcely look at these clouds without being fascinated with their beauty and majesty. They towered in massive black formations, and within them lightning sparked with brilliant light from one end to the other in an indescribable fury of fire. What a glorious and fascinating sight!

But what do you think pilots do when they approach these storms? They avoid them — no matter how beautiful and intriguing they appear. As moisture rises in the clouds, it begins to freeze, forming hail the size of soccer balls that can puncture metal and destroy an aircraft. Severe turbulence and electric discharges can cripple the airplane and its systems.

Isn't the same principle true when you see things that could cause spiritual harm? Temptation wouldn't be temptation if it didn't appear attractive, fascinating, or fun. But, like the pilot approaching a storm, you need to learn to avoid it, no matter how beautiful or intriguing it may appear.

Because Heavenly Father loves His children, He has given us the commandments to keep us at a safe distance from those harmful storms. He does

not force any of His children to walk in His way. He allows and expects you to choose for yourselves. But know this: some choices lead to disaster. So, choose the right.

I add my witness to the chorus of warnings against the terrible problem of pornography. Steer clear of it. Stay away from it. The same words we used to train our pilots regarding thunderstorms I say to you regarding pornography: "Avoid, avoid, avoid!"

Don't assume that you can put the nose of the plane just a little bit inside the storm — do not flirt with pornography. Remember that often the most disgusting and destructive of things can appear attractive in the beginning. Steer clear of those things that can endanger you.

Is It True?

Now the next issue: What about doubts and questions? How do you find out that the gospel is true? Is it all right to have questions about the Church or its doctrine? My dear young friends, we are a question-asking people because we know that inquiry leads to truth. That is the way the Church got its start — from a young man who had questions. In fact, I'm not sure how one can discover truth without asking questions. In the scriptures you will rarely discover a revelation that didn't come in response to a question. Whenever a question arose and Joseph Smith wasn't sure of the answer, he approached the Lord, and the results are the wonderful revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. Often the knowledge Joseph received extended far beyond the original question. That is because not only can the Lord answer the questions we ask but, even more importantly, He can give us answers to questions we should have asked. Let us listen to those answers.

The missionary effort of the Church is founded upon honest investigators asking heartfelt questions. Inquiry is the birthplace of testimony. Some might feel embarrassed or unworthy because they have searching questions regarding

the gospel, but they needn't feel that way. Asking questions isn't a sign of weakness; it's a precursor of growth.

God commands us to seek answers to our questions and asks only that we seek "with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ." When we do so, the truth of all things can be manifested to us "by the power of the Holy Ghost."

Fear not; ask questions. Be curious, but doubt not! Always hold fast to faith and to the light you have already received. Because we see imperfectly in mortality, not everything is going to make sense right now. In fact, I should think that if everything did make sense to us, it would be evidence that it had all been made up by a mortal mind. Remember that God has said:

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. . . .

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Nevertheless, you know that one of the purposes of mortality is to become more like your Heavenly Father in your thoughts and in your ways. Viewed from this perspective, searching for answers to your questions can bring you closer to God, strengthening your testimony instead of shaking it. It's true that "faith is not . . . a perfect knowledge," but as you exercise your faith, applying gospel principles every day under any circumstances, you will taste the sweet fruits of the gospel, and by this fruit you will know of its truth.

You Are Eternal

There will always be voices telling you that you are foolish to believe that you are swans, insisting you are but ugly ducklings and that you can't expect to become anything else.

But you know better. Because of the revealed word of a merciful God, you have seen your true reflection in the water and you have felt the

eternal glory of that divine spirit within you. You are no ordinary beings, my beloved young friends all around the world. You are glorious and eternal.

No matter your circumstances or trials in life, I urge you to remember who you are, where you came from, and where you are going — for the answers to those questions will truly provide confidence and direction for your life.

Your Heavenly Father lives. He knows you. He speaks to you in these latter days through prophets and apostles. President Thomas S. Monson is the Lord's prophet on earth in our day. This Church is directed by the Savior Jesus Christ. I know this. He is at the head of this Church.

Today I may speak to you with imperfection — and with a German accent — but I promise you that the words you feel in your heart and in your mind and in your soul come to you through the eloquence, purity, and power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost you can know the truth of all things.

Brothers and sisters — my dear friends — I love you. I love you with all my heart. I am grateful for you. I am grateful for your goodness. As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, I bless you individually and collectively that you may learn to know who you really are and what you must do and be to live a happy and fulfilling life.

It is my prayer and blessing that when you look at your reflection, you will be able to see beyond imperfections and self-doubts and recognize who you truly are: glorious sons and daughters of the Almighty God. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #12

Temple Ordinances and Covenants

Exodus 19:3-6

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

D&C 84:19-21

19 And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

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

21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

D&C 97:10-17

10 Verily I say unto you, that it is my will that a house should be built unto me in the land of Zion, like unto the pattern which I have given you.

11 Yea, let it be built speedily, by the tithing of my people.

12 Behold, this is the tithing and the sacrifice which I, the Lord, require at their hands, that there may be a house built unto me for the salvation of Zion—

13 For a place of thanksgiving for all saints, and for a place of instruction for all those who are called to the work of the ministry in all their several callings and offices;

14 That they may be perfected in the understanding of their ministry, in theory, in principle, and in doctrine, in all things pertaining to the kingdom of God on the earth, the keys of which kingdom have been conferred upon you.

15 And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it;

16 Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God.

17 But if it be defiled I will not come into it, and my glory shall not be there; for I will not come into unholy temples.

D&C 109:12-26

12 That thy glory may rest down upon thy people, and upon this thy house, which we now dedicate to thee, that it may be sanctified and consecrated to be holy, and that thy holy presence may be continually in this house;

13 And that all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord's house may feel thy power, and feel constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, and that it is thy house, a place of thy holiness.

14 And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house may be taught words of wisdom out of the best books, and that they may seek learning even by study, and also by faith, as thou hast said;

15 And that they may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing;

16 And that this house may be a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of glory and of God, even thy house;

17 That all the incomings of thy people, into this house, may be in the name of the Lord;

18 That all their outgoings from this house may be in the name of the Lord;

19 And that all their salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with holy hands, uplifted to the Most High;

20 And that no unclean thing shall be permitted to come into thy house to pollute it;

21 And when thy people transgress, any of them, they may speedily repent and return unto thee, and find favor in thy sight, and be restored to the blessings which thou hast ordained to be poured out upon those who shall reverence thee in thy house.

22 And we ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them;

23 And from this place they may bear exceedingly great and glorious tidings, in truth, unto the ends of the earth, that they may know that this is thy work, and that thou hast put forth thy hand, to fulfil that which thou hast spoken by

the mouths of the prophets, concerning the last days.

24 We ask thee, Holy Father, to establish the people that shall worship, and honorably hold a name and standing in this thy house, to all generations and for eternity;

25 That no weapon formed against them shall prosper; that he who diggeth a pit for them shall fall into the same himself;

26 That no combination of wickedness shall have power to rise up and prevail over thy people upon whom thy name shall be put in this house;

D&C 124:37-40, 55

37 And again, verily I say unto you, how shall your washings be acceptable unto me, except ye perform them in a house which you have built to my name?

38 For, for this cause I commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, and to build a house in the land of promise, that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before the world was.

39 Therefore, verily I say unto you, that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments, for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, honor, and endowment of all her municipals,

reordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name.

40 And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people;

55 And again, verily I say unto you, I command you again to build a house to my name, even in this place, that you may prove yourselves unto me that ye are faithful in all things whatsoever I command you, that I may bless you, and crown you with honor, immortality, and eternal life.

The Holy Temple

Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, Oct. 2010

In temples we can participate in the most exalted of the redeeming ordinances

There are many reasons one should want to come to the temple. Even its external appearance seems to hint of its deeply spiritual purposes. This is much more evident within its walls. Over the door to the temple appears the tribute “Holiness to the Lord.” When you enter any dedicated temple, you are in the house of the Lord.

In the temples, members of the Church who make themselves eligible can participate in the most exalted of the redeeming ordinances that have been revealed to mankind. There, in a sacred ceremony, an individual may be washed and anointed and instructed and endowed and sealed. And when we have received these blessings for ourselves, we may officiate for those who have died without having had the same opportunity. In the temples sacred ordinances are performed for the living and for the dead alike.

The ordinances and ceremonies of the temple are simple, beautiful, and sacred

A careful reading of the scriptures reveals that the Lord did not tell all things to all people. There were some qualifications set that were prerequisite to receiving sacred information. Temple ceremonies fall within this category.

We do not discuss the temple ordinances outside the temples. It was never intended that knowledge of these temple ceremonies would be limited to a select few who would be obliged to ensure that others never learn of them. It is quite the opposite, in fact. With great effort we urge every soul to qualify and prepare for the temple experience. Those who have been to the temple have been taught an ideal: Someday every living soul and every soul who has ever lived shall have the opportunity to hear the gospel and to accept or reject what the temple offers. If this opportunity is rejected, the rejection must be on the part of the individual.

The ordinances and ceremonies of the temple are simple. They are beautiful. They are sacred. They are kept confidential lest they be given to those who are unprepared. Curiosity is not a preparation. Deep interest itself is not a preparation. Preparation for the ordinances includes preliminary steps: faith, repentance, baptism, confirmation, worthiness, a maturity and dignity worthy of one who comes invited as a guest into the house of the Lord.

Those who are worthy may enter the temple

All who are worthy and qualify in every way may enter the temple, there to be introduced to the sacred rites and ordinances.

Once you have some feeling for the value of temple blessings and for the sacredness of the ordinances performed in the temple, you would be hesitant to question the high standards set by the Lord for entrance into the holy temple.

You must possess a current recommend to be admitted to the temple. This recommend must be signed by the proper officers of the Church. Only those who are worthy should go to the temple. Your local bishop or branch president has the responsibility of making inquiries into your personal worthiness before you receive your temple ordinances. This interview is of great importance, for it is an occasion to explore with an ordained servant of the Lord the pattern of

your life. If anything is amiss in your life, the bishop will be able to help you resolve it. Through this procedure, you can declare or can be helped to establish your worthiness to enter the temple with the Lord's approval.

The interview for a temple recommend is conducted privately between the bishop and the Church member concerned. Here the member is asked searching questions about his or her personal conduct, worthiness, and loyalty to the Church and its officers. The person must certify that he or she is morally clean and is keeping the Word of Wisdom, paying a full tithing, living in harmony with the teachings of the Church, and not maintaining any affiliation or sympathy with apostate groups. The bishop is instructed that confidentiality in handling these matters with each interviewee is of the utmost importance.

Acceptable answers to the bishop's questions will ordinarily establish the worthiness of an individual to receive a temple recommend. If an applicant is not keeping the commandments or there is something unsettled about his or her life that needs putting in order, it will be necessary to demonstrate true repentance before a temple recommend is issued.

After the bishop has conducted such an interview, the stake president likewise interviews you before you can receive your temple ordinances.

Teaching in the temple is symbolic

Before going to the temple for the first time, or even after many times, it may help you to realize that the teaching in the temples is done in symbolic fashion. The Lord, the Master Teacher, gave much of His instruction in this way.

The temple is a great school. It is a house of learning. In the temples the atmosphere is maintained so that it is ideal for instruction on matters that are deeply spiritual. The late Elder John A. Widtsoe of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was a distinguished university president and a world-renowned scholar. He had great

reverence for temple work and said on one occasion:

"The temple ordinances encompass the whole plan of salvation, as taught from time to time by the leaders of the Church, and elucidate matters difficult of understanding. There is no warping or twisting in fitting the temple teachings into the great scheme of salvation. The philosophical completeness of the endowment is one of the great arguments for the veracity of the temple ordinances. Moreover, this completeness of survey and expounding of the Gospel plan, makes temple worship one of the most effective methods of refreshing the memory concerning the whole structure of the Gospel" ("Temple Worship," Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine, Apr. 1921, 58).

If you will go to the temple and remember that the teaching is symbolic, you will never go in the proper spirit without coming away with your vision extended, feeling a little more exalted, with your knowledge increased as to things that are spiritual. The teaching plan is superb. It is inspired. The Lord Himself, the Master Teacher, taught His disciples constantly in parables—a verbal way to represent symbolically things that might otherwise be difficult to understand.

The temple itself becomes a symbol. If you have seen one of the temples at night, fully lighted, you know what an impressive sight that can be. The house of the Lord, bathed in light, standing out in the darkness, becomes symbolic of the power and the inspiration of the gospel of Jesus Christ standing as a beacon in a world that sinks ever further into spiritual darkness.

Upon entering the temple, you exchange your street clothing for the white clothing of the temple. This change of clothing takes place in the dressing room, where each individual is provided with a locker and a dressing space that is completely private. In the temple the ideal of modesty is carefully maintained. As you put your clothing in the locker, you leave your cares and concerns and distractions there with them. You

step out of this private little dressing area dressed in white, and you feel a oneness and a sense of equality, for all around you are similarly dressed.

Temple marriage is the ultimate ordinance of the temple

Those of you who look forward to a temple marriage may want to know what will occur. We do not quote the words of the sealing (marriage) ordinance outside of the temple, but we may describe the sealing room as being beautiful in its appointment, quiet and serene in spirit, and hallowed by the sacred work that is performed there.

Before the couple comes to the altar for the sealing ordinance, it is the privilege of the officiator to extend, and of the young couple to receive, some counsel. These are among the thoughts that a young couple might hear on this occasion.

“Today is your wedding day. You are caught up in the emotion of your marriage. Temples were built as a sanctuary for such ordinances as this. We are not in the world. The things of the world do not apply here and should have no influence upon what we do here. We have come out of the world into the temple of the Lord. This becomes the most important day of your lives.

“You were born, invited to earth, by parents who prepared a mortal tabernacle for your spirit to inhabit. Each of you has been baptized. Baptism, a sacred ordinance, is symbolic of a cleansing, symbolic of death and resurrection, symbolic of coming forward in a newness of life. It contemplates repentance and a remission of sins. The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is a renewal of the covenant of baptism, and we can, if we live for it, retain a remission of our sins.

“You, the groom, were ordained to the priesthood. You had first conferred upon you the Aaronic Priesthood and probably have progressed through all the offices thereof—deacon, teacher, and priest. Then the day came when you were

found worthy to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. That priesthood, the higher priesthood, is defined as the priesthood after the holiest order of God, or the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God (see Alma 13:18; Helaman 8:18; Doctrine and Covenants 107:2–4). You were given an office in the priesthood. You are now an elder.

“Each of you has received your endowment. In that endowment you received an investment of eternal potential. But all of these things, in one sense, were preliminary and preparatory to your coming to the altar to be sealed as husband and wife for time and for all eternity. You now become a family, free to act in the creation of life, to have the opportunity through devotion and sacrifice to bring children into the world and to raise them and foster them safely through their mortal existence; to see them come one day, as you have come, to participate in these sacred temple ordinances.

“You come willingly and have been judged to be worthy. To accept one another in the marriage covenant is a great responsibility, one that carries with it blessings without measure.”

The sealing power binds on earth and in heaven

If we would understand both the history and the doctrine of temple work, we must understand what the sealing power is. We must envision, at least to a degree, why the keys of authority to employ the sealing power are crucial.

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? ...

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:13, 16–19).

Peter was to hold the keys. Peter was to hold the sealing power, that authority which carries the power to bind or seal on earth or to loose on earth and it would be so in the heavens. Those keys belong to the President of the Church—to the prophet, seer, and revelator. That sacred sealing power is with the Church now. Nothing is regarded with more sacred contemplation by those who know the significance of this authority. Nothing is more closely held. There are relatively few men who have been delegated this sealing power upon the earth at any given time—in each temple are brethren who have been given the sealing power. No one can get it except from the prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said he was frequently asked the question “‘Can we not be saved without going through with all those ordinances, etc.?’ I would answer, No, not the fullness of salvation. Jesus said, ‘There are many mansions in my Father’s house, and I will go and prepare a place for you.’ [See John 14:2.] House here named should have been translated kingdom; and any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law, and the whole law too” (in History of the Church, 6:184).

Temple work is a source of spiritual power

Temples are the very center of the spiritual strength of the Church. We should expect that the adversary will try to interfere with us as a Church and with us individually as we seek to participate in this sacred and inspired work. Temple work brings so much resistance because it is the source

of so much spiritual power to the Latter-day Saints and to the entire Church.

At the Logan Utah Temple cornerstone dedication, President George Q. Cannon, then of the First Presidency, made this statement:

“Every foundation stone that is laid for a Temple, and every Temple completed according to the order the Lord has revealed for his holy Priesthood, lessens the power of Satan on the earth, and increases the power of God and Godliness, moves the heavens in mighty power in our behalf, invokes and calls down upon us the blessings of the Eternal Gods, and those who reside in their presence” (in “The Logan Temple,” *Millennial Star*, Nov. 12, 1877, 743).

When members of the Church are troubled or when crucial decisions weigh heavily upon their minds, it is a common thing for them to go to the temple. It is a good place to take our cares. In the temple we can receive spiritual perspective. There, during the time of the temple service, we are “out of the world.”

Sometimes our minds are so beset with problems and there are so many things clamoring for attention at once that we just cannot think clearly and see clearly. At the temple the dust of distraction seems to settle out, the fog and the haze seem to lift, and we can “see” things that we were not able to see before and find a way through our troubles that we had not previously known.

The Lord will bless us as we attend to the sacred ordinance work of the temples. Blessings there will not be limited to our temple service. We will be blessed in all of our affairs.

Our labors in the temple cover us with a shield and a protection

No work is more of a protection to this Church than temple work and the family history research that supports it. No work is more spiritually

refining. No work we do gives us more power. No work requires a higher standard of righteousness.

Our labors in the temple cover us with a shield and a protection, both individually and as a people.

So come to the temple—come and claim your blessings. It is a sacred work.

Adapted from Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple (booklet, 2002)

Only those who are worthy should go to the temple. Your local bishop or branch president has the responsibility of making inquiries into your personal worthiness before you receive your temple ordinances.

Preparation for the ordinances of the temple includes preliminary steps: faith, repentance, baptism, confirmation, worthiness, a maturity and dignity worthy of one who comes invited as a guest into the house of the Lord.

Before going to the temple for the first time, or even after many times, it may help you to realize that the teaching in the temples is done in symbolic fashion. The Lord, the Master Teacher, gave much of His instruction in this way. The house of the Lord, bathed in light, standing out in the darkness, becomes symbolic of the power and the inspiration of the gospel of Jesus Christ standing as a beacon in a world that sinks ever further into spiritual darkness.

If you will go to the temple and remember that the teaching is symbolic, you will never go in the proper spirit without coming away with your vision extended, feeling a little more exalted, with your knowledge increased as to things that are spiritual.

All of the ordinances of the gospel, in one sense, are preliminary to coming to the temple to be sealed as husband and wife for time and for all eternity.

No work is more of a protection to this Church than temple work and the family history research that supports it. No work is more spiritually refining. No work we do gives us more power. No work requires a higher standard of righteousness.

“Every foundation stone that is laid for a Temple, and every Temple completed according to the order the Lord has revealed for his holy Priesthood, lessens the power of Satan on the earth, and increases the power of God and Godliness.”—President George Q. Cannon

Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:

Lesson # 13

Improving Temple Worship

Psalm 24:3-5

3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

5 He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

John 2:13-16

13 ¶And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

3 Nephi 17:1-3

1 Behold, now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked round about again on the multitude, and he said unto them: Behold, my time is at hand.

2 I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time.

3 Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again.

D&C 109:8-22

8 Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God;

9 That your incomings may be in the name of the Lord, that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord, that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with uplifted hands unto the Most High—

10 And now, Holy Father, we ask thee to assist us, thy people, with thy grace, in calling our solemn assembly, that it may be done to thine honor and to thy divine acceptance;

11 And in a manner that we may be found worthy, in thy sight, to secure a fulfilment of the promises which thou hast made unto us, thy people, in the revelations given unto us;

12 That thy glory may rest down upon thy people, and upon this thy house, which we now dedicate to thee, that it may be sanctified and consecrated to be holy, and that thy holy presence may be continually in this house;

13 And that all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord's house may feel thy power, and feel constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, and that it is thy house, a place of thy holiness.

14 And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house may be taught words of wisdom out of the best books, and that

they may seek learning even by study, and also by faith, as thou hast said;

15 And that they may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing;

16 And that this house may be a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of glory and of God, even thy house;

17 That all the incomings of thy people, into this house, may be in the name of the Lord;

18 That all their outgoings from this house may be in the name of the Lord;

19 And that all their salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with holy hands, uplifted to the Most High;

20 And that no unclean thing shall be permitted to come into thy house to pollute it;

21 And when thy people transgress, any of them, they may speedily repent and return unto thee, and find favor in thy sight, and be restored to the blessings which thou hast ordained to be poured out upon those who shall reverence thee in thy house.

22 And we ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them;

Temple Worship: “The Source of Strength and Power in Times of Need,”

Richard G. Scott, *Ensign*, May 2009

Each member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is blessed to live in a time when the Lord has inspired His prophets to provide significantly increased accessibility to the holy temples. With careful planning and some sacrifice, the majority of the members of the Church can receive the ordinances of the temple for themselves and for their ancestors and be blessed by the covenants made therein.

Because I love you, I am going to speak to you heart to heart, without mincing words. I have seen that many times individuals have made great sacrifices to go to a distant temple. But when a temple is built close by, within a short time, many do not visit it regularly. I have a suggestion: When a temple is conveniently nearby, small things may interrupt your plans to go to the temple. Set specific goals, considering your circumstances, of when you can and will participate in temple ordinances. Then do not allow anything to interfere with that plan. This pattern will guarantee that those who live in the shadow of a temple will be as blessed as are those who plan far ahead and make a long trip to the temple.

Fourteen years ago I decided to attend the temple and complete an ordinance at least once a week. When I am traveling I make up the missed visits in order to achieve that objective. I have kept that resolve, and it has changed my life profoundly. I strive to participate in all the different ordinances available in the temple.

I encourage you to establish your own goal of how frequently you will avail yourself of the ordinances offered in our operating temples. What is there that is more important than attending and participating in the ordinances of the temple? What activity could have a greater impact and provide more joy and profound

happiness for a couple than worshipping together in the temple?

Now I share some additional suggestions of how to gain more benefit from temple attendance.

- Understand the doctrine related to temple ordinances, especially the significance of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. ¹
- While participating in temple ordinances, consider your relationship to Jesus Christ and His relationship to our Heavenly Father. This simple act will lead to greater understanding of the supernal nature of the temple ordinances.
- Always prayerfully express gratitude for the incomparable blessings that flow from temple ordinances. Live each day so as to give evidence to Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son of how very much those blessings mean to you.
- Schedule regular visits to the temple.
- Leave sufficient time to be unhurried within the temple walls.
- Rotate activities so that you can participate in all of the ordinances of the temple.
- Remove your watch when you enter a house of the Lord.
- Listen carefully to the presentation of each element of the ordinance with an open mind and heart.
- Be mindful of the individual for whom you are performing the vicarious ordinance. At times pray that he or she will recognize the vital importance of the ordinances and be worthy or prepare to be worthy to benefit from them.
- Recognize that much of the majesty of the sealing ordinance cannot be understood and remembered with one live experience. Substantial subsequent vicarious work permits

one to understand much more of what is communicated in the live ordinances.

- Realize that a sealing ordinance is not enduring until after it is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise. Both individuals must be worthy and want the sealing to be eternal.

If as a couple you have not yet been sealed in the temple, consider this scripture:

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

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

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

“He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase” (D&C 131:1–4).

Sometimes when I hear a choir during a temple dedicatory service, I experience a feeling so sublime that it elevates my heart and mind. I close my eyes, and more than once, in my mind, I have seen an inverted cone of individuals beginning at the temple and rising upward. I have felt that they represent many spirits waiting for the vicarious work to be done for them in that sanctuary, rejoicing because finally there is a place that can free them from the chains that hold them back in their eternal progress. In order to achieve this end, you will need to do the vicarious work. You will need to identify your ancestors. The new FamilySearch™ program makes the effort easier than before. It is necessary to identify those ancestors, qualify them, and come to the house of the Lord to perform the ordinances they are longing to receive. What a joy it is to be able to participate in the work of a temple!

I would like to relate the experience of an ancestor of my wife, Jeanene. Her name is Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich. Her commentary shows the

impact that the temple can have in our lives. When she was 31 years old, she received a calling from Brigham Young to work in the Nauvoo Temple, where all the ordinances possible were performed before the Saints had to abandon that temple. This is what she wrote:

“Many were the blessings we had received in the house of the Lord, which has caused us joy and comfort in the midst of all our sorrows and enabled us to have faith in God, knowing He would guide us and sustain us in the unknown journey that lay before us. For if it had not been for the faith and knowledge that was bestowed upon us in that temple by the influence and help of the Spirit of the Lord, our journey would have been like one taking a leap in the dark. To start out on such a journey in the winter as it were and in our state of poverty, it would seem like walking into the jaws of death. But we had faith in our Heavenly Father, and we put our trust in Him feeling that we were His chosen people and had embraced His gospel, and instead of sorrow, we felt to rejoice that the day of our deliverance had come.”²

Now I would like to speak of the special meaning the temple has for me. Part of this message is going to be sensitive, so I will appreciate your prayers as I give it so that I do not become too emotional.

Fourteen years ago the Lord took my wife beyond the veil. I love her with all my heart, but I have never complained because I know it was His will. I have never asked why but rather what is it that He wants me to learn from this experience. I believe that is a good way to face the unpleasant things in our lives, not complaining but thanking the Lord for the trust He places in us when He gives us the opportunity to overcome difficulties.

We had the blessing of having children. A daughter, the first child, continues to be an enormous blessing in our lives. A couple of years later a son we named Richard was born. A few years later a daughter was born. She died after living only a few minutes.

Our son, Richard, was born with a heart defect. We were told that unless that could be cured, there was little probability that he would live more than two or three years. This was so long ago that techniques now used to repair such defects were unknown. We had the blessing of having a place where doctors agreed to attempt to perform the needed surgery. The surgery had to be done while his little heart was beating.

The surgery was performed just six weeks after the birth and death of our baby daughter. When the operation finished, the principal surgeon came in and said it was a success. And we thought, “How wonderful! Our son will have a strong body, be able to run and walk and grow!” We expressed deep gratitude to the Lord. Then about 10 minutes later, the same doctor came in with an ashen face and told us, “Your son has died.” Apparently the shock of the operation was more than his little body could endure.

Later, during the night, I embraced my wife and said to her, “We do not need to worry, because our children were born in the covenant. We have the assurance that we will have them with us in the future. Now we have a reason to live extremely well. We have a son and a daughter who have qualified to go to the celestial kingdom because they died before the age of eight.” That knowledge has given us great comfort. We rejoice in the knowledge that all seven of our children are sealed to us for time and all eternity.

That trial has not been a problem for either of us because, when we live righteously and have received the ordinances of the temple, everything else is in the hands of the Lord. We can do the best we can, but the final outcome is up to Him. We should never complain, when we are living worthily, about what happens in our lives.

Fourteen years ago the Lord decided it was not necessary for my wife to live any longer on the earth, and He took her to the other side of the veil. I confess that there are times when it is difficult not to be able to turn and talk to her, but I do not complain. The Lord has allowed me, at

important moments in my life, to feel her influence through the veil.

What I am trying to teach is that when we keep the temple covenants we have made and when we live righteously in order to maintain the blessings promised by those ordinances, then come what may, we have no reason to worry or to feel despondent.

I know that I will have the privilege of being with that beautiful wife, whom I love with all my heart, and with those children who are with her on the other side of the veil because of the ordinances that are performed in the temple. What a blessing to have once again on the earth the sealing authority, not only for this mortal life but for the eternities. I am grateful that the Lord has restored His gospel in its fulness, including the ordinances that are required for us to be happy in the world and to live everlastingly happy lives in the hereafter.

This is the work of the Lord. Jesus Christ lives. This is His Church. I am a witness of Him and of His Atonement, which is the foundation that makes effective and lasting every ordinance performed in the temples. I so testify with every capacity I possess, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson # 14

Becoming Saviors on Mount Zion

Obadiah 1:21

21 And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

Malachi 4:5-6

5 ¶Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

D&C 110:13-16

13 After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

14 Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—

15 To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—

16 Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.

D&C 128:18

18 I might have rendered a plainer translation to this, but it is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands. It is sufficient to know, in this case, that the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other—and behold what is that subject? It is the baptism for the dead. For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect. Neither can they nor we be made perfect without those who have died in the gospel also; for it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times.

D&C 138:27-37, 58-59

27 But his ministry among those who were dead was limited to the brief time intervening between the crucifixion and his resurrection;

28 And I wondered at the words of Peter—wherein he said that the Son of God preached unto the spirits in prison, who sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah—and how it was possible for him to preach to those spirits and perform the necessary labor among them in so short a time.

29 And as I wondered, my eyes were opened, and my understanding quickened, and I perceived that the Lord went not in person among the wicked and the disobedient who had rejected the truth, to teach them;

30 But behold, from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead.

31 And the chosen messengers went forth to declare the acceptable day of the Lord and proclaim liberty to the captives who were bound, even unto all who would repent of their sins and receive the gospel.

32 Thus was the gospel preached to those who had died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets.

33 These were taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands,

34 And all other principles of the gospel that were necessary for them to know in order to qualify themselves that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

35 And so it was made known among the dead, both small and great, the unrighteous as well as the faithful, that redemption had been wrought through the sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross.

36 Thus was it made known that our Redeemer spent his time during his sojourn in the world of spirits, instructing and preparing the faithful spirits of the prophets who had testified of him in the flesh;

37 That they might carry the message of redemption unto all the dead, unto whom he could not go personally, because of their rebellion and transgression, that they through the ministration of his servants might also hear his words.

58 The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,

59 And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.

The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn **David A. Bednar, *Ensign*, Nov. 2011**

As we study, learn, and live the gospel of [Jesus Christ](#), sequence often is instructive. Consider, for example, the lessons we learn about spiritual priorities from the order of the major events that occurred as the fulness of the Savior's gospel was restored in these latter days.

In the Sacred Grove, [Joseph Smith](#) saw and talked with the Eternal Father and Jesus Christ. Among other things, Joseph learned about the true nature of the Godhead and of continuing revelation. This majestic vision ushered in "the dispensation of the fulness of times" ([Ephesians 1:10](#)) and is one of the signal events in the history of the world.

Approximately three years later, in response to earnest prayer on the evening of September 21, 1823, Joseph's bedroom filled with light until it "was lighter than at noonday" ([Joseph Smith—History 1:30](#)). A personage appeared at his bedside, called the young boy by name, and declared "he was a messenger sent from the presence of God ... and that his name was Moroni" ([verse 33](#)). He instructed Joseph about the coming forth of the [Book of Mormon](#). And then Moroni quoted from the book of Malachi in the Old Testament, with a little variation in the language used in the King James Version:

"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” ([verses 38, 39](#)).

Moroni’s instructions to the young prophet ultimately included two primary themes: (1) the Book of Mormon and (2) the words of Malachi foretelling the role of Elijah in the Restoration “of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” ([Acts 3:21](#)). Thus, the introductory events of the Restoration revealed a correct understanding of the Godhead, emphasized the importance of the Book of Mormon, and anticipated the work of salvation and exaltation for both the living and the dead. This inspiring sequence is instructive about the spiritual matters of highest priority to Deity.

My message focuses upon the ministry and Spirit of Elijah foretold by Moroni in his initial instructions to Joseph Smith. I earnestly pray for the assistance of the [Holy Ghost](#).

The Ministry of Elijah

Elijah was an Old Testament prophet through whom mighty miracles were performed. He sealed the heavens, and no rain fell in ancient Israel for 3½ years. He multiplied a widow’s meal and oil. He raised a young boy from the dead, and he called down fire from heaven in a challenge to the prophets of Baal. (See [1 Kings 17–18](#).) At the conclusion of Elijah’s mortal ministry, he “went up by a whirlwind into heaven” ([2 Kings 2:11](#)) and was translated.

“We learn from latter-day revelation that Elijah held the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood and was the last prophet to do so before the time of Jesus Christ” ([Bible Dictionary](#), “Elijah”). The Prophet Joseph Smith explained, “The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the ... *fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood* ... ; and to ... obtain ... all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church*:

Joseph Smith [2007], 311; emphasis added). This sacred sealing authority is essential for priesthood ordinances to be valid and binding both on earth and in heaven.

Elijah appeared with [Moses](#) on the Mount of Transfiguration (see [Matthew 17:3](#)) and conferred this authority upon Peter, James, and John. Elijah appeared again with Moses and others on April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple and conferred the same keys upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

Scripture records that Elijah the prophet stood before Joseph and Oliver and said:

“Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—

“To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—

“Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors” ([D&C 110:14–16](#)).

The restoration of the sealing authority by Elijah in 1836 was necessary to prepare the world for the Savior’s Second Coming and initiated a greatly increased and worldwide interest in [family](#) history research.

The Spirit and Work of Elijah

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared: “The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead. ... For it is necessary that the sealing power should be in our hands to seal our children and our dead for the fulness of the dispensation of times—a dispensation to meet the promises made by Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world for the salvation of man. ... Hence, God said, ‘I will send you Elijah the prophet’” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 475).

Joseph further explained:

“But what is the object of [the coming of Elijah]? or how is it to be fulfilled? The keys are to be delivered, the spirit of Elijah is to come, the Gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, and the Saints to come up as saviors on Mount Zion [see [Obadiah 1:21](#)].

“But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples ... and going forth and receiving all the ordinances ... in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead ... ; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 472–73).

Elder [Russell M. Nelson](#) has taught that the Spirit of Elijah is “a manifestation of the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family” (“A New Harvest Time,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 34). This distinctive influence of the Holy Ghost draws people to identify, document, and cherish their ancestors and family members—both past and present.

The Spirit of Elijah affects people inside and outside of the Church. However, as members of Christ’s restored Church, we have the covenant responsibility to search out our ancestors and provide for them the saving ordinances of the gospel. “They without us should not be made perfect” ([Hebrews 11:40](#); see also *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 475). And “neither can we without our dead be made perfect” ([D&C 128:15](#)).

For these reasons we do family history research, build temples, and perform vicarious ordinances. For these reasons Elijah was sent to restore the sealing authority that binds on earth and in heaven. We are the Lord’s agents in the work of salvation and exaltation that will prevent “the whole earth [from being] smitten with a curse” ([D&C 110:15](#)) when He returns again. This is our duty and great blessing.

An Invitation to the Rising Generation

I now invite the attention of the young women, young men, and children of the rising generation as I emphasize the importance of the Spirit of Elijah in your lives today. My message is intended for the entire Church in general—but for you in particular.

Many of you may think family history work is to be performed primarily by older people. But I know of no age limit described in the scriptures or guidelines announced by Church leaders restricting this important service to mature adults. You are sons and daughters of God, children of the covenant, and builders of the kingdom. You need not wait until you reach an arbitrary age to fulfill your responsibility to assist in the work of salvation for the human family.

The Lord has made available in our day remarkable resources that enable you to learn about and love this work that is sparked by the Spirit of Elijah. For example, Family Search is a collection of records, resources, and services easily accessible with personal computers and a variety of handheld devices, designed to help people discover and document their family history. These resources also are available in the family history centers located in many of our Church buildings throughout the world.

It is no coincidence that Family Search and other tools have come forth at a time when young people are so familiar with a wide range of information and communication technologies. Your fingers have been trained to text and tweet to accelerate and advance the work of the Lord—not just to communicate quickly with your friends. The skills and aptitude evident among many young people today are a preparation to contribute to the work of salvation.

I invite the young people of the Church to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah. I encourage you to study, to search out your ancestors, and to prepare yourselves to perform proxy baptisms in the house of the Lord

for *your* kindred dead (see [D&C 124:28–36](#)). And I urge you to help other people identify their family histories.

As you respond in faith to this invitation, your hearts shall turn to the fathers. The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be implanted in your hearts. Your patriarchal blessing, with its declaration of lineage, will link you to these fathers and be more meaningful to you. Your love and [gratitude](#) for your ancestors will increase. Your testimony of and conversion to the Savior will become deep and abiding. And I promise you will be protected against the intensifying influence of the adversary. As you participate in and love this holy work, you will be safeguarded in your youth and throughout your lives.

Parents and leaders, please help your children and youth to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah. But do not overly program this endeavor or provide too much detailed information or training. Invite young people to explore, to experiment, and to learn for themselves (see [Joseph Smith—History 1:20](#)). Any young person can do what I am suggesting, using the modules available at lds.org/familyhistoryyouth. Aaronic Priesthood quorum and Young Women class presidencies can play an important role in helping all youth become acquainted with these basic resources. Young people increasingly need to be learners who act and thereby receive additional light and knowledge by the power of the Holy Ghost—and not merely passive students who primarily are acted upon (see [2 Nephi 2:26](#)).

Parents and leaders, you will stand all amazed at how rapidly your children and the youth of the Church become highly skilled with these tools. In fact, you will learn valuable lessons from these young people about effectively using these resources. The youth can offer much to older individuals who are uncomfortable with or intimidated by technology or are unfamiliar with Family Search. You also will count your many blessings as young people devote more time to

family history work and temple service and less time to video games, surfing the Internet, and Facebooking.

Troy Jackson, Jaren Hope, and Andrew Allan are bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood who were called by an inspired bishop to team teach a family history class in their ward. These young men are representative of so many of you in their eagerness to learn and desire to serve. Troy stated, “I used to come to church and just sit there, but now I realize that I need to go home and do something. We can all do family history.”

Jaren reported that as he learned more about family history, he realized “that these were not just names but real people. I became more and more excited about taking the names to the temple.”

And Andrew commented, “I have taken to family history with a love and vigor I did not know I could muster. As I prepared each week to teach, I was often nudged by the Holy Spirit to act and try some of the methods taught in the lesson. Before, family history was a scary thing. But aided by the Spirit I was able to step up to my calling and help many people in our ward.”

My beloved young brothers and sisters, family history is not simply an interesting program or activity sponsored by the Church; rather, it is a vital part of the work of salvation and exaltation. You have been prepared for this day and to build up the kingdom of God. You are here upon the earth now to assist in this glorious work.

I testify Elijah returned to the earth and restored the sacred sealing authority. I witness that what is bound on earth can be bound in heaven. And I know the youth of the rising generation have a key role to play in this great endeavor. I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #15

Eternal Marriage

D&C 131:1-4

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

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

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

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

D&C 132: 1-24

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—

2 Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.

3 Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.

4 For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.

5 For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were

instituted from before the foundation of the world.

6 And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.

7 And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred), are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.

8 Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion.

9 Will I accept of an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name?

10 Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed?

11 And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I and my Father ordained unto you, before the world was?

12 I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment—that no man shall come unto the Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord.

13 And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities,

or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God.

14 For whatsoever things remain are by me; and whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed.

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

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

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

18 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity, if that covenant is not by me or by my word, which is my law, and is not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, through him whom I have anointed and appointed unto this power, then it is not valid neither of force when they are out of the world, because they are not joined by me, saith the Lord, neither by my word; when they are out of the world it cannot be received there, because the angels and the gods are appointed there, by whom they cannot pass; they cannot, therefore, inherit my glory; for my house is a house of order, saith the Lord God.

19 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

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

21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.

22 For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

23 But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also.

24 This is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. I am he. Receive ye, therefore, my law.

Celestial Marriage

Russell M. Nelson, *Ensign*, Nov. 2008

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.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #16

The Sacred Powers of Procreation

Genesis 2:21-24

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

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

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

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

Psalms 24:3-4

3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

Matthew 5:8, 27-28

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

27 ¶Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Romans 8:6

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Jacob 2:28, 31-35

28 For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts.

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

32 And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Hosts, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people, which I have led out of the land of Jerusalem, shall come up unto me against the men of my people, saith the Lord of Hosts.

33 For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction; for they shall not commit whoredoms, like unto them of old, saith the Lord of Hosts.

34 And now behold, my brethren, ye know that these commandments were given to our father, Lehi; wherefore, ye have known them before; and ye have come unto great condemnation; for ye have done these things which ye ought not to have done.

35 Behold, ye have done greater iniquities than the Lamanites, our brethren. Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you. And because of the strictness of the word of God, which cometh down against you, many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds.

Alma 39:1-9

1 And now, my son, I have somewhat more to say unto thee than what I said unto thy brother; for behold, have ye not observed the steadiness of thy brother, his faithfulness, and his diligence in keeping the commandments of God? Behold, has he not set a good example for thee?

2 For thou didst not give so much heed unto my words as did thy brother, among the people of the Zoramites. Now this is what I have against thee; thou didst go on unto boasting in thy strength and thy wisdom.

3 And this is not all, my son. Thou didst do that which was grievous unto me; for thou didst forsake the ministry, and did go over into the land of Siron among the borders of the Lamanites, after the harlot Isabel.

4 Yea, she did steal away the hearts of many; but this was no excuse for thee, my son. Thou shouldst have tended to the ministry wherewith thou wast entrusted.

5 Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost?

6 For behold, if ye deny the Holy Ghost when it once has had place in you, and ye know that ye deny it, behold, this is a sin which is unpardonable; yea, and whosoever murdereth against the light and knowledge of God, it is not easy for him to obtain forgiveness; yea, I say unto you, my son, that it is not easy for him to obtain a forgiveness.

7 And now, my son, I would to God that ye had not been guilty of so great a crime. I would not dwell upon your crimes, to harrow up your soul, if it were not for your good.

8 But behold, ye cannot hide your crimes from God; and except ye repent they will stand as a testimony against you at the last day.

9 Now my son, I would that ye should repent and forsake your sins, and go no more after the lusts of your eyes, but cross yourself in all these things; for except ye do this ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Oh, remember, and take it upon you, and cross yourself in these things.

D&C 42:22-24

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

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

24 Thou shalt not commit adultery; and he that committeth adultery, and repenteth not, shall be cast out.

D&C 63:16

16 And verily I say unto you, as I have said before, he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear.

D&C 121:45-46

45 Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dew from heaven.

46 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.

We Believe in Being Chaste

David A. Bednar, *Ensign*, May 2013

My message addresses a fundamental question of great spiritual consequence: Why is the law of chastity so important? I pray the Holy Ghost will confirm the truthfulness of the principles I emphasize.

The Father's Plan of Happiness

The eternal importance of chastity can only be understood within the overarching context of our Heavenly Father's plan of happiness for His children. "All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and ... has a divine nature and destiny" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129). All men and women lived with God as His spirit children before coming to the earth as mortal beings. The Father's plan enables His spirit sons and daughters to obtain physical bodies, to gain mortal experience, and to progress toward exaltation.

The Importance of a Physical Body

Our physical bodies make possible a breadth, a depth, and an intensity of experience that simply could not be obtained in our premortal existence. Thus, our relationships with other people, our capacity to recognize and act in accordance with truth, and our ability to obey the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ are amplified through our physical bodies. In the school of mortality, we experience tenderness, love, kindness, happiness, sorrow, disappointment, pain, and even the challenges of

physical limitations in ways that prepare us for eternity. Simply stated, there are lessons we must learn and experiences we must have, as the scriptures describe, "according to the flesh" (1 Nephi 19:6; Alma 7:12–13).

The Power of Procreation

After the earth was created, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden. Importantly, however, God said "it was not good that the man should be alone" (Moses 3:18; see also Genesis 2:18), and Eve became Adam's wife and helpmeet. The unique combination of spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional capacities of both males and females was needed to enact the plan of happiness. "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11). The man and the woman are intended to learn from, strengthen, bless, and complete each other.

The means by which mortal life is created is divinely appointed. "The first commandment ... God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129). The commandment to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force today. Thus, marriage between a man and a woman is the authorized channel through which premortal spirits enter mortality. Complete sexual abstinence before marriage and total fidelity within marriage protect the sanctity of this sacred channel.

The power of procreation is spiritually significant. Misuse of this power subverts the purposes of the Father's plan and of our mortal existence. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son are creators and have entrusted each of us with a portion of Their creative power. Specific guidelines for the proper use of the ability to create life are vital elements in the Father's plan. How we feel about and use that supernal power will determine in large measure our happiness in mortality and our destiny in eternity.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained:

“The power to create mortal life is the most exalted power God has given his children. Its use was mandated in the first commandment, but another important commandment was given to forbid its misuse. The emphasis we place on the law of chastity is explained by our understanding of the purpose of our procreative powers in the accomplishment of God’s plan. ...

“Outside the bonds of marriage, all uses of the procreative power are to one degree or another a sinful degrading and perversion of the most divine attribute of men and women” (“The Great Plan of Happiness,” Ensign, Nov. 1993, 74).

The Standard of Sexual Morality

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a single, undeviating standard of sexual morality: intimate relations are proper only between a man and a woman in the marriage relationship prescribed in God’s plan. Such relations are not merely a curiosity to be explored, an appetite to be satisfied, or a type of recreation or entertainment to be pursued selfishly. They are not a conquest to be achieved or simply an act to be performed. Rather, they are in mortality one of the ultimate expressions of our divine nature and potential and a way of strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife. We are agents blessed with moral agency and are defined by our divine heritage as children of God—and not by sexual behaviors, contemporary attitudes, or secular philosophies.

The Natural Man

To some degree, the natural man described by King Benjamin is alive and well in each of us (see Mosiah 3:19). The natural man or woman is unrepentant, is carnal and sensual (see Mosiah 16:5; Alma 42:10; Moses 5:13), is indulgent and excessive, and is prideful and selfish. As President Spencer W. Kimball taught, “The ‘natural man’ is the ‘earthy man’ who has allowed rude animal passions to overshadow his spiritual inclinations”

(“Ocean Currents and Family Influences,” Ensign, Nov. 1974, 112).

In contrast, the “man [or woman] of Christ” (Helaman 3:29) is spiritual and bridles all passions (see Alma 38:12), is temperate and restrained, and is benevolent and selfless. Men and women of Christ lay hold upon the word of God, deny themselves and take up His cross (see Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; D&C 56:2), and press forward along a strait and narrow course of faithfulness, obedience, and devotion to the Savior and His gospel.

As sons and daughters of God, we have inherited divine capacities from Him. But we presently live in a fallen world. The very elements out of which our bodies were created are by nature fallen and ever subject to the pull of sin, corruption, and death. Consequently, the Fall of Adam and its spiritual and temporal consequences affect us most directly through our physical bodies. And yet we are dual beings, for our spirit that is the eternal part of us is tabernacled in a physical body that is subject to the Fall. As Jesus emphasized to the Apostle Peter, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41).

The precise nature of the test of mortality, then, can be summarized in the following question: Will I respond to the inclinations of the natural man, or will I yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit and put off the natural man and become a saint through the Atonement of Christ the Lord (see Mosiah 3:19)? That is the test. Every appetite, desire, propensity, and impulse of the natural man may be overcome by and through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We are here on the earth to develop godlike qualities and to bridle all of the passions of the flesh.

The Intent of the Adversary

The Father’s plan is designed to provide direction for His children, to help them become happy, and to bring them safely home to Him with resurrected, exalted bodies. Heavenly Father desires us to be together in the light and filled with hope. In contrast, Lucifer labors to make the

sons and daughters of God confused and unhappy and to hinder their eternal progression. The overarching intent of the father of lies is that all of us would become “miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27). Lucifer wants us ultimately to be alone in the dark and without hope.

Satan relentlessly works to distort the most important elements of the Father’s plan. He does not have a body, and his eternal progress has been halted. Just as water flowing in a riverbed is stopped by a dam, so the adversary’s eternal progress is thwarted because he does not have a physical body. Because of his rebellion, Lucifer has denied himself all of the mortal blessings and experiences made possible through a body of flesh and bones. He cannot learn the lessons that only an embodied spirit can learn. He resents the reality of a literal and universal resurrection of all mankind. One of the potent scriptural meanings of the word *damned* is illustrated in his inability to continue developing and becoming like our Heavenly Father.

Because a physical body is so central to the Father’s plan of happiness and our spiritual development, Lucifer seeks to frustrate our progression by tempting us to use our bodies improperly. One of the ultimate ironies of eternity is that the adversary, who is miserable precisely because he has no physical body, entices us to share in his misery through the improper use of our bodies. The very tool he does not have is thus the primary target of his attempts to lure us to spiritual destruction.

Violating the law of chastity is a grievous sin and a misuse of our physical tabernacles. To those who know and understand the plan of salvation, defiling the body is an act of rebellion (see Mosiah 2:36–37; D&C 64:34–35) and a denial of our true identity as sons and daughters of God. As we look beyond mortality and into eternity, it is easy to discern that the counterfeit companionship advocated by the adversary is temporary and empty.

The Blessings of Being Chaste

Alma counseled his son Shiblon to “bridle all [of his] passions, that [he] may be filled with love” (Alma 38:12). Significantly, disciplining the natural man in each of us makes possible a richer, a deeper, and a more enduring love of God and of His children. Love increases through righteous restraint and decreases through impulsive indulgence.

President Marion G. Romney declared:

“I can think of no blessings to be more fervently desired than those promised to the pure and the virtuous. Jesus spoke of specific rewards for different virtues but reserved the greatest, so it seems to me, for the pure in heart, ‘for they,’ said he, ‘shall see God’ (Matt. 5:8). And not only shall they see the Lord, but they shall feel at home in his presence.

“Here is ... the Savior’s promise: ‘Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God’ (D&C 121:45)” (“Trust in the Lord,” Ensign, May 1979, 42).

We also are promised that, as we pursue the pathway of virtue, “the Holy Ghost shall be [our] constant companion” (D&C 121:46). Thus, living the law of chastity invites some of the greatest blessings men and women can receive in mortality: appropriate spiritual confidence in the presence of family, friends, Church associates, and, ultimately, the Savior. Our innate longing to belong is fulfilled in righteousness as we walk in the light with hope.

The Principle of Repentance

Some of you who receive this message need to repent of sexual or other sins. The Savior is often referred to as the Great Physician, and this title has both symbolic and literal significance. All of us have experienced the pain associated with a physical injury or wound. When we are in pain, we typically seek relief and are grateful for the

medication and treatments that help to alleviate our suffering. Consider sin as a spiritual wound that causes guilt or, as described by Alma to his son Corianton, “remorse of conscience” (Alma 42:18). Guilt is to our spirit what pain is to our body—a warning of danger and a protection from additional damage. From the Atonement of the Savior flows the soothing salve that can heal our spiritual wounds and remove guilt. However, this salve can only be applied through the principles of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, and consistent obedience. The results of sincere repentance are peace of conscience, comfort, and spiritual healing and renewal.

Your bishop or branch president is the spiritual physician’s assistant who is authorized to help you repent and heal. Please remember, however, that the extent and intensity of your repentance must match the nature and severity of your sins—especially for Latter-day Saints who are under sacred covenant. Serious spiritual wounds require sustained treatment and time to heal completely and fully.

A Promise and a Testimony

The doctrine I have described will seem to be archaic and outdated to many people in a world that increasingly mocks the sanctity of procreation and minimizes the worth of human life. But the Lord’s truth is not altered by fads, popularity, or public opinion polls. I promise that obedience to the law of chastity will increase our happiness in mortality and make possible our progress in eternity. Chastity and virtue are now, always have been, and always will be “most dear and precious above all things” (Moroni 9:9). I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Sexual Purity

For the Strength of Youth (booklet, 2011)

Physical intimacy between husband and wife is beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the

creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife. God has commanded that sexual intimacy be reserved for marriage.

When you are sexually pure, you prepare yourself to make and keep sacred covenants in the temple. You prepare yourself to build a strong marriage and to bring children into the world as part of an eternal and loving family. You protect yourself from the spiritual and emotional damage that come from sharing sexual intimacy outside of marriage. You also protect yourself from harmful diseases. Remaining sexually pure helps you to be confident and truly happy and improves your ability to make good decisions now and in the future.

The Lord’s standard regarding sexual purity is clear and unchanging. Do not have any sexual relations before marriage, and be completely faithful to your spouse after marriage. Do not allow the media, your peers, or others to persuade you that sexual intimacy before marriage is acceptable. It is not. In God’s sight, sexual sins are extremely serious. They defile the sacred power God has given us to create life. The prophet Alma taught that sexual sins are more serious than any other sins except murder or denying the Holy Ghost (see Alma 39:5).

Never do anything that could lead to sexual transgression. Treat others with respect, not as objects used to satisfy lustful and selfish desires. Before marriage, do not participate in passionate kissing, lie on top of another person, or touch the private, sacred parts of another person’s body, with or without clothing. Do not do anything else that arouses sexual feelings. Do not arouse those emotions in your own body. Pay attention to the promptings of the Spirit so that you can be clean and virtuous. The Spirit of the Lord will withdraw from one who is in sexual transgression.

Avoid situations that invite increased temptation, such as late-night or overnight activities away from home or activities where there is a lack of adult supervision. Do not participate in discussions or any media that arouse sexual

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feelings. Do not participate in any type of pornography. The Spirit can help you know when you are at risk and give you the strength to remove yourself from the situation. Have faith in and be obedient to the righteous counsel of your parents and leaders.

Homosexual and lesbian behavior is a serious sin. If you find yourself struggling with same-gender attraction or you are being persuaded to participate in inappropriate behavior, seek counsel from your parents and bishop. They will help you.

Victims of sexual abuse are not guilty of sin and do not need to repent. If you have been a victim of abuse, know that you are innocent and that God loves you. Talk to your parents or another trusted adult, and seek your bishop's counsel immediately. They can support you spiritually and assist you in getting the protection and help you need. The process of healing may take time. Trust in the Savior. He will heal you and give you peace.

If you are tempted to commit any form of sexual transgression, seek help from your parents and bishop. Pray to your Father in Heaven, who will help you resist temptation and overcome inappropriate thoughts and feelings. If you have committed sexual transgression, talk to your bishop now and begin the process of repentance so that you can find peace and have the full companionship of the Spirit.

Make a personal commitment to be sexually pure. By your words and actions, encourage others to do the same.

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

Lesson #17

The Commandment to Multiply and Replenish the Earth

Genesis 1:27-28

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Genesis 9:1

1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

Genesis 35:11

11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

Psalm 127:3

3 Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

1 Nephi 15:11

11 Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—If ye will not harden your hearts, and

ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you.

D&C 29:6

6 And, as it is written—Whatsoever ye shall ask in faith, being united in prayer according to my command, ye shall receive.

D&C 59:6

6 Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it.

Moses 2:27-28

27 And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them.

28 And I, God, blessed them, and said unto them: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Children

Neil L. Andersen, *Ensign*, Nov. 2011

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.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson # 18

Nurturing the Marriage Relationship

Matthew 19:3-8

3 ¶The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

Ephesians 5:25, 28-31

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

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

D&C 25:5; 13-15

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

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

14 Continue in the spirit of meekness, and beware of pride. Let thy soul delight in thy husband, and the glory which shall come upon him.

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

D&C 42:22

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

Abraham 5:15-18

15 And the Gods caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; and he slept, and they took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in the stead thereof;

16 And of the rib which the Gods had taken from man, formed they a woman, and brought her unto the man.

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

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

Marriage: Watch and Learn

L. Whitney Clayton, *Ensign*, May 2013

One evening several years ago, my wife and I were visiting the home of one of our sons and his wife and children for dinner. It was a typical event for a family with small children: there was much noise and even more fun. Shortly after dinner our four-year-old granddaughter, Anna, and I were still sitting at the table. Realizing that she had my full attention, she stood up straight on a bench and fixed her eyes on me. When she was sure that I was looking at her, she solemnly ordered me to “watch and learn.” She then danced and sang a song for me.

Anna’s instruction to “watch and learn” was wisdom from the mouth of a babe. We can learn so much by watching and then considering what we have seen and felt. In that spirit, let me share with you a few principles I have observed by watching and learning from wonderful, faithful marriages. These principles build strong, satisfying marriages that are compatible with heavenly principles. I invite you to watch and learn with me.

First, I have observed that in the happiest marriages both the husband and wife consider their relationship to be a pearl beyond price, a treasure of infinite worth. They both leave their fathers and mothers and set out together to build a marriage that will prosper for eternity. They understand that they walk a divinely ordained path. They know that no other relationship of any kind can bring as much joy, generate as much good, or produce as much personal refinement. Watch and learn: the best marriage partners regard their marriages as priceless.

Next, faith. Successful eternal marriages are built on the foundation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

and adherence to His teachings.¹ I have observed that couples who have made their marriages priceless practice the patterns of faith: they attend sacrament and other meetings every week, hold family home evening, pray and study the scriptures together and as individuals, and pay an honest tithing. Their mutual quest is to be obedient and good. They do not consider the commandments to be a buffet from which they can pick and choose only the most appealing offerings.

Faith is the foundation of every virtue that strengthens marriage. Strengthening faith strengthens marriage. Faith grows as we keep the commandments, and so do the harmony and joy in marriage. Thus, keeping the commandments is fundamental to establishing strong eternal marriages. Watch and learn: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of happy eternal marriages.

Third, repentance. I have learned that happy marriages rely on the gift of repentance. It is an essential element in every good marital relationship. Spouses who regularly conduct honest self-examination and promptly take needed steps to repent and improve experience a healing balm in their marriages. Repentance helps restore and maintain harmony and peace.

Humility is the essence of repentance. Humility is selfless, not selfish. It doesn’t demand its own way or speak with moral superiority. Instead, humility answers softly² and listens kindly for understanding, not vindication. Humility recognizes that no one can change someone else, but with faith, effort, and the help of God, we can undergo our own mighty change of heart.³ Experiencing the mighty change of heart causes us to treat others, especially our spouses, with meekness.⁴ Humility means that both husbands and wives seek to bless, help, and lift each other, putting the other first in every decision. Watch and learn: repentance and humility build happy marriages.

Fourth, respect. I have observed that in wonderful, happy marriages, husbands and wives treat each other as equal partners. Practices from any place or any time in which husbands have dominated wives or treated them in any way as second-class partners in marriage are not in keeping with divine law and should be replaced by correct principles and patterns of behavior.

Husbands and wives in great marriages make decisions unanimously, with each of them acting as a full participant and entitled to an equal voice and vote.⁵ They focus first on the home and on helping each other with their shared responsibilities.⁶ Their marriages are based on cooperation, not negotiation. Their dinner hour and the family time that follows become the center of their day and the object of their best efforts. They turn off electronics and forgo personal entertainment in order to help with household duties. To the extent possible, they read with their children every night and both participate in putting the little ones to bed. They retire to their bed together. As their duties and circumstances permit, husbands and wives work side by side in doing the most important work there is—the work we do in our own homes.

Where there is respect, there is also transparency, which is a key element of happy marriages. There are no secrets about relevant matters in marriages based on mutual respect and transparency. Husbands and wives make all decisions about finances together, and both have access to all information.

Loyalty is a form of respect. Prophets teach that successful marriage partners are “fiercely loyal” to each other.⁷ They keep their social media use fully worthy in every way. They permit themselves no secret Internet experiences. They freely share with each other their social network passwords. They do not look at the virtual profiles of anyone in any way that might betray the sacred trust of their spouse. They never do or say anything that approaches the appearance of impropriety, either virtually or physically. Watch and learn: terrific

marriages are completely respectful, transparent, and loyal.

Fifth, love. The happiest marriages I have seen radiate obedience to one of the happiest commandments—that we “live together in love.”⁸ Speaking to husbands, the Lord commanded, “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.”⁹ A Church handbook teaches: “The word cleave means to be completely devoted and faithful to someone. Married couples cleave to God and one another by serving and loving each other and by keeping covenants in complete fidelity to one another and to God.” Both the husband and wife “leave behind their single life and establish their marriage as [their] first priority. ... They allow no other person or interest to have greater priority ... than keeping the covenants they have made with God and each other.”¹⁰ Watch and learn: successful couples love each other with complete devotion.

There are those whose marriages are not as happy as they would wish, as well as those who have never married, are divorced, are single parents, or for various reasons are not in a position to marry. These circumstances can be full of challenge and heartbreak, but they need not be eternal. To those of you in such situations who nevertheless “cheerfully do all things that lie in [your] power”¹¹ to persevere, may heaven bless you richly. Seek after the ideal of forming an eternal marriage, including by striving or preparing to be a worthy spouse. Keep the commandments, and trust the Lord and His perfect love for you. One day every promised blessing concerning marriage will be yours.¹²

One of the sweetest verses in the Book of Mormon states simply, “And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them.”¹³ The promises of the Lord are extended to all those who follow the pattern of life that builds happy, holy marriage relationships. Such blessings come as the delightful, predictable consequences of faithfully living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am grateful for my wonderful wife, Kathy, who is the love of my life.

Marriage is a gift from God to us; the quality of our marriages is a gift from us to Him. I bear testimony of the marvelous plan of our loving Heavenly Father, which provides for eternal, wondrous marriage. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:

Lesson #19

Building Christ-Centered Lives and Homes

John 15:1-5, 10-11

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

Helaman 5:12

12 And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall

beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.

Helaman 14:30-31

30 And now remember, remember, my brethren, that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free.

31 He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil, and he hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death; and ye can do good and be restored unto that which is good, or have that which is good restored unto you; or ye can do evil, and have that which is evil restored unto you.

3 Nephi 11:29-30

29 For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

30 Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away.

3 Nephi 12:22-24

22 But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and

whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

23 Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee—

24 Go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you.

Moroni 7:45, 48

45 And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

48 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen.

D&C 64:9-11

9 Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

10 I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

11 And ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds.

D&C 88:119, 123-125

119 Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God;

123 See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires.

124 Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated.

125 And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace.

For Peace at Home

Richard G. Scott, *Ensign*, May 2013

Many voices from the world in which we live tell us we should live at a frantic pace. There is always more to do and more to accomplish. Yet deep inside each of us is a need to have a place of refuge where peace and serenity prevail, a place where we can reset, regroup, and reenergize to prepare for future pressures.

The ideal place for that peace is within the walls of our own homes, where we have done all we can to make the Lord Jesus Christ the centerpiece.

Some homes have a father who is a worthy priesthood holder joined by a faithful, devoted mother who together lead in righteousness. Many homes have a different configuration. Regardless of your circumstances, you can center your home and your life on the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is the source of true peace in this life.

Be certain that every decision you make, whether temporal or spiritual, is conditioned on what the Savior would have you do. When He is the center of your home, there is peace and serenity. There is a spirit of assurance that pervades the home, and it is felt by all who dwell there.

The fulfillment of this counsel does not rest upon parents alone, although it is their role to lead. Children can be responsible for improving the Christ-centered efforts in the home. It is important for parents to teach children to recognize how their actions affect each individual who lives in the home. Children who are made to feel accountable for their actions, whether righteous or otherwise, grow to become trustworthy citizens in the kingdom of God.

I'm sure you can identify the fundamental principles that center your home on the Savior. The prophetic counsel to have daily personal and family prayer, daily personal and family scripture study, and weekly family home evening are the essential, weight-bearing beams in the construction of a Christ-centered home. Without these regular practices it will be difficult to find the desired and much-needed peace and refuge from the world.

Be obedient to the prophetic teachings Christ would have you follow. Don't rationalize away future happiness by taking shortcuts instead of applying sound gospel principles. Remember: little things lead to big things. Seemingly insignificant indiscretions or neglect can lead to big problems. More importantly, simple, consistent, good habits lead to a life full of bountiful blessings.

You children in the Primary, you young men and women in youth programs, and you stalwart missionaries now serving are doing many things more effectively than I was able to do at your age. In the premortal life you proved to be valiant, obedient, and pure. There you worked hard to develop talents and capacities to prepare yourselves to face mortality with courage, dignity, honor, and success.

Not long ago you came to mortality with all of those magnificent capacities and endless possibilities. Yet there is real danger in the environment surrounding you. Your great potential and ability could be limited or destroyed if you yield to the devil-inspired contamination around you. However, Satan is no match for the Savior. Satan's fate is decided. He knows he has lost, but he wants to take as many with him as he can. He will try to ruin your goodness and abilities by exploiting your weaknesses. Stay on the Lord's side, and you will win every time.

You live in a world where technological advances occur at an astounding pace. It is difficult for many of my generation to keep up with the possibilities. Depending on how technology is used, these advances can be a blessing or a deterrent. Technology, when understood and used for righteous purposes, need not be a threat but rather an enhancement to spiritual communication.

For example, many of us have a personal electronic device that fits into our pocket. We are seldom without its company; we may refer to it many times a day. Unfortunately, these devices can be a source of filth and wasted time. But, used with discipline, this technology can be a tool of protection from the worst of society.

Who could have imagined not very many years ago that the full standard works and years of general conference messages would fit into your pocket? Just having them in your pocket will not protect you, but studying, pondering, and listening to them during quiet moments of each day will enhance communication through the Spirit.

Be wise in how you embrace technology. Mark important scriptures on your device and refer back to them frequently. If you young people would review a verse of scripture as often as some of you send text messages, you could soon have hundreds of passages of scripture memorized. Those passages would prove to be a

powerful source of inspiration and guidance by the Holy Ghost in times of need.

Doing all we can to invite the gentle, guiding influence of the Holy Ghost into our lives is critical in our attempts to center our homes on the Savior. Acting obediently on those promptings strengthens us even more.

Greater peace will come as you couple your efforts to be obedient with serving those around you. So many individuals who have what they perceive to be meager talents humbly and generously use those talents to bless the lives of those around them. Selfishness is the root of great evil. The antidote for that evil is exemplified in the life of the Savior. He shows us how to focus our lives outward in unselfish service to others.

I have learned a truth that has been repeated so frequently in my life that I have come to know it as an absolute law. It defines the way obedience and service relate to the power of God. When we obey the commandments of the Lord and serve His children unselfishly, the natural consequence is power from God—power to do more than we can do by ourselves. Our insights, our talents, our abilities are expanded because we receive strength and power from the Lord. His power is a fundamental component to establishing a home filled with peace.

As you center your home on the Savior, it will naturally become a refuge not only to your own family but also to friends who live in more difficult circumstances. They will be drawn to the serenity they feel there. Welcome such friends into your home. They will blossom in that Christ-centered environment. Become friends with your children's friends. Be a worthy example to them.

One of the greatest blessings we can offer to the world is the power of a Christ-centered home where the gospel is taught, covenants are kept, and love abounds.

Years ago, following a mission tour, my wife, Jeanene, told me about an elder she had met.

Jeanene had asked him about his family. She was surprised as he responded that he had no family. He further explained that at his birth, his mother had given him to the government to raise. He spent his childhood going from one foster home to another. He was blessed as a teenager to find the gospel. A loving ward family had helped him to have the opportunity to serve a mission.

Later Jeanene asked the mission president's wife about this fine elder. She learned that a few months earlier this elder had been in the mission home for a few days due to an illness. During that time he had joined them for a family home evening. Before he left to go back into the field, he asked the mission president if he could spend two or three days at the end of his mission in the mission home again. He wanted to observe how a Christ-centered family functions. He wanted to be able to pattern his family after theirs.

Do all you can to have just such a home. Reach out to those living in adverse circumstances. Be a true friend. This kind of enduring friendship is like asphalt that fills the potholes of life and makes the journey smoother and more pleasant. It should not be a resource used to gain personal advantage but a treasure to be appreciated and shared. Welcome into your home others who need to be strengthened by such an experience.

I offer some final thoughts for those who love a family member who is not making good choices. That can challenge our patience and endurance. We need to trust in the Lord and in His timing that a positive response to our prayers and rescue efforts can occur. We do all that we can to serve, to bless, and to submissively acknowledge God's will in all things. We exercise faith and remember that there are some things that must be left to the Lord. He invites us to set our burdens down at His feet. With faith we can know that this straying loved one is not abandoned but is in the watchcare of a loving Savior.

Recognize the good in others, not their stains. At times a stain needs appropriate attention to be cleansed, but always build on his or her virtues.

When you feel that there is only a thin thread of hope, it is really not a thread but a massive connecting link, like a life preserver to strengthen and lift you. It will provide comfort so you can cease to fear. Strive to live worthily and place your trust in the Lord.

We need not worry if we can't simultaneously do all of the things that the Lord has counseled us to do. He has spoken of a time and a season for all things. In response to our sincere prayers for guidance, He will direct us in what should be emphasized at each phase of our life. We can learn, grow, and become like Him one consistent step at a time.

I bear testimony that living an obedient life, firmly rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ, provides the greatest assurance for peace and refuge in our homes. There will still be plenty of challenges or heartaches, but even in the midst of turmoil, we can enjoy inner peace and profound happiness. I testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is the source of that abundant peace, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:

Lesson #20

Safeguarding Faith and Testimony

Luke 22:31-32

31 ¶And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

John 14:26-27

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Ephesians 4:11-14

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

1 Nephi 15:23-24

23 And they said unto me: What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw, that led to the tree?

24 And I said unto them that it was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction.

2 Nephi 31:19-20

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

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

Alma 5:45-46

45 And this is not all. Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

46 Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me.

Helaman 3:28-30

28 Yea, thus we see that the gate of heaven is open unto all, even to those who will believe on the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God.

29 Yea, we see that whosoever will may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked—

30 And land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven, to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and with Jacob, and with all our holy fathers, to go no more out.

3 Nephi 18:32

32 Nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out of your synagogues, or your places of worship, for unto such shall ye continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them.

D&C 11:13-14

13 Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy;

14 And then shall ye know, or by this shall you know, all things whatsoever you desire of me, which are pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive.

D&C 21:4-6

4 Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

5 For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

6 For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory.

D&C 108:7-8

7 Therefore, strengthen your brethren in all your conversation, in all your prayers, in all your exhortations, and in all your doings.

8 And behold, and lo, I am with you to bless you and deliver you forever. Amen.

Lord, I Believe

Jeffrey R. Holland, *Ensign*, May 2013

On one occasion Jesus came upon a group arguing vehemently with His disciples. When the Savior inquired as to the cause of this contention, the father of an afflicted child stepped forward, saying he had approached Jesus's disciples for a blessing for his son, but they were not able to provide it. With the boy still gnashing his teeth, foaming from the mouth, and thrashing on the ground in front of them, the father appealed to

Jesus with what must have been last-resort desperation in his voice:

“If thou canst do any thing,” he said, “have compassion on us, and help us.

“Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

“And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”¹

This man’s initial conviction, by his own admission, is limited. But he has an urgent, emphatic desire in behalf of his only child. We are told that is good enough for a beginning. “Even if ye can no more than *desire to believe*,” Alma declares, “let this desire work in you, even until ye believe.”² With no other hope remaining, this father asserts what faith he has and pleads with the Savior of the world, “If *thou* canst do *any thing*, have compassion on us, and help us.”³ I can hardly read those words without weeping. The plural pronoun *us* is obviously used intentionally. This man is saying, in effect, “Our whole family is pleading. Our struggle never ceases. We are exhausted. Our son falls into the water. He falls into the fire. He is continually in danger, and we are continually afraid. We don’t know where else to turn. Can *you* help us? We will be grateful for *anything*—a partial blessing, a glimmer of hope, some small lifting of the burden carried by this boy’s mother every day of her life.”

“If thou canst do *any thing*,” spoken by the father, comes back to him “If *thou* canst *believe*,” spoken by the Master.⁴

“Straightway,” the scripture says—not slowly nor skeptically nor cynically but “straightway”—the father cries out in his unvarnished parental pain, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” In response to new and still partial faith, Jesus heals the boy, almost literally raising him from the dead, as Mark describes the incident.⁵

With this tender scriptural record as a backdrop, I wish to speak directly to the young people of the Church—young in years of age or young in years of membership or young in years of faith. One way or another, that should include just about all of us.

Observation number one regarding this account is that when facing the challenge of faith, the father asserts his strength first and only then acknowledges his limitation. His initial declaration is affirmative and without hesitation: “Lord, I believe.” I would say to all who wish for more faith, remember this man! In moments of fear or doubt or troubling times, hold the ground you have already won, even if that ground is limited. In the growth we all have to experience in mortality, the spiritual equivalent of this boy’s affliction or this parent’s desperation is going to come to all of us. When those moments come and issues surface, the resolution of which is not immediately forthcoming, *hold fast to what you already know and stand strong until additional knowledge comes*. It was of this very incident, this specific miracle, that Jesus said, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”⁶ The size of your faith or the degree of your knowledge is not the issue—it is the integrity you demonstrate toward the faith you do have and the truth you already know.

The second observation is a variation of the first. When problems come and questions arise, do not start your quest for faith by saying how much you do *not* have, leading as it were with your “unbelief.” That is like trying to stuff a turkey through the beak! Let me be clear on this point: I am not asking you to pretend to faith you do not have. I *am* asking you to be true to the faith *you* do have. Sometimes we act as if an honest declaration of doubt is a higher manifestation of moral courage than is an honest declaration of faith. It is not! So let us all remember the clear message of this scriptural account: Be as candid about your questions as you need to be; life is full of them on one subject or another. But if you and

your family want to be healed, don't let those questions stand in the way of faith working its miracle.

Furthermore, you have more faith than you think you do because of what the Book of Mormon calls "the greatness of the evidences."⁷ "Ye shall know them by their fruits," Jesus said,⁸ and the fruit of living the gospel is evident in the lives of Latter-day Saints everywhere. As Peter and John said once to an ancient audience, I say today, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," and what we have seen and heard is that "a notable miracle hath been done" in the lives of millions of members of this Church. That cannot be denied.⁹

Brothers and sisters, this is a divine work in process, with the manifestations and blessings of it abounding in every direction, so please don't hyperventilate if from time to time issues arise that need to be examined, understood, and resolved. They do and they will. *In this Church, what we know will always trump what we do not know. And remember, in this world, everyone is to walk by faith.*

So be kind regarding human frailty—your own as well as that of those who serve with you in a Church led by volunteer, mortal men and women. Except in the case of His only perfect Begotten Son, imperfect people are all God has ever had to work with. That must be terribly frustrating to Him, but He deals with it. So should we. And when you see imperfection, remember that the limitation is not in the divinity of the work. As one gifted writer has suggested, when the infinite fulness is poured forth, it is not the oil's fault if there is some loss because finite vessels can't quite contain it all.¹⁰ Those finite vessels include you and me, so be patient and kind and forgiving.

Last observation: When doubt or difficulty come, do not be afraid to ask for help. If we want it as humbly and honestly as this father did, we can get it. The scriptures phrase such earnest desire as being of "real intent," pursued "with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception

before God."¹¹ I testify that in response to that kind of importuning, God will send help from both sides of the veil to strengthen our belief.

I said I was speaking to the young. I still am. A 14-year-old boy recently said to me a little hesitantly, "Brother Holland, I can't say yet that I know the Church is true, but I believe it is." I hugged that boy until his eyes bulged out. I told him with all the fervor of my soul that belief is a precious word, an even more precious act, and he need never apologize for "only believing." I told him that Christ Himself said, "Be not afraid, only believe,"¹² a phrase which, by the way, carried young Gordon B. Hinckley into the mission field.¹³ I told this boy that belief was always the first step toward conviction and that the definitive articles of our collective faith forcefully reiterate the phrase "We believe."¹⁴ And I told him how very proud I was of him for the honesty of his quest.

Now, with the advantage that nearly 60 years give me since I was a newly believing 14-year-old, I declare some things I now know. I know that God is at all times and in all ways and in all circumstances our loving, forgiving Father in Heaven. I know Jesus was His only perfect child, whose life was given lovingly by the will of both the Father and the Son for the redemption of all the rest of us who are not perfect. I know He rose from that death to live again, and because He did, you and I will also. I know that Joseph Smith, who acknowledged that he wasn't perfect,¹⁵ was nevertheless the chosen instrument in God's hand to restore the everlasting gospel to the earth. I also know that in doing so—particularly through translating the Book of Mormon—he has taught me more of God's love, of Christ's divinity, and of priesthood power than any other prophet of whom I have ever read, known, or heard in a lifetime of seeking. I know that President Thomas S. Monson, who moves devotedly and buoyantly toward the 50th anniversary of his ordination as an Apostle, is the rightful successor to that prophetic mantle today. We have seen that mantle upon him again in this conference. I know that 14 other men whom you sustain as prophets,

seers, and revelators sustain him with their hands, their hearts, and their own apostolic keys.

These things I declare to you with the conviction Peter called the “more sure word of prophecy.”¹⁶ What was once a tiny seed of belief for me has grown into the tree of life, so if your faith is a little tested in this or any season, I invite you to lean on mine. I know this work is God’s very truth, and I know that only at our peril would we allow doubt or devils to sway us from its path. Hope on. Journey on. Honestly acknowledge your questions and your concerns, but first and forever fan the flame of your faith, because all things are possible to them that believe. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #21

Rearing Children in Love and Righteousness

Luke 15:11-20

11 ¶And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

Ephesians 6:4

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

2 Timothy 3:15

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

3 Nephi 18:21

21 Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed.

D&C 68:25-28

25 And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.

26 For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized.

27 And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands.

28 And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.

D&C 93:36-40

36 The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.

37 Light and truth forsake that evil one.

38 Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.

39 And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.

40 But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.

A Prayer for the Children **Jeffrey R. Holland, *Ensign*, May 2003**

At the close of His first day teaching among the Nephite faithful, the resurrected Jesus turned His attention to a special audience which often stands just below the level of our gaze, sometimes nearly out of sight.

The sacred record says: “He commanded that their little children should be brought [forward].

“And ... when they had knelt upon the ground, ... he himself also knelt ... ; and behold he prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed cannot be written, ... so great and marvelous [were the] things ... [He did] speak unto the Father. ...

“... When Jesus had made an end of praying ... , he arose; ... and ... wept, ... and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and [again] prayed unto the Father for them.

“And when he had done this he wept again; ... [saying] unto the multitude, ... Behold your little ones.”

We cannot know exactly what the Savior was feeling in such a poignant moment, but we do know that He was “troubled” and that He

“groaned within himself” over the destructive influences always swirling around the innocent.¹ We know He felt a great need to pray for and bless the children.

In such times as we are in, whether the threats be global or local or in individual lives, I too pray for the children. Some days it seems that a sea of temptation and transgression inundates them, simply washes over them before they can successfully withstand it, before they should have to face it. And often at least some of the forces at work seem beyond our personal control.

Well, some of them may be beyond our control, but I testify with faith in the living God that they are not beyond His. He lives, and priesthood power is at work on both sides of the veil. We are not alone, and we do not tremble as if abandoned. In doing our part, we can live the gospel and defend its principles. We can declare to others the sure Way, the saving Truth, the joyful Life.² We can personally repent in any way we need to repent, and when we have done all, we can pray. In all these ways we can bless one another and especially those who need our protection the most—the children. As parents we can hold life together the way it is always held together—with love and faith, passed on to the next generation, one child at a time.

In offering such a prayer for the young, may I address a rather specific aspect of their safety? In this I speak carefully and lovingly to any of the adults of the Church, parents or otherwise, who may be given to cynicism or skepticism, who in matters of whole-souled devotion always seem to hang back a little, who at the Church’s doctrinal campsite always like to pitch their tents out on the periphery of religious faith. To all such—whom we do love and wish were more comfortable camping nearer to us—I say, please be aware that the full price to be paid for such a stance does not always come due in your lifetime. No, sadly, some elements of this can be a kind of profligate national debt, with payments coming out of your children’s and grandchildren’s pockets

in far more expensive ways than you ever intended it to be.

In this Church there is an enormous amount of room—and scriptural commandment—for studying and learning, for comparing and considering, for discussion and awaiting further revelation. We all learn “line upon line, precept upon precept,”³ with the goal being authentic religious faith informing genuine Christlike living. In this there is no place for coercion or manipulation, no place for intimidation or hypocrisy. But no child in this Church should be left with uncertainty about his or her parents’ devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Restoration of His Church, and the reality of living prophets and apostles who, now as in earlier days, lead that Church according to “the will of the Lord, ... the mind of the Lord, ... the word of the Lord, ... and the power of God unto salvation.”⁴ In such basic matters of faith, prophets do not apologize for requesting unity, indeed conformity, in the eloquent sense that the Prophet Joseph Smith used that latter word.⁵ In any case, as Elder Neal Maxwell once said to me in a hallway conversation, “There didn’t seem to be any problem with conformity the day the Red Sea opened.”

Parents simply cannot flirt with skepticism or cynicism, then be surprised when their children expand that flirtation into full-blown romance. If in matters of faith and belief children are at risk of being swept downstream by this intellectual current or that cultural rapid, we as their parents must be more certain than ever to hold to anchored, unmistakable moorings clearly recognizable to those of our own household. It won’t help anyone if we go over the edge with them, explaining through the roar of the falls all the way down that we really did know the Church was true and that the keys of the priesthood really were lodged there but we just didn’t want to stifle anyone’s freedom to think otherwise. No, we can hardly expect the children to get to shore safely if the parents don’t seem to know where to anchor their own boat. Isaiah once used a variation on such imagery when he said of

unbelievers, “[Their] tacklings are loosed; they could not ... strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail.”⁶

I think some parents may not understand that even when they feel secure in their own minds regarding matters of personal testimony, they can nevertheless make that faith too difficult for their children to detect. We can be reasonably active, meeting-going Latter-day Saints, but if we do not live lives of gospel integrity and convey to our children powerful heartfelt convictions regarding the truthfulness of the Restoration and the divine guidance of the Church from the First Vision to this very hour, then those children may, to our regret but not surprise, turn out not to be visibly active, meeting-going Latter-day Saints or sometimes anything close to it.

Not long ago Sister Holland and I met a fine young man who came in contact with us after he had been roaming around through the occult and sorting through a variety of Eastern religions, all in an attempt to find religious faith. His father, he admitted, believed in nothing whatsoever. But his grandfather, he said, was actually a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. “But he didn’t do much with it,” the young man said. “He was always pretty cynical about the Church.” From a grandfather who is cynical to a son who is agnostic to a grandson who is now looking desperately for what God had already once given his family! What a classic example of the warning Elder Richard L. Evans once gave.

Said he: “Sometimes some parents mistakenly feel that they can relax a little as to conduct and conformity or take perhaps a so called liberal view of basic and fundamental things—thinking that a little laxness or indulgence won’t matter—or they may fail to teach or to attend Church, or may voice critical views. Some parents ... seem to feel that they can ease up a little on the fundamentals without affecting their family or their family’s future. *But,*” he observed, “*if a parent goes a little off course, the children are likely to exceed the parent’s example.*”⁷

To lead a child (or anyone else!), even inadvertently, away from faithfulness, away from loyalty and bedrock belief simply because we want to be clever or independent is license no parent nor any other person has ever been given. In matters of religion a skeptical mind is not a higher manifestation of virtue than is a believing heart, and analytical deconstruction in the field of, say, literary fiction can be just plain old-fashioned destruction when transferred to families yearning for faith at home. And such a deviation from the true course can be deceptively slow and subtle in its impact. As one observer said, “[If you raise the temperature of my] bath water ... only 1 degree every 10 minutes, how [will I] know when to scream?”⁸

When erecting their sacred tabernacle in the wilderness of Sinai, the ancient children of Israel were commanded to make firm their supporting cords and strengthen the stakes which held them.⁹ The reason? Storms arise in life—regularly. So fix it, fasten it, then fix and fasten it again. Even then we know that some children will make choices that break their parents’ hearts. Moms and dads can do everything right and yet have children who stray. Moral agency still obtains. But even in such painful hours it will be comforting for you to know that your children knew of your abiding faith in Christ, in His true Church, in the keys of the priesthood and in those who hold them. It will be comforting then for you to know that if your children choose to leave the straight and narrow way, they leave it very conscious that their parents were firmly in it. Furthermore, they will be much more likely to return to that path when they come to themselves¹⁰ and recall the loving example and gentle teachings you offered them there.

Live the gospel as conspicuously as you can. Keep the covenants your children know you have made. Give priesthood blessings. And bear your testimony!¹¹ Don’t just assume your children will somehow get the drift of your beliefs on their own. The prophet Nephi said near the end of his life that they had written their record of Christ and preserved their convictions regarding His

gospel in order “to persuade our children ... that our children may know ... [and believe] the right way.”¹²

Nephi-like, might we ask ourselves what our children know? From us? Personally? Do our children know that we love the scriptures? Do they see us reading them and marking them and clinging to them in daily life? Have our children ever unexpectedly opened a closed door and found us on our knees in prayer? Have they heard us not only pray *with* them but also pray *for* them out of nothing more than sheer parental love? Do our children know we believe in fasting as something more than an obligatory first-Sunday-of-the-month hardship? Do they know that we have fasted for them and for their future on days about which they knew nothing? Do they know we love being in the temple, not least because it provides a bond to them that neither death nor the legions of hell can break? Do they know we love and sustain local and general leaders, imperfect as they are, for their willingness to accept callings they did not seek in order to preserve a standard of righteousness they did not create? Do those children know that we love God with all our heart and that we long to see the face—and fall at the feet—of His Only Begotten Son? I pray that they know this.

Brothers and sisters, our children take their flight into the future with our thrust and with our aim. And even as we anxiously watch that arrow in flight and know all the evils that can deflect its course after it has left our hand, nevertheless we take courage in remembering that the most important mortal factor in determining that arrow’s destination will be the stability, strength, and unwavering certainty of the holder of the bow.¹³

Carl Sandburg once said, “A baby is God’s opinion that life should go on.”¹⁴ For that baby’s future as well as your own, be strong. Be believing. Keep loving and keep testifying. Keep praying. Those prayers will be heard and answered in the most unexpected hour. God will send aid to no one

more readily than He will send it to a child—and to the parent of a child.

“And [Jesus] said unto them: Behold your little ones.

“And ... they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending ... as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.”¹⁵

May it always be so, I earnestly pray—for the children—in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #22

Creating a Successful Family

Deuteronomy 6:1-7

1 Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:

2 That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

3 ¶ Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:

5 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Joshua 24:15

15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the

Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Mosiah 4:14-15

14 And ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin, or who is the evil spirit which hath been spoken of by our fathers, he being an enemy to all righteousness.

15 But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another.

D&C 58:21

21 Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land.

D&C 98:4-6

4 And now, verily I say unto you concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them.

5 And that law of the land which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable before me.

6 Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land;

D&C 134:5-6

5 We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights by the laws of such governments; and that sedition and rebellion are unbecoming every citizen thus protected, and should be punished accordingly; and that all governments have a right to enact such laws as in their own judgments are best calculated to secure the public interest; at the same time, however, holding sacred the freedom of conscience.

6 We believe that every man should be honored in his station, rulers and magistrates as such, being placed for the protection of the innocent and the punishment of the guilty; and that to the laws all men owe respect and deference, as without them peace and harmony would be supplanted by anarchy and terror; human laws being instituted for the express purpose of regulating our interests as individuals and nations, between man and man; and divine laws given of heaven, prescribing rules on spiritual concerns, for faith and worship, both to be answered by man to his Maker.

Articles of Faith 1:12

12 We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.

Good, Better, Best

Dallin H. Oaks, *Ensign*, Nov. 2007

Most of us have more things expected of us than we can possibly do. As breadwinners, as parents, as Church workers and members, we face many choices on what we will do with our time and other resources.

I.

We should begin by recognizing the reality that just because something is good is not a sufficient reason for doing it. The number of good things we can do far exceeds the time available to accomplish them. Some things are better than good, and these are the things that should command priority attention in our lives.

Jesus taught this principle in the home of Martha. While she was “cumbered about much serving” (Luke 10:40), her sister, Mary, “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word” (v. 39). When Martha complained that her sister had left her to serve alone, Jesus commended Martha for what she was doing (v. 41) but taught her that “one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (v. 42). It was praiseworthy for Martha to be “careful and troubled about many things” (v. 41), but learning the gospel from the Master Teacher was more “needful.” The scriptures contain other teachings that some things are more blessed than others (see Acts 20:35; Alma 32:14–15).

A childhood experience introduced me to the idea that some choices are good but others are better. I lived for two years on a farm. We rarely went to town. Our Christmas shopping was done in the Sears, Roebuck catalog. I spent hours poring over its pages. For the rural families of that day, catalog pages were like the shopping mall or the Internet of our time.

Something about some displays of merchandise in the catalog fixed itself in my mind. There were three degrees of quality: good, better, and best. For example, some men’s shoes were labeled *good* (\$1.84), some *better* (\$2.98), and some *best* (\$3.45).¹

As we consider various choices, we should remember that it is not enough that something is good. Other choices are better, and still others are best. Even though a particular choice is more costly, its far greater value may make it the best choice of all.

Consider how we use our time in the choices we make in viewing television, playing video games, surfing the Internet, or reading books or magazines. Of course it is good to view wholesome entertainment or to obtain interesting information. But not everything of that sort is worth the portion of our life we give to obtain it. Some things are better, and others are best. When the Lord told us to seek learning, He said, "Seek ye out of the *best* books words of wisdom" (D&C 88:118; emphasis added).

II.

Some of our most important choices concern family activities. Many breadwinners worry that their occupations leave too little time for their families. There is no easy formula for that contest of priorities. However, I have never known of a man who looked back on his working life and said, "I just didn't spend enough time with my job."

In choosing how we spend time as a family, we should be careful not to exhaust our available time on things that are merely good and leave little time for that which is better or best. A friend took his young family on a series of summer vacation trips, including visits to memorable historic sites. At the end of the summer he asked his teenage son which of these good summer activities he enjoyed most. The father learned from the reply, and so did those he told of it. "The thing I liked best this summer," the boy replied, "was the night you and I laid on the lawn and looked at the stars and talked." Super family activities may be good for children, but they are not always better than one-on-one time with a loving parent.

The amount of children-and-parent time absorbed in the good activities of private lessons, team sports, and other school and club activities also needs to be carefully regulated. Otherwise, children will be overscheduled, and parents will be frazzled and frustrated. Parents should act to preserve time for family prayer, family scripture study, family home evening, and the other precious togetherness and individual one-on-one

time that binds a family together and fixes children's values on things of eternal worth. Parents should teach gospel priorities through what they do with their children.

Family experts have warned against what they call "the overscheduling of children." In the last generation children are far busier and families spend far less time together. Among many measures of this disturbing trend are the reports that structured sports time has doubled, but children's free time has declined by 12 hours per week, and unstructured outdoor activities have fallen by 50 percent. ²

The number of those who report that their "whole family usually eats dinner together" has declined 33 percent. This is most concerning because the time a family spends together "eating meals at home [is] the strongest predictor of children's academic achievement and psychological adjustment." ³ Family mealtimes have also been shown to be a strong bulwark against children's smoking, drinking, or using drugs. ⁴ There is inspired wisdom in this advice to parents: what your children really want for dinner is you.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has pleaded that we "work at our responsibility as parents as if everything in life counted on it, because in fact everything in life does count on it."

He continued: "I ask you men, particularly, to pause and take stock of yourselves as husbands and fathers and heads of households. Pray for guidance, for help, for direction, and then follow the whisperings of the Spirit to guide you in the most serious of all responsibilities, for the consequences of your leadership in your home will be eternal and everlasting." ⁵

The First Presidency has called on parents "to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles. ... The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place ... in ... this God-given responsibility." The First Presidency

has declared that “however worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform.”⁶

III.

Church leaders should be aware that Church meetings and activities can become too complex and burdensome if a ward or a stake tries to have the membership do everything that is good and possible in our numerous Church programs. Priorities are needed there also.

Members of the Quorum of the Twelve have stressed the importance of exercising inspired judgment in Church programs and activities. Elder L. Tom Perry taught this principle in our first worldwide leadership training meeting in 2003. Counseling the same leaders in 2004, Elder Richard G. Scott said: “Adjust your activities to be consistent with your local conditions and resources. ... Make sure that the essential needs are met, but do not go overboard in creating so many good things to do that the essential ones are not accomplished. ... Remember, don’t magnify the work to be done—simplify it.”⁷

In general conference last year, Elder M. Russell Ballard warned against the deterioration of family relationships that can result when we spend excess time on ineffective activities that yield little spiritual sustenance. He cautioned against complicating our Church service “with needless frills and embellishments that occupy too much time, cost too much money, and sap too much energy. ... The instruction to magnify our callings is not a command to embellish and complicate them. To innovate does not necessarily mean to expand; very often it means to simplify. ... What is most important in our Church responsibilities,” he said, “is not the statistics that are reported or the meetings that are held but whether or not individual people—ministered to one at a time just as the Savior did—have been lifted and encouraged and ultimately changed.”⁸

Stake presidencies and bishoprics need to exercise their authority to weed out the excessive and ineffective busyness that is sometimes required of the members of their stakes or wards. Church programs should focus on what is best (most effective) in achieving their assigned purposes without unduly infringing on the time families need for their “divinely appointed duties.”

But here is a caution for families. Suppose Church leaders reduce the time required by Church meetings and activities in order to increase the time available for families to be together. This will not achieve its intended purpose unless individual family members—especially parents—vigorously act to increase family togetherness and one-on-one time. Team sports and technology toys like video games and the Internet are already winning away the time of our children and youth. Surfing the Internet is not better than serving the Lord or strengthening the family. Some young men and women are skipping Church youth activities or cutting family time in order to participate in soccer leagues or to pursue various entertainments. Some young people are amusing themselves to death—spiritual death.

Some uses of individual and family time are better, and others are best. We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best because they develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen our families.

IV.

Here are some other illustrations of good, better, and best:

It is *good* to belong to our Father in Heaven’s true Church and to keep all of His commandments and fulfill all of our duties. But if this is to qualify as “best,” it should be done with love and without arrogance. We should, as we sing in a great hymn, “crown [our] good with brotherhood,”⁹ showing love and concern for all whom our lives affect.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

To our hundreds of thousands of home teachers and visiting teachers, I suggest that it is good to visit our assigned families; it is *better* to have a brief visit in which we teach doctrine and principle; and it is *best* of all to make a difference in the lives of some of those we visit. That same challenge applies to the many meetings we hold—good to hold a meeting, *better* to teach a principle, but *best* to actually improve lives as a result of the meeting.

As we approach 2008 and a new course of study in our Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies, I renew our caution about how we use the *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* manuals. Many years of inspired work have produced our 2008 volume of the teachings of Joseph Smith, the founding prophet of this dispensation. This is a landmark among Church books. In the past, some teachers have given a chapter of the Teachings manuals no more than a brief mention and then substituted a lesson of their own choice. It may have been a good lesson, but this is not an acceptable practice. A gospel teacher is called to teach the subject specified from the inspired materials provided. The best thing a teacher can do with *Teachings: Joseph Smith* is to select and quote from the words of the Prophet on principles specially suited to the needs of class members and then direct a class discussion on how to apply those principles in the circumstances of their lives.

I testify of our Heavenly Father, whose children we are and whose plan is designed to qualify us for “eternal life ... the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7; see also D&C 76:51–59). I testify of Jesus Christ, whose Atonement makes it possible. And I testify that we are led by prophets, our President Gordon B. Hinckley and his counselors, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Lesson #23

Providing for Temporal Needs

Malachi 3:8-12

8 ¶Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.

Matthew 6:19-21

19 ¶Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Mark 6:1-3

1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

Luke 2:51-52

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

1 Timothy 6:7-10

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

2 Nephi 9:51

51 Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy. Hearken diligently unto me, and remember the words which I have spoken; and come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted, and let your soul delight in fatness.

Jacob 2:17-19

17 Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you.

18 But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

19 And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.

D&C 56:17

17 Wo unto you poor men, whose hearts are not broken, whose spirits are not contrite, and whose bellies are not satisfied, and whose hands are not stayed from laying hold upon other men's goods, whose eyes are full of greediness, and who will not labor with your own hands!

D&C 75:28

28 And again, verily I say unto you, that every man who is obliged to provide for his own family, let him provide, and he shall in nowise lose his crown; and let him labor in the church.

D&C 104: 13-18, 78

13 For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures.

14 I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine.

15 And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine.

16 But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low.

17 For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves.

18 Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.

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

Becoming Provident Providers Temporally and Spiritually **Robert D. Hales, *Ensign*, May 2009**

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. Hearken 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.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #24

Single Adult Church Members

1 Corinthians 12:12-20, 25-27

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Hebrews 11:1, 6, 8-13, 16

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

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

16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be

called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

A Conversation with Single Adults
Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, March
1997

A Conversation with Single Adults

My beloved brethren and sisters, it is a wonderful privilege to be here with you tonight. As you can well imagine, I have the opportunity to speak to many kinds of groups, but there is no group to whom I would rather speak at this time than you. You have come for answers to your concerns and your problems. You have many of them. You want assurance, you want help. I pray for the direction of the Holy Spirit that I may say some things which will be helpful to you.

You are a diverse group. I understand that all of you are over 30. In a sense that is the only thing you have in common, other than your membership in the Lord's Church.

Some of you have never married. Some of you have been married and been divorced, some with children and some without. Many of you are struggling to support your children. You have come to know that it is a harsh and cruel world out there. You long for help. You need help.

Others of you are widows or widowers for whom loneliness is an unrelenting and constant experience.

Though you are so diverse in your backgrounds, we have put a badge on you as if you were all alike. That badge reads S-I-N-G-L-E-S. I do not like that. I do not like to categorize people. We are all individuals living together, hopefully with respect for one another, notwithstanding some of our personal situations.

I assure you that I feel at home with you because you are all Latter-day Saints. In your hearts you

know that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ and that this Church is the creation of the Almighty and the Savior whose name it bears. I know that you pray, and that is a wonderful thing. Sometimes you pray to the Lord with great earnestness for help, for companionship, for relief from your struggles. You wonder why your prayers are not answered as you would like them to be.

We have all had that experience. But we come to know as the years pass that our Father in Heaven does hear our prayers. His wisdom is greater than ours, and we come to know that He answers our prayers even though the answers at times are difficult to discern.

My heart reaches out in love to each of you. I think that in some measure, at least, I know something of your problems and your desires. You reply: "You have never been through what we go through, and so you really do not know anything about it."

There is a measure of truth in that, but I hope you will not deny the feelings of my heart for you. I do not sympathize with you because I know you do not want pity. Rather, in a spirit of love and of understanding I simply talk with you in a dialogue.

All of you presumably are without marriage partners. Many of you wish you were married. You think this would be the answer to all your problems. While a happy marriage should be the goal of every normal Latter-day Saint, let me assure you that for many who are married, life is miserable and filled with fears and anxiety. The most burdensome responsibility I have is to make judgments on applications for cancellation of temple sealings following civil divorce. Each case is considered on its individual merits. I pray for wisdom, for the direction of the Lord in dealing with sacred covenants made in the most hallowed surroundings and of an eternal nature.

The circumstances behind the divorce and behind the request for cancellation of a temple sealing contain a litany of selfishness, of greed, of

behavior at times even sadistic in its nature, of abuse and heartache and tragedy.

I say that only to remind you that there are those who are married whose lives are extremely unhappy, and that you who are single and experience much of deep and consuming worry are not alone in your feelings.

When I spoke on this subject once before, I received a number of letters. I get letters all the time. I read from one that I had on that occasion:

“For more than 20 years I have endured a lack of sensitivity of members of the Church with respect to my single state. As I have pursued my profession, I have moved to various areas of the country. In seeking participation in local Church activities, I have encountered a variety of levels of welcome and acceptance, ranging from a warm, friendly welcome to a very cool indifference and an air of discomfort that seems to stem from their lack of knowing what to do with me. In one ward I felt strongly that the members would prefer that I not attend. This continued for nearly six months, and I finally sensed a passive acceptance, as though I were a nuisance that wouldn’t go away, and so, must be tolerated.”

If that be the case, it is a tragedy. It represents a betrayal of the spirit that should be found in all of our congregations. Men and women such as you have great talents and can add immeasurably to the quality of the teaching and leadership in almost any ward in the Church. It is a general Church responsibility to remind bishops and other Church officers to give each member a warm welcome and to make use of his or her talents. For when all is said and done, we should not be classified as married or single but as members of the Church, each worthy of the same attention, the same care, the same opportunities to be of service.

We are all individuals, men and women, sons and daughters of God, not a mass of “look-alikes” or “do-alikes.” All of us are very much alike in our capacity to think, to reason, to be miserable, if

you please; in our need to be happy, to love and be loved. We are subject to the same pains, the same sensitivities, the same emotions.

Never forget that there is something of divinity in each of you. You are a son or daughter of God, and you have a wonderful inheritance. I hope you will never belittle or demean yourself.

On an occasion similar to this I told of an experience I once had. One evening when my wife was at something which women call “a shower” and I was home alone, I put on a record, turned down the lights, and listened to Beethoven’s Concerto for the Violin. As I sat there in the semidarkness, I marveled that such a thing could come of the mind of a man, a man who, in most respects, was as I am. I do not know how tall he was or how broad he was or how much hair he had, but I guess he looked very much like the rest of us. He became hungry, he felt pain, he had most of the problems we have and maybe some we do not have. But out of the genius of that inspired mind came the creation of a masterpiece which has entertained the world through all of these many years.

I marvel at the miracle of the human mind and body. Have you ever contemplated the wonders of yourself, the eyes with which you see, the ears with which you hear, the voice with which you speak? No camera ever built can compare with the human eye. No method of communication ever devised can compare with the voice and the ear. No pump ever built will run as long or as efficiently as the human heart. No computer or other creation of science can equal the human brain. What a remarkable thing you are. You can think by day and dream by night. You can speak and hear and smell. Look at your finger. The most skillful attempt to reproduce it mechanically has resulted in only a crude approximation. The next time you use your finger, watch it, look at it, and sense the wonder of it.

You are a child of God, His crowning creation. After He had formed the earth, separated the darkness from the light, divided the waters,

created the plant and animal kingdoms—after all this He created man and then woman. I repeat, I hope you will never demean or belittle yourselves. Some of you may think you are not attractive, that you have no talents. Stop wandering around in the wasteland of self-pity. The greatest missionary the world has known, the Apostle Paul, is said to have been short, have a large Roman nose, rounded shoulders, and a whining voice, all of which may not sound too attractive to some persons. Abraham Lincoln, America’s greatest hero, was tragically homely. But from his great heart and mind came words such as few other men have spoken.

I hope you will not indulge in put-downs, in pessimism, in self-recrimination. Never make fun at the expense of another. Look for virtue in the lives of all with whom you associate.

When I was much younger there was a popular song which said, “Accentuate the positive.” Attitude has more to do with personality, with attractiveness, with getting along with others than does any other attribute. The scripture states that “as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7).

To you single women and men who wish to be married I say this, *Do not give up hope. And do not give up trying. But do give up being obsessed with it.* The chances are that if you forget about it and become anxiously engaged in other activities, the prospects will brighten immeasurably.

I repeat some words from the newspaper column “Dear Abby”:

“The key to being popular with both sexes is: Be kind. Be honest. Be tactful. If you can’t be beautiful (or handsome), be well-groomed, tastefully attired, conscious of your posture, and *keep a smile on your face.*”

“Be clean in body and mind. If you’re not a ‘brain,’ try harder. If you’re not a great athlete, be a good sport. Try to be a standout in something. If you can’t dance or sing, learn to play an instrument.

“Think for yourself, but respect the rules. Be generous with kind words and affectionate gestures, but save the heavy artillery. ... You’ll be glad you did” (reprinted in Chicago Tribune, 17 March 1991, 6).

I wish every woman might be married to a good man, one worthy of her association and her companionship, a breadwinner who looks after her needs and the needs of those who come to that home, her protector, her strength, a companion who loves and cherishes her. I would hope that every man might have the eternal companionship of a woman who loves him, who comforts and encourages him, who reads and thinks, who understands and cultivates his strengths as well as her own, one with whom he can share his innermost thoughts, one with whom he can walk side by side on the high road that leads to immortality and eternal life. Unfortunately it does not always work out that way. So frequently it does not.

Marriage requires a high degree of tolerance, and some of us need to cultivate that attribute. I have enjoyed these words of Jenkins Lloyd Jones, which I clipped from the newspaper some years ago. Said he:

“There seems to be a superstition among many thousands of our young [men and women] who hold hands and smooch in the drive-ins that marriage is a cottage surrounded by perpetual hollyhocks to which a perpetually young and handsome husband comes home to a perpetually young and [beautiful] wife. When the hollyhocks wither and boredom and bills appear the divorce courts are jammed. ...

“Anyone who imagines that bliss [in marriage] is normal is going to waste a lot of time running around shouting that he has been robbed.

“[The fact is] most putts don’t drop. Most beef is tough. Most children grow up to be just people. Most successful marriages require a high degree of mutual toleration. Most jobs are more often dull than otherwise. ...

“Life is like an old-time rail journey—delays, sidetracks, smoke, dust, cinders and jolts, interspersed only occasionally by beautiful vistas and thrilling bursts of speed.

“The trick is to thank the Lord for letting you have the ride” (“Big Rock Candy Mountains,” *Deseret News*, 12 June 1973, A4).

Let us face the fact that in this life some of you will marry, some of you may not. For those of you who do, it must be a total commitment, without reservation. It must involve total and unequivocal loyalty. It must be a covenant for eternity, a companionship that will require constant attention and nurturing.

For those who do not marry, this fact of life must be faced squarely. But continuous single status is not without opportunity, challenge, or generous recompense.

I believe that for most of us the best medicine for loneliness is work and service in behalf of others. I do not minimize your problems, but I do not hesitate to say that there are many others whose problems are more serious than yours. Reach out to serve them, to help them, to encourage them. There are so many boys and girls who fail in school for want of a little personal attention and encouragement. There are so many elderly people who live in misery and loneliness and fear for whom a simple conversation would bring a measure of hope and brightness.

Lose yourself in the service of others. As Jesus said, “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life ... shall find it” (Matt. 16:25). If you are fed up with your life, if you feel an oppressive loneliness, if you feel you are of no worth, go out and look up somebody who is in worse condition than you are—and you will find very many of them. Read to the blind, read to the aged, help those in distress, comfort those who are in sorrow. Give a little of your substance to those who are in need. Share and the world will become a sweeter, more delightful place for you. “Look to God and live” (Alma

37:47). There is so much to be done that can be wonderfully rewarding.

There came to my desk recently a bulletin issued by the Utah Boys Ranch. It included the story of a boy named Mike. A judge of the juvenile court wrote concerning him:

“Mike, at the age of 9 years, was sleeping in cars, associating with gangs and involving himself with dangerous weapons. No state agency could help this young boy turn his life around. The Utah Boys Ranch stepped forward and offered their help. The Boys Ranch saved his life. They gave him a place to live and taught him values and standards. His environment and world changed and now he is out of the Juvenile Justice system.”

Included also was a letter from Mike himself which reads:

“Hi. This is Mike. I had a bad childhood where I grew up. I was in a gang that was bad. I came to this place. I’m glad that I came to this place ‘cause if I didn’t come here I would still be in gangs and getting in trouble. I was so glad that I came here ‘cause I met some good people like Chris and Delpha. But now I have a family and I am doing good” (Utah Boys Ranch, *New Beginnings Round-up*, fall 1996, 1).

There are so many who have been injured and who need a good Samaritan to bind up their wounds and help them on their way. A small kindness can bring a great blessing to someone in distress and a sweet feeling to the one who befriends him.

Another thing to remember: there is a great potential within each of us to go on learning. Regardless of our age, unless there be serious illness, we can read, study, drink in the writings of wonderful men and women. As Dr. Joshua Liebman once observed: “The great thing is that as long as we live we have the privilege of growing. We can learn new skills, engage in new kinds of work, devote ourselves to new causes, make new friends. Accepting then the truth that

we are capable in some directions and limited in others, that genius is rare, that mediocrity is the portion of most of us, let us remember that we can and must change ourselves. Until the day of our death we can grow. We can tap hidden resources in our makeup.”

We of this Church have been given a marvelous promise by the Lord. Said He: “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24).

What a remarkable statement that is. It is one of my favorite verses of scripture. It speaks of growth, of development, of the march that leads toward godhood. It goes hand in hand with these great declarations: “The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth” (D&C 93:36); “If a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come” (D&C 130:19); and, “Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection” (D&C 130:18).

What a profound challenge is found in these marvelous statements. We must go on growing. We must continually learn. It is a divinely given mandate that we go on adding to our knowledge.

We have access to institute of religion classes, extension courses, education weeks, and many other opportunities where, as we study and match our minds with others, we will discover a tremendous reservoir of capacity within ourselves.

It is never too late to learn. I believe this with all my heart. Sister Hinckley and I are growing old. We are in our mid-80s. I am constantly amazed at what a voracious reader she is. She reads two newspapers a day, goes through magazines, is an ardent student of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, and I saw her the other evening reading a lengthy biography.

I know of no other practice which will make one more attractive in conversation than to be well-read in a variety of subjects. Said the Lord to you and to me: “Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith. ... Organize yourselves. ... Cease to be idle” (D&C 88:118–119, 124).

The best books are the scriptures. Said the Lord: “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). Read the Church magazines. There are many other worthwhile things to read. Reading will sharpen your mind. It will clean up your intellect. It will improve your speech to get into the thoughts of the great men and women of the ages, including those of our own age.

But be careful of what you read. Avoid pornography as you would a plague because it is as deadly as a deadly disease. Avoid the foul language, the titillating rubbish of many TV programs, of videotapes, of sensual magazines, of 900-numbers, and the filth that I am told is now found on the Internet. These will bring you no benefit, and they could destroy you.

I mention another matter. There is a growing practice among single men and women of traveling alone together, visiting distant places together. Such a practice is fraught with danger. Recognize that in your circumstances you are extremely vulnerable. You may think you can play with fire and not get burned. That, I submit, is a dangerous assumption. Be true to the best that is within you. Let your self-discipline be as steel when it comes to compromising circumstances.

To you men I say that you have no right to take undue liberties, that invitations to immoral behavior are unbecoming any man who holds the priesthood of God, that it is imperative that you practice self-discipline and govern your thoughts and rein in your impulses.

To all of you, accept every invitation to serve in the Church. Be true and faithful, be loyal and supportive concerning this glorious work of the

Lord. Every one of us is a part of this great cause and kingdom. There is no room for a slacker, a critic, a pessimist, concerning this the work of the Almighty. Teach a class, and you may point a boy or a girl in a direction that will make of him or her a great and good man or woman. Volunteer for projects. And, most importantly, in the quiet moments of your lives, reflect on the goodness of the Lord to you. You were born in a good land and in this great season of the history of the world. You are among the relatively few who have been blessed with a knowledge of the restored gospel, with membership in this Church, with testimony in your hearts concerning the work of the Lord.

Be prayerful. I hope that every one of you gets on your knees every morning and every night and expresses gratitude to the Lord, that you share with Him the righteous desires of your hearts, that you pray for those in need and distress wherever they may be.

To you single mothers and fathers, may I say a special word of appreciation for you. Your burdens are heavy. We know this. Your concerns are deep. There is never enough money. There is never enough time. Do the very best you can and plead with the Lord for His help that your children may grow in grace and understanding and achievement and, most importantly, in faith. If you do so, the day will come when you will get on your knees and, with tears in your eyes, thank the Lord for His blessings upon you.

To you older women and men who are widows and widowers, how precious you are. You have lived long and had much of experience. You have tasted the bitter and the sweet. You have known much of pain and sorrow and loneliness and fear. But you also carry in your hearts a sweet and sublime assurance that God our Father will not fail us in our hour of need. May the years that lie ahead be kind to you. May heaven smile upon you. May you draw comfort and strength from your memories. And may you, with your mature kindness and love, reach out to help those in distress wherever you find them.

Brothers and sisters, look above your trials. Try to forget your own pain as you work to alleviate the pain of others. Mingle together as opportunity affords. It is important that we do so. We need others to talk with and to share our feelings and faith with. Cultivate friends. Begin by being a good friend to others.

Share your burdens with the Lord. He has said to each of us: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28–30).

May I suggest that you go to work on your family history. You will become enthralled with it.

Qualify for a temple recommend and live worthy of it at all times and in all circumstances. I would think that every one of you would hold a temple recommend. If you do not, then resolve that you will get your lives in order and become eligible to go to the Lord's house. Go to the temple on a regular schedule. There you may help those who are totally helpless to help themselves. And each time you go you will leave as a better man or woman than when you entered. The recommend you carry in your wallet or purse will become a reminding safeguard. The vicarious service you do in behalf of others will bring a measure of satisfaction that will come from no other source.

Now, one other matter. There is no place for arrogance or egotism on the part of any of us. The Lord in revelation has said, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers" (D&C 112:10). I believe that. I hope you do also.

In conclusion, please be assured of our love. Please be assured of our respect, of our confidence in you. Insofar as I have the right to do so, I bless you that if you will walk in faith and

righteousness you will know much of happiness, you will have the temporal blessings you need, you will have friends with whom you can share your thoughts and your feelings, and you will experience the love of the Redeemer of the world.

Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson:

Lesson #25

Exercising Faith in Difficult Family Circumstances

Proverbs 3:5-6

5 ¶ Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Matthew 11:28-30

28 ¶ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

I Nephi 16:34-39

34 And it came to pass that Ishmael died, and was buried in the place which was called Nahom.

35 And it came to pass that the daughters of Ishmael did mourn exceedingly, because of the loss of their father, and because of their afflictions in the wilderness; and they did murmur against my father, because he had brought them out of the land of Jerusalem, saying: Our father is dead; yea, and we have wandered much in the wilderness, and we have suffered much affliction, hunger, thirst, and fatigue; and after all these sufferings we must perish in the wilderness with hunger.

36 And thus they did murmur against my father, and also against me; and they were desirous to return again to Jerusalem.

37 And Laman said unto Lemuel and also unto the sons of Ishmael: Behold, let us slay our father, and also our brother Nephi, who has taken it upon him to be our ruler and our teacher, who are his elder brethren.

38 Now, he says that the Lord has talked with him, and also that angels have ministered unto him. But behold, we know that he lies unto us; and he tells us these things, and he worketh many things by his cunning arts, that he may deceive our eyes, thinking, perhaps, that he may lead us away into some strange wilderness; and after he has led us away, he has thought to make himself a king and a ruler over us, that he may do with us according to his will and pleasure. And after this manner did my brother Laman stir up their hearts to anger.

39 And it came to pass that the Lord was with us, yea, even the voice of the Lord came and did speak many words unto them, and did chasten them exceedingly; and after they were chastened by the voice of the Lord they did turn away their anger, and did repent of their sins, insomuch that the Lord did bless us again with food, that we did not perish.

I Nephi 17:1-4

1 And it came to pass that we did again take our journey in the wilderness; and we did travel nearly eastward from that time forth. And we did travel and wade through much affliction in the wilderness; and our women did bear children in the wilderness.

2 And so great were the blessings of the Lord upon us, that while we did live upon raw meat in the wilderness, our women did give plenty of suck for their children, and were strong, yea, even like

unto the men; and they began to bear their journeyings without murmurings.

3 And thus we see that the commandments of God must be fulfilled. And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them; wherefore, he did provide means for us while we did sojourn in the wilderness.

4 And we did sojourn for the space of many years, yea, even eight years in the wilderness.

Mosiah 24:8-16

8 And now it came to pass that Amulon began to exercise authority over Alma and his brethren, and began to persecute him, and cause that his children should persecute their children.

9 For Amulon knew Alma, that he had been one of the king's priests, and that it was he that believed the words of Abinadi and was driven out before the king, and therefore he was wroth with him; for he was subject to king Laman, yet he exercised authority over them, and put tasks upon them, and put task-masters over them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

D&C 121:7-8

7 My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

8 And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.

Strengthening the Family: Adapting to Circumstances, *Ensign*, Dec. 2005

“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.”¹

Less Than Ideal

In an ideal world all adults would be happily married, all marriages would be blessed with children, and all family members would be healthy, obedient, and supportive of each other. But life is rarely ideal. Each individual experiences adversity, and no family's mortal sojourn is consistently trouble free. Without trial, weakness, illness, and death, we would not learn the lessons we came here to learn. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) explained: "If we look at mortality as a complete existence, then pain, sorrow, failure, and short life could be a calamity. But if we look upon life as an eternal thing stretching far into the pre-earth past and on into the eternal post-death future, then all happenings may be put in proper perspective." ²

Shifting Responsibilities

Disease, disability, death, divorce, and other disruptive factors can create challenges. In such situations, "individual adaptation" of roles may be necessary. A father may need to take on additional household and nurturing responsibilities, or a mother who has been a full-time homemaker may need to enter the workforce. Even children may need to accept new responsibilities.

When unsettling events occur, the extended family may also need to assist. Support may range from providing financial assistance to donating time to tend children, help with chores, or care for an ill or disabled family member. The degree of extended-family involvement depends on the situation and the family's needs.

Even without the effects of serious adversity, the extended family can be an important support system. Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: "To build a foundation strong enough to support a family in our troubled world today requires the best effort of each of us—father, mother, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, aunts, uncles, cousins, and so on. Each must contribute energy and effort

in driving piles right down to the bedrock of the gospel until the foundation is strong enough to endure through the eternities." ³

Adversity

You may wonder why your family has to endure adversity and the disruption it brings. The answer, and the comfort, can be found in the gospel's eternal perspective. The Apostle Paul taught that our "affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). How is this possible?

Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Presidency of the Seventy reminds us: "Trials and tribulations take many forms: the death of a loved one, a marriage that is different than expected, no marriage, a divorce, a child born with a disability, no children, losing a job, parents who make mistakes, a wayward son or daughter, ill health. The list is endless. Why did God make allowances in His plan for disappointment, pain, suffering, and death? Is adversity necessary for one to build a Christ-centered life, to receive the image of God in his or her countenance?

"An understanding of the plan of salvation, of premortality, earth life, and life after death provides perspective. ... Opposition, disappointments, pain, suffering, and death are necessary to protect agency and provide for spiritual development (see 2 Ne. 11). On the other hand, if life were limited to our mortal experience, adversity could not be understood. ... Without an eternal perspective, there are no meaningful explanations for man's inhumanity to man or for earthquakes, floods, or children with disabilities.

"We should remember that it was Satan who wanted an earth with no disappointments, no tests, no adversity, and no glory except for himself." ⁴

Healing through the Atonement

Although this mortal existence is meant to test us, we are not without divine help. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: “It is important to understand that His healing can mean being cured, or having your burdens eased, or even coming to realize that it is worth it to endure to the end patiently. ...

“Recognize that some challenges in life will not be resolved here on earth. ... He wants you to learn how to be cured when that is His will and how to obtain strength to live with your challenge when He intends it to be an instrument for growth. ...

“When you feel you can do no more, temporarily lay your challenges at His feet. ... The Lord will give relief with divine power when you seek deliverance in humility and *faith in Jesus Christ.*”⁵

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From Your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #26

Accountable before God

Matthew 18:1-6

1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

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

Romans 13:12-14

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Mosiah 4:30

30 But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not.

Alma 5:15-22

15 Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?

16 I say unto you, can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?

17 Or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say—Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth—and that he will save you?

18 Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God?

19 I say unto you, can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances?

20 I say unto you, can ye think of being saved when you have yielded yourselves to become subjects to the devil?

21 I say unto you, ye will know at that day that ye cannot be saved; for there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins.

22 And now I ask of you, my brethren, how will any of you feel, if ye shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with blood and all manner of filthiness? Behold, what will these things testify against you?

Alma 12:14

14 For our words will condemn us, yea, all our works will condemn us; we shall not be found spotless; and our thoughts will also condemn us; and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God; and we would fain be glad if we could command the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us to hide us from his presence.

D&C 42:22-25

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

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

24 Thou shalt not commit adultery; and he that committeth adultery, and repenteth not, shall be cast out.

25 But he that has committed adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsaketh it, and doeth it no more, thou shalt forgive;

D&C 93:39-44

39 And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.

40 But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.

41 But verily I say unto you, my servant Frederick G. Williams, you have continued under this condemnation;

42 You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your affliction.

43 And now a commandment I give unto you—if you will be delivered you shall set in order your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house.

44 Verily, I say unto my servant Sidney Rigdon, that in some things he hath not kept the commandments concerning his children; therefore, first set in order thy house.

To Heal the Shattering Consequences of Abuse

Richard G. Scott, *Ensign*, May 2008

I bear solemn witness of how deeply I love our new prophet, seer, and revelator, President Thomas S. Monson—how deeply I trust him, and how I am willing to do whatever he asks me to do.

Some matters are so sensitive and intensely personal and can awaken such disturbing feelings that they are seldom mentioned publicly. Yet, if tenderly and compassionately treated in the light of truth, discussion of these matters can bring greater understanding, with the easing of pain, the blessing of healing, and even the avoidance of further tragedy.

It is with a deep desire to define a path to relief that I speak to you who suffer the shattering consequences of mental, verbal, physical, and especially sexual abuse. I speak also to those of you who cause it. I will focus on sexual abuse, although the counsel given should help the victims of other mistreatment. My intent is to act as a mirror so that divine, healing light can illuminate the dark clouds of distress caused by others' unrighteous acts. May I be aided to communicate understandably, to provide help, and not further complicate a damaged life. It is

also likely that greater understanding, awareness, and sensitivity may permit some of the rest of us to help resolve or prevent the tragedy of abuse in additional victims.

The rising tide of this vicious, abominable sin may not have touched your life personally. Yet it is pervasive enough in the world that it may have touched someone you love. It frequently causes such profound suffering— that can be overcome—that I want to speak of how healing can be attained. It will be done reverently, for my objective is to help heal and not aggravate painful memories.

Agency

Moral agency is a vital element in our Father in Heaven's plan of happiness. He understood that some of His spirit children would use that agency improperly, causing serious problems to others. Some would even violate sacred trust, such as a father or family member abusing an innocent child. Since our Heavenly Father is completely just, there has to be a way of overcoming the tragic consequences of such damaging use of agency for both the victim and the perpetrator. That secure healing comes through the power of the Atonement of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to rectify that which is unjust. Faith in Jesus Christ and in His power to heal provides the abused with the means to overcome the terrible consequences of another's unrighteous acts. When combined with complete repentance, the Atonement also affords the perpetrator a way to avoid the severe punishment the Lord has decreed for such acts.

To the Victim

I testify that I know victims of serious abuse who have successfully made the difficult journey to full healing through the power of the Atonement. After her own concerns were resolved by her faith in the healing power of the Atonement, one young woman who had been severely abused by her father requested another interview with me. She returned with an older couple. I could sense

that she loved the two very deeply. Her face radiated happiness. She began, "Elder Scott, this is my father. I love him. He's concerned about some things that happened in my early childhood. They are no longer a problem for me. Could you help him?" What a powerful confirmation of the Savior's capacity to heal! She no longer suffered from the consequences of abuse, because she had adequate understanding of His Atonement, sufficient faith, and was obedient to His law. As you conscientiously study the Atonement and exercise your faith that Jesus Christ has the power to heal, you can receive the same blessed relief. During your journey of recovery, accept His invitation to let Him share your burden until you have sufficient time and strength to be healed.

To find relief from the consequences of abuse, it is helpful to understand their source. Satan is the author of all of the destructive outcomes of abuse. He has extraordinary capacity to lead an individual into blind alleys where the solution to extremely challenging problems cannot be found. His strategy is to separate the suffering soul from the healing attainable from a compassionate Heavenly Father and a loving Redeemer.

If you have been abused, Satan will strive to convince you that there is no solution. Yet he knows perfectly well that there is. Satan recognizes that healing comes through the unwavering love of Heavenly Father for each of His children. He also understands that the power of healing is inherent in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Therefore, his strategy is to do all possible to separate you from your Father and His Son. Do not let Satan convince you that you are beyond help.

Satan uses your abuse to undermine your self-confidence, destroy trust in authority, create fear, and generate feelings of despair. Abuse can damage your ability to form healthy human relationships. You must have faith that all of these negative consequences can be resolved; otherwise they will keep you from full recovery. While these outcomes have powerful influence in your life, *they do not define the real you.*

Satan will strive to alienate you from your Father in Heaven with the thought that if He loved you He would have prevented the tragedy. Do not be kept from the very source of true healing by the craftiness of the prince of evil and his wicked lies. Recognize that if you have feelings that you are not loved by your Father in Heaven, you are being manipulated by Satan. Even when it may seem very difficult to pray, kneel and ask Father in Heaven to give you the capacity to trust Him and to feel His love for you. Ask to come to know that His Son can heal you through His merciful Atonement.

It was Satan's proposal that Father's children be forced to obey, that there be no moral agency and therefore no personal growth. To preserve moral agency, the Lord does not restrain individuals from improper use of that agency. However, He will punish them for such acts unless there is full repentance. Through the Holy Ghost, He sends warning promptings to the abuser, but often that individual's degrading appetite is so powerful that it blocks out that spiritual guidance. That is why our Father provided a way to heal the consequences of acts that, through force, misuse of authority, or fear of another, temporarily take away the agency of the abused.

The beginning of healing requires childlike faith in the unalterable fact that Father in Heaven loves you and has supplied a way to heal. His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, laid down His life to provide that healing. But there is no magic solution, no simple balm to provide healing, nor is there an easy path to the complete remedy. The cure requires profound faith in Jesus Christ and in His infinite capacity to heal. It is rooted in an understanding of doctrine and a resolute determination to follow it.

Healing may begin with a thoughtful bishop or stake president or a wise professional counselor. If you had a broken leg, you wouldn't decide to fix it yourself. Serious abuse can also benefit from professional help. There are many ways to begin healing, but remember that a full cure comes through the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, our

Master and Redeemer. Have faith that with effort His perfect, eternal, infinite Atonement can heal your suffering from the consequences of abuse.

As impossible as it may seem to you now, in time the healing you can receive from the Savior will allow you to truly forgive the abuser and even have feelings of sorrow for him or her. When you can forgive the offense, you will be relieved of the pain and heartache that Satan wants in your life by encouraging you to hate the abuser. As a result, you will enjoy greater peace. While an important part of healing, if the thought of forgiveness causes you yet more pain, set that step aside until you have more experience with the Savior's healing power in your own life. ¹

If you are currently being abused or have been in the past, find the courage to seek help. You may have been severely threatened or caused to fear so that you would not reveal the abuse. Have the courage to act now. Seek the support of someone you can trust. Your bishop or stake president can give you valuable counsel and help you with the civil authorities. Explain how you have been abused and identify who has done it. Ask for protection. Your action may help others avoid becoming innocent victims, with the consequent suffering. Get help now. Do not fear—for fear is a tool Satan will use to keep you suffering. The Lord will help you, but you must reach out for that help.

Do not be discouraged if initially a bishop hesitates when you identify an abuser. Remember that predators are skillful at cultivating a public appearance of piety to mask their despicable acts. Pray to be guided in your efforts to receive help. That support will come. Rest assured that the Perfect Judge, Jesus the Christ, with a perfect knowledge of the details, will hold all abusers accountable for every unrighteous act. In time He will fully apply the required demands of justice unless there is complete repentance. Your preoccupation with a need for justice only slows your healing and allows the perpetrator to continue his abusive control. Therefore you

should leave punishment for the diabolic acts of abuse to civil and Church authorities.

To the Perpetrator

Now, to the perpetrator who has shattered the life of another by abuse: Recognize that you need help with your addiction or it will destroy you. You will not overcome it by yourself. You likely need specialized professional help. I plead with you to seek to be rescued now. You likely have deceived yourself in the false, temporary security that you have successfully hidden your transgression from the civil or Church authorities. But know that the Lord Jesus Christ is completely aware of your sins. He has warned: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones ... , it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." ² Know that even without action by a victim, your act of abuse will be publicly known, for Satan will expose you, then abandon you.

Simplify your life by taking steps now to cleanse your soul from such sin and resolve the penalties they evoke. Show your desire to heal the anguish that you have caused others. Talk to your bishop or stake president. The seriousness of your acts may require you to face civil and Church discipline. But full repentance will bring the sweet relief of forgiveness, peace of conscience, and a renewed life. It will also bring relief to the abused and their families. You will be free of the weight of remorse and the accusing thoughts of what you have caused in grief and anguish in another's life. Recognize that it is much easier to repent in this life than it will be in the next, so repent now. You will be helped when you decide to be freed from your addiction through repentance and the support of others. Be grateful that you didn't live anciently when abusers were stoned to death without the opportunity for repentance. ³

To Parents

Parents, in appropriate, sensitive ways, teach your children of the potential danger of abuse and how to avoid it. Be aware of warning signs,

such as an abrupt change in a child's behavior, that may signal a problem. Be alert to a child's unsettled feelings and identify their origin.

To Judges in Israel

To you who hold the keys of a judge in Israel, painstakingly assure that every individual that is suffering from abuse receives appropriate help. The Church handbook and the help line listed there are valuable resources to guide your ecclesiastical action and coordination with civil authorities. ⁴ Carefully supervise the participation of any individual who may have had past offenses. Recognize that it is very unlikely that a perpetrator will confess his depraved acts. Seek the guidance of the Spirit when you feel that something may be amiss. Enlist the help of ward and stake leaders to avoid potential dangers.

I pray that you, as one abused or one who has caused it, will act now to avail yourself of the healing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I testify that your faith and obedience will assure that He will help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From your Readings or From the Lesson:

Lesson #27

Prophetic Warnings Concerning the Family

2 Timothy 3:1-7, 13

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

1 Nephi 14:14-17

14 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.

15 And it came to pass that I beheld that the wrath of God was poured out upon that great and abominable church, insomuch that there were wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds of the earth.

16 And as there began to be wars and rumors of wars among all the nations which belonged to the mother of abominations, the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold, the wrath of God is upon the mother of harlots; and behold, thou seest all these things—

17 And when the day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the mother of harlots, which is the great and abominable church of all the earth, whose founder is the devil, then, at that day, the work of the Father shall commence, in preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel.

1 Nephi 22:16-17

16 For the time soon cometh that the fulness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men; for he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous.

17 Wherefore, he will preserve the righteous by his power, even if it so be that the fulness of his wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire. Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; for thus saith the prophet, they shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire.

D&C 97:22-28

22 For behold, and lo, vengeance cometh speedily upon the ungodly as the whirlwind; and who shall escape it?

23 The Lord's scourge shall pass over by night and by day, and the report thereof shall vex all

people; yea, it shall not be stayed until the Lord come;

24 For the indignation of the Lord is kindled against their abominations and all their wicked works.

25 Nevertheless, Zion shall escape if she observe to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her.

26 But if she observe not to do whatsoever I have commanded her, I will visit her according to all her works, with sore affliction, with pestilence, with plague, with sword, with vengeance, with devouring fire.

27 Nevertheless, let it be read this once to her ears, that I, the Lord, have accepted of her offering; and if she sin no more none of these things shall come upon her;

28 And I will bless her with blessings, and multiply a multiplicity of blessings upon her, and upon her generations forever and ever, saith the Lord your God. Amen.

Defenders of the Family Proclamation **Bonnie L. Oscarson, *Ensign*, May 2015**

What a privilege and joy to be a part of this marvelous assembly of girls and women. How blessed we are as women to be joined together this evening in unity and in love.

I recently read the story of Marie Madeline Cardon, who, with her family, received the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ from the first missionaries called to serve in Italy in 1850. She was a young woman of 17 or 18 years of age when they were baptized. One Sunday, while the family was holding a worship service in their home high in the Alps of northern Italy, an angry mob of men, including some of the local ministers, gathered around the house and began shouting, yelling, and calling for the

missionaries to be brought outside. I don't think they were anxious to be taught the gospel—they intended bodily harm. It was young Marie who marched out of the house to confront the mob.

They continued their vicious yells and demands for the missionaries to be brought out. Marie raised her Bible up in her hand and commanded them to depart. She told them that the elders were under her protection and that they could not harm one hair of their heads. Listen to her own words: "All stood aghast. ... God was with me. He placed those words in my mouth, or I could not have spoken them. All was calm, instantly. That strong ferocious body of men stood helpless before a weak, trembling, yet fearless girl." The ministers asked the mob to leave, which they did quietly in shame, fear, and remorse. The small flock completed their meeting in peace.¹

Can't you just picture that brave young woman, the same age as many of you, standing up to a mob and defending her newly found beliefs with courage and conviction?

Sisters, few of us will ever have to face an angry mob, but there is a war going on in this world in which our most cherished and basic doctrines are under attack. I am speaking specifically of the doctrine of the family. The sanctity of the home and the essential purposes of the family are being questioned, criticized, and assaulted on every front.

When President Gordon B. Hinckley first read "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" 20 years ago this year, we were grateful for and valued the clarity, simplicity, and truth of this revelatory document. Little did we realize then how very desperately we would need these basic declarations in today's world as the criteria by which we could judge each new wind of worldly dogma coming at us from the media, the Internet, scholars, TV and films, and even legislators. The proclamation on the family has become our benchmark for judging the philosophies of the world, and I testify that the principles set forth

within this statement are as true today as they were when they were given to us by a prophet of God nearly 20 years ago.

May I point out something obvious? Life rarely goes exactly according to plan for anyone, and we are very aware that not all women are experiencing what the proclamation describes. It is still important to understand and teach the Lord's pattern and strive for the realization of that pattern the best we can.

Each of us has a part to play in the plan, and each of us is equally valued in the eyes of the Lord. We should remember that a loving Heavenly Father is aware of our righteous desires and will honor His promises that nothing will be withheld from those who faithfully keep their covenants. Heavenly Father has a mission and plan for each of us, but He also has His own timetable. One of the hardest challenges in this life is to have faith in the Lord's timing. It's a good idea to have an alternative plan in mind, which helps us to be covenant-keeping, charitable, and righteous women who build the kingdom of God no matter which way our lives go. We need to teach our daughters to aim for the ideal but plan for contingencies.

During this 20th anniversary year of the family proclamation, I would like to issue a challenge for all of us as women of the Church to be defenders of "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." Just as Marie Madeline Cardon courageously defended the missionaries and her newly found beliefs, we need to boldly defend the Lord's revealed doctrines describing marriage, families, the divine roles of men and women, and the importance of homes as sacred places—even when the world is shouting in our ears that these principles are outdated, limiting, or no longer relevant. Everyone, no matter what their marital circumstance or number of children, can be defenders of the Lord's plan described in the family proclamation. If it is the Lord's plan, it should also be our plan!

There are three principles taught in the proclamation which I think are especially in need

of steadfast defenders. The first is marriage between a man and a woman. We are taught in the scriptures, "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."² For anyone to attain the fulness of priesthood blessings, there must be a husband and a wife sealed in the house of the Lord, working together in righteousness and remaining faithful to their covenants. This is the Lord's plan for His children, and no amount of public discourse or criticism will change what the Lord has declared. We need to continue to model righteous marriages, seek for that blessing in our lives, and have faith if it is slow in coming. Let us be defenders of marriage as the Lord has ordained it while continuing to show love and compassion for those with differing views.

The next principle which calls for our defending voices is elevating the divine roles of mothers and fathers. We eagerly teach our children to aim high in this life. We want to make sure that our daughters know that they have the potential to achieve and be whatever they can imagine. We hope they will love learning, be educated, talented, and maybe even become the next Marie Curie or Eliza R. Snow.

Do we also teach our sons and daughters there is no greater honor, no more elevated title, and no more important role in this life than that of mother or father? I would hope that as we encourage our children to reach for the very best in this life that we also teach them to honor and exalt the roles that mothers and fathers play in Heavenly Father's plan.

Our youngest daughter, Abby, saw a unique opportunity to stand as a defender of the role of mother. One day she got a notice from her children's school that they were having Career Day presentations at the school. Parents were invited to send in an application if they wanted to come to school to teach the children about their jobs, and Abby felt impressed to apply to come and speak about motherhood. She didn't hear back from the school, and when Career Day was getting close, she finally called the school,

thinking they may have lost her application. The organizers scrambled around and found two teachers who agreed to have Abby come talk to their classes at the end of Career Day.

In her very fun presentation to the children, Abby taught them, among other things, that as a mother she needed to be somewhat of an expert in medicine, psychology, religion, teaching, music, literature, art, finance, decorating, hair styling, chauffeuring, sports, culinary arts, and so much more. The children were impressed. She finished by having the children remember their mothers by writing thank-you notes expressing gratitude for the many loving acts of service they received daily. Abby felt that the children saw their mothers in a whole new light and that being a mother or father was something of great worth. She applied to share again this year at Career Day and was invited to present to six classes.

Abby has said of her experience: “I feel like it could be easy in this world for a child to get the sense that being a parent is a secondary job or even sometimes a necessary inconvenience. I want every child to feel like they are the most important priority to their parent, and maybe telling them how important being a parent is to me will help them realize all that their parents do for them and why.”

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, is a wonderful example of honoring women and motherhood, especially his own mother. In reference to our earthly mothers, he has said: “May each of us treasure this truth; one cannot forget mother and remember God. One cannot remember mother and forget God. Why? Because these two sacred persons, God and [our earthly] mother, partners in creation, in love, in sacrifice, in service, are as one.”³

The last principle we need to stand and defend is the sanctity of the home. We need to take a term which is sometimes spoken of with derision and elevate it. It is the term homemaker. All of us—women, men, youth, and children, single or married—can work at being homemakers. We

should “make our homes” places of order, refuge, holiness, and safety. Our homes should be places where the Spirit of the Lord is felt in rich abundance and where the scriptures and the gospel are studied, taught, and lived. What a difference it would make in the world if all people would see themselves as makers of righteous homes. Let us defend the home as a place which is second only to the temple in holiness.

Sisters, I am grateful to be a woman in these latter days. We have opportunities and possibilities which no other generation of women has had in the world. Let us help build the kingdom of God by standing up boldly and being defenders of marriage, parenthood, and the home. The Lord needs us to be brave, steadfast, and immovable warriors who will defend His plan and teach the upcoming generations His truths.

I bear witness that Heavenly Father lives and loves each of us. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Spiritual Impressions, Feelings,
Thoughts or Insights From your
Readings or From the Lesson:**

Lesson #28

Promoting the Family as the Fundamental Unit of Society

Alma 43:9, 30, 45, 48

9 And now the design of the Nephites was to support their lands, and their houses, and their wives, and their children, that they might preserve them from the hands of their enemies; and also that they might preserve their rights and their privileges, yea, and also their liberty, that they might worship God according to their desires.

30 And he also knowing that it was the only desire of the Nephites to preserve their lands, and their liberty, and their church, therefore he thought it no sin that he should defend them by stratagem; therefore, he found by his spies which course the Lamanites were to take.

45 Nevertheless, the Nephites were inspired by a better cause, for they were not fighting for monarchy nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church.

48 And it came to pass that when the men of Moroni saw the fierceness and the anger of the Lamanites, they were about to shrink and flee from them. And Moroni, perceiving their intent, sent forth and inspired their hearts with these thoughts—yea, the thoughts of their lands, their liberty, yea, their freedom from bondage.

Alma 46: 11-16

11 And now it came to pass that when Moroni, who was the chief commander of the armies of the Nephites, had heard of these dissensions, he was angry with Amalickiah.

12 And it came to pass that he rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it—In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole.

13 And he fastened on his head-plate, and his breastplate, and his shields, and girded on his armor about his loins; and he took the pole, which had on the end thereof his rent coat, (and he called it the title of liberty) and he bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren, so long as there should a band of Christians remain to possess the land—

14 For thus were all the true believers of Christ, who belonged to the church of God, called by those who did not belong to the church.

15 And those who did belong to the church were faithful; yea, all those who were true believers in Christ took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ, or Christians as they were called, because of their belief in Christ who should come.

16 And therefore, at this time, Moroni prayed that the cause of the Christians, and the freedom of the land might be favored.

Alma 48: 9-13

9 And in their weakest fortifications he did place the greater number of men; and thus he did fortify and strengthen the land which was possessed by the Nephites.

10 And thus he was preparing to support their liberty, their lands, their wives, and their children, and their peace, and that they might live unto the Lord their God, and that they might maintain that which was called by their enemies the cause of Christians.

11 And Moroni was a strong and a mighty man; he was a man of a perfect understanding; yea, a man that did not delight in bloodshed; a man

whose soul did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery;

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

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

Balancing Truth and Tolerance **Dallin H. Oaks, *Ensign*, Feb. 2013**

The existence and nature of truth is one of the fundamental questions of mortal life. Jesus told the Roman governor Pilate that He came into the world to “bear witness unto the truth.” That unbeliever responded, “What is truth?” (John 18:37–38). Earlier the Savior had declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). In modern revelation, He declared, “Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24).

We believe in *absolute truth*, including the existence of God and the right and wrong established by His commandments. We know that the existence of God and the existence of absolute truth are fundamental to life on this earth, whether they are believed in or not. We also know that evil exists and that some things are simply, seriously, and everlastingly wrong.

Shocking reports of large-scale thievery and lying in civilized societies suggest a moral vacuum in which many have little sense of right and wrong. Widespread rioting, pillaging, and cheating have caused many to wonder whether we are losing the moral foundation Western countries have received from their Judeo-Christian heritage.¹

It is well to worry about our moral foundation. We live in a world where more and more persons of influence are teaching and acting out a belief that there is no absolute right and wrong—that all authority and all rules of behavior are man-made choices that can prevail over the commandments of God. Many even question whether there is a God.

The philosophy of moral relativism, which holds that each person is free to choose for him or herself what is right and wrong, is becoming the unofficial creed for many in the United States and other Western nations. At the extreme level, evil acts that used to be localized and covered up like a boil are now legalized and paraded like a banner. Persuaded by this philosophy, many of the rising generation are caught up in self-serving pleasures, pornography, dishonesty, foul language, revealing attire, pagan painting and piercing of body parts, and degrading sexual indulgence.

Many religious leaders teach the existence of God as the ultimate lawgiver, by whose command certain behavior is absolutely right and true and other behavior is absolutely wrong and untrue.² Bible and Book of Mormon prophets foresaw this time, when men would be “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:4) and, indeed, when men would deny God (see Jude 1:4; 2 Nephi 28:5; Moroni 7:17; D&C 29:22).

In this troubled circumstance, we who believe in God and the corollary truth of absolute right and wrong have the challenge of living in a godless and increasingly amoral world. In this circumstance, all of us—especially the rising generation—have a duty to stand up and speak out to affirm that God exists and that there are absolute truths that His commandments establish.

Many teachers in schools, colleges, and universities are teaching and practicing relative morality. This is shaping the attitudes of many young people who are taking their places as the teachers of our children and the shapers of public

attitudes through the media and popular entertainment. This philosophy of moral relativism denies what millions of believing Christians, Jews, and Muslims consider fundamental, and this denial creates serious problems for all of us. What believers should do about this introduces the second of my twin subjects, tolerance.

Tolerance is defined as a friendly and fair attitude toward unfamiliar or different opinions and practices or toward the persons who hold or practice them. As modern transportation and communication have brought all of us into closer proximity to different peoples and different ideas, we have greater need for tolerance.

This greater exposure to diversity both enriches our lives and complicates them. We are enriched by associations with different peoples, which remind us of the wonderful diversity of the children of God. But diversity in cultures and values also challenges us to identify what can be embraced as consistent with our gospel culture and values and what cannot be. In this way, diversity increases the potential for conflict and requires us to be more thoughtful about the nature of tolerance. What is tolerance, when does it apply, and when does it not apply?

These are harder questions for those who affirm the existence of God and absolute truth than for those who believe in moral relativism. The weaker one's belief in God and the fewer one's moral absolutes, the fewer the occasions when the ideas or practices of others will confront one with the challenge to be tolerant. For example, an atheist has no need to decide what kinds and occasions of profanity or blasphemy can be tolerated and what kinds should be confronted. Persons who don't believe in God or in absolute truth in moral matters can see themselves as the most tolerant of persons. For them, almost anything goes. This belief system can tolerate almost any behavior and almost any person. Unfortunately, some who believe in moral relativism seem to have difficulty tolerating those who insist that there is a God who should be

respected and that there are certain moral absolutes that should be observed.

Three Absolute Truths

So what does tolerance mean to us and other believers, and what are our special challenges in applying it? I begin with three absolute truths. I express them as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I believe that most of these ideas are shared by believers generally.

First, all persons are brothers and sisters under God, taught within their various religions to love and do good to one another. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) expressed this idea for Latter-day Saints: "Each of us [from various religious denominations] believes in the fatherhood of God, although we may differ in our interpretations of Him. Each of us is part of a great family, the human family, sons and daughters of God, and therefore brothers and sisters. We must work harder to build mutual respect, an attitude of forbearance, with tolerance one for another regardless of the doctrines and philosophies which we may espouse."³

Note that President Hinckley spoke of mutual respect *as well* as tolerance. Living together with mutual respect for one another's differences is a challenge in today's world. However—and here I express a *second* absolute truth—this living with differences is what the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us we must do.

The kingdom of God is like leaven, Jesus taught (see Matthew 13:33). Leaven—yeast—is hidden away in the larger mass until the whole is leavened, which means raised by its influence. Our Savior also taught that His followers will have tribulation in the world (see John 16:33), that their numbers and dominions will be small (see 1 Nephi 14:12), and that they will be hated because they are not of the world (see John 17:14). But that is our role. We are called to live with other children of God who do not share our faith or our values and who do not have the covenant

obligations we have assumed. We are to be *in* the world but not *of* the world.

Because followers of Jesus Christ are commanded to be leaven, we must seek tolerance from those who hate us for not being of the world. As part of this, we will sometimes need to challenge laws that would impair our freedom to practice our faith, doing so in reliance on our constitutional rights to the free exercise of religion. The big concern is “the ability of people of all faiths to work out their relationship with God and one another without the government looking over their shoulder.”⁴ That is why we need understanding and support when we must contend for religious freedom.

We must also practice tolerance and respect toward others. As the Apostle Paul taught, Christians should “follow after the things which make for peace” (Romans 14:19) and, as much as possible, “live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). Consequently, we should be alert to honor the good we should see in all people and in many opinions and practices that differ from our own. As the Book of Mormon teaches:

“All things which are good cometh of God; ...

“... wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.

“Wherefore, take heed ... that ye do not judge ... that which is good and of God to be of the devil” (Moroni 7:12–14).

That approach to differences will yield tolerance and also respect toward us.

Our tolerance and respect for others and their beliefs does not cause us to abandon our commitment to the truths we understand and the covenants we have made. That is a *third* absolute truth. We are cast as combatants in the war between truth and error. There is no middle ground. We must stand up for truth, even while we practice tolerance and respect for beliefs and

ideas different from our own and for the people who hold them.

Tolerance for Behavior

While we must practice tolerance and respect for others and their beliefs, including their right to explain and advocate their positions, we are not required to respect and tolerate wrong *behavior*. Our duty to truth requires us to seek relief from behavior that is wrong. This is easy with extreme behaviors that most believers and nonbelievers recognize as wrong or unacceptable.

As to less-extreme behaviors, where even believers disagree on whether they are wrong, the nature and extent of what we should tolerate is much more difficult to define. Thus, a thoughtful Latter-day Saint woman wrote me about her concern that “the world’s definition of ‘tolerance’ seems to be increasingly used in relation to tolerating wicked lifestyles.” She asked how the Lord would define *tolerance*.⁵

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has said: “The word *tolerance* does not stand alone. It requires an object and a response to qualify it as a virtue. ... Tolerance is often demanded but seldom returned. Beware of the word *tolerance*. It is a very unstable virtue.”⁶

This inspired caution reminds us that for persons who believe in absolute truth, tolerance for behavior is like a two-sided coin. Tolerance or respect is on one side of the coin, but truth is always on the other. You cannot possess or use the coin of tolerance without being conscious of both sides.

Our Savior applied this principle. When He faced the woman taken in adultery, Jesus spoke the comforting words of tolerance: “Neither do I condemn thee.” Then, as He sent her away, He spoke the commanding words of truth: “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). We should all be edified and strengthened by this example of speaking

both tolerance and truth: kindness in the communication but firmness in the truth.

Another thoughtful Latter-day Saint wrote: “I often hear the name of the Lord taken in vain, and I also have acquaintances who tell me that they are living with their boyfriends. I have found that observance of the Sabbath is almost obsolete. How can I keep my covenant to stand as a witness and not offend these people?”⁷

I begin with our personal conduct. In applying the sometimes-competing demands of truth and tolerance to these three behaviors—profanity, cohabitation, and Sabbath breaking—and many others, we should not be tolerant with ourselves. We should be ruled by the demands of truth. We should be strong in keeping the commandments and our covenants, and we should repent and improve when we fall short.

President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “The face of sin today often wears the mask of tolerance. Do not be deceived; behind that facade is heartache, unhappiness, and pain. ... If your so-called friends urge you to do anything you know to be wrong, *you* be the one to make a stand for right, even if you stand alone.”⁸

Similarly, with our children and others whom we have a duty to teach, our duty to truth is paramount. Of course, teaching efforts bear fruit only through the agency of others, so our teaching must always be done with love, patience, and persuasion.

I turn now to the obligations of truth and tolerance in our personal relations with associates who use profanity in our presence, live with a partner out of wedlock, or do not observe the Sabbath day appropriately.

Our obligation to tolerance means that none of these behaviors—or others we consider deviations from the truth—should ever cause us to react with hateful communications or unkind actions. But our obligation to truth has its own set of requirements and its own set of blessings.

When we “speak every man truth with his neighbour” and when we “[speak] the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15, 25), we are acting as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, doing His work. Angels will stand with us, and He will send His Holy Spirit to guide us.

In this sensitive matter we should first consider whether—or the extent to which—we should communicate to our associates what we know to be true about their behavior. In most cases this decision can depend on how directly we are personally affected by it.

Profanity consistently used in our presence is an appropriate cause for us to communicate the fact that this is offensive to us. Profanity used out of our presence by nonbelievers probably would not be an occasion for us to confront the offenders.

Cohabitation we know to be a serious sin, in which Latter-day Saints must not engage. When practiced by those around us, it can be private behavior or something we are asked to condone, sponsor, or facilitate. In the balance between truth and tolerance, tolerance can be dominant where the behavior does not involve us personally. But if the cohabitation does involve us personally, we should be governed by our duty to truth. For example, it is one thing to ignore serious sins when they are private; it is quite another thing to be asked to sponsor or implicitly endorse them, such as by housing them in our own homes.

On Sabbath observance, we should perhaps explain our belief that our observance of the Sabbath, including our partaking of the sacrament, restores us spiritually and makes us better people for the rest of the week. Then, to other believers, we might express appreciation for the fact that we share common ground on what is most vital: each of us believes in God and in the existence of absolute truth, even though we differ in our definitions of those fundamentals. Beyond that, we should remember the Savior’s teaching that we should avoid contention (see 3 Nephi 11:29–30) and that our

example and our preaching should “be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness” (D&C 38:41).

In all of this we should not presume to judge our neighbors or associates on the ultimate effect of their behaviors. That judgment is the Lord’s, not ours.

Principles in the Public Square

When believers enter the public square to try to influence the making or the administration of laws motivated by their beliefs, they should apply some different principles.

First, they must seek the inspiration of the Lord to be selective and wise in choosing which true principles they seek to promote by law or executive action. Generally, they should refrain from seeking laws or administrative action to facilitate beliefs that are distinctive to believers, such as the enforcement of acts of worship, even by implication. Believers can be less cautious in seeking government action that would serve principles broader than merely facilitating the practice of their beliefs, such as laws concerning public health, safety, and morals.

Believers can and must seek laws that will preserve religious freedom. Along with the ascendancy of moral relativism, the United States and other nations are experiencing a disturbing reduction in overall public esteem for religion. Once an accepted part of American life, religion is now suspect in the minds of many. Some influential voices even question the extent to which our constitutions should protect the free exercise of religion, including the right to practice and preach religious principles.

This is a vital matter on which we who believe in a Supreme Being who has established absolute right and wrong in human behavior must unite to insist on our time-honored rights to exercise our religion, to vote our consciences on public issues, and to participate in elections and debates in the public square and the halls of justice. We must

stand shoulder to shoulder with other believers to preserve and strengthen the freedom to advocate and practice our religious beliefs, whatever they are. For this purpose we must walk together on the same path in order to secure our freedom to pursue our separate ways when that is necessary according to our separate beliefs.

Second, when believers promote their positions in the public square, they should always be tolerant of the opinions and positions of those who do not share their beliefs. Believers must always speak with love and show patience, understanding, and compassion toward their adversaries. Christian believers are under command to love their neighbors (see Luke 10:27) and to forgive (see Matthew 18:21–35). They should also remember the Savior’s teaching to “bless them that curse [them], do good to them that hate [them], and pray for them which despitefully use [them], and persecute [them]” (Matthew 5:44).

Third, believers should not be deterred by the familiar charge that they are trying to legislate morality. Many areas of the law are based on Judeo-Christian morality and have been for centuries. Western civilization is based on morality and cannot exist without it. As the second U.S. president, John Adams, declared: “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”⁹

Fourth, believers should not shrink from seeking laws to maintain public conditions or policies that assist them in practicing the requirements of their faith where those conditions or policies are also favorable to the public health, safety, or morals. For example, even though religious beliefs are behind many criminal laws and some family laws, such laws have a long-standing history of appropriateness in democratic societies. But where believers are in the majority, they should always be sensitive to the views of the minority.

Finally, the spirit of our balance of truth and tolerance is applied in these words of President Hinckley: “Let us reach out to those in our

community who are not of our faith. Let us be good neighbors, kind and generous and gracious. Let us be involved in good community causes. There may be situations where, with serious moral issues involved, we cannot bend on matters of principle. But in such instances we can politely disagree without being disagreeable. We can acknowledge the sincerity of those whose positions we cannot accept. We can speak of principles rather than personalities.”¹⁰

Watchman on the Tower

The Bible teaches that one of the functions of a prophet is to be a “watchman” to warn Israel (see Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7). In revelation the Lord added this counsel for modern Zion: “Set ... a watchman upon the tower,” who will “[see] the enemy while he [is] yet afar off” and give warning to save the vineyard “from the hands of the destroyer” (D&C 101:45, 54).

I speak as one of those watchmen. I assure you that my message is true. I proclaim my knowledge that God lives! I testify that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, crucified for the sins of the world, and that He reaches out to each of us with the timeless invitation to receive His peace by learning of Him and walking in His way (see D&C 19:23).

Why Marriage and Family Matter – Everywhere in the World

L. Tom Perry, *Ensign*, May 2015

Last November, I had the privilege of being invited—along with President Henry B. Eyring and Bishop Gérald Caussé—to attend a colloquium on marriage and family at the Vatican in Rome, Italy. In attendance were religious representatives from 14 different faiths and from six of the seven continents, all of whom had been invited to express their beliefs on what is happening to the family in today’s world.

Pope Francis opened the first session of the assembly with this statement: “We now live in a culture of the temporary, in which more and more people are simply giving up on marriage as a public commitment. This revolution in manners and morals has often flown the flag of freedom, but in fact it has brought spiritual and material devastation to countless human beings, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. ... It is always they who suffer the most in this crisis.”¹

In referring to those of the rising generation, he said it is important that they “do not give themselves over to the poisonous [mentality] of the temporary, but rather be revolutionaries with the courage to seek true and lasting love, going against the common pattern”; this must be done.²

This was followed by three days of presentation and discussion with religious leaders addressing the subject of marriage between a man and a woman. As I listened to the widest imaginable variety of worldwide religious leaders, I heard them agree completely with each other and express support for one another’s beliefs on the sanctity of the institution of marriage and of the importance of families as the basic unit of society. I felt a powerful sense of commonality and unity with them.

There were many who saw and expressed this unity, and they did so in a variety of ways. One of my favorites was when a Muslim scholar from Iran quoted two paragraphs verbatim from our very own proclamation on the family.

During the colloquium, I observed that when various faiths and denominations and religions are united on marriage and family, they are also united on the values and loyalty and commitment which are naturally associated with family units. It was remarkable for me to see how marriage and family-centered priorities cut across and superseded any political, economic, or religious differences. When it comes to love of spouse and hopes, worries, and dreams for children, we are all the same.

It was marvelous to be in meetings with worldwide presenters as they universally addressed their feelings of the importance of marriage between a man and a woman. Each of their addresses was followed by testimonies from other religious leaders. President Henry B. Eyring gave a final testimony at the colloquium. He bore powerful witness to the beauty of a committed marriage and to our belief in the promised blessing of eternal families.

President Eyring's testimony was a fitting benediction to those three special days.

Now, you may be asking, "If the majority felt that similarity of family priority and beliefs, if all of those faiths and religions essentially agreed on what marriage should be, and if they all agreed on the value that should be placed on homes and family relationships, then how are we any different? How does The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints distinguish and differentiate itself from the rest of the world?"

Here is the answer: while it was wonderful to see and feel that we have so much in common with the rest of the world in regard to our families, only we have the eternal perspective of the restored gospel.

What the restored gospel brings to the discussion on marriage and family is so large and so relevant that it cannot be overstated: we make the subject eternal! We take the commitment and the sanctity of marriage to a greater level because of our belief and understanding that families go back to before this earth was and that they can go forward into eternity.

This doctrine is taught so simply, powerfully, and beautifully by Ruth Gardner's text for the Primary song "Families Can Be Together Forever." Pause for just a moment and think about Primary children all over the world singing these words in their native tongue, at the top of their lungs, with an enthusiasm that only love of family can evoke:

*Families can be together forever
Through Heavenly Father's plan.
I always want to be with my own family,
And the Lord has shown me how I can.³*

The entire theology of our restored gospel centers on families and on the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we believe in a premortal life where we all lived as literal spirit children of God our Heavenly Father. We believe that we were, and still are, members of His family.

We believe that marriage and family ties can continue beyond the grave—that marriages performed by those who have the proper authority in His temples will continue to be valid in the world to come. Our marriage ceremonies eliminate the words "till death do us part" and instead say, "for time and for all eternity."

We also believe that strong traditional families are not only the basic units of a stable society, a stable economy, and a stable culture of values—but that they are also the basic units of eternity and of the kingdom and government of God.

We believe that the organization and government of heaven will be built around families and extended families.

It is because of our belief that marriages and families are eternal that we, as a church, want to be a leader and a participant in worldwide movements to strengthen them. We know that it is not only those who are actively religious who share common values and priorities of lasting marriages and strong family relationships. A great number of secular people have concluded that a committed marriage and family lifestyle is the most sensible, the most economical, and the happiest way to live.

No one has ever come up with a more efficient way to raise the next generation than a household of married parents with children.

Why should marriage and family matter—everywhere? Public opinion polls show that marriage is still the ideal and the hope among the majority of every age group—even among the millennial generation, where we hear so much about chosen singleness, personal freedom, and cohabitation instead of marriage. The fact is that strong majorities worldwide still want to have children and to create strong families.

Once we are married and once we have children, the true commonality among all mankind becomes even more evident. As “family people”—no matter where we live or what our religious beliefs may be—we share many of the same struggles, the same adjustments, and the same hopes, worries, and dreams for our children.

As New York Times columnist David Brooks said: “People are not better off when they are given maximum personal freedom to do what they want. They’re better off when they are enshrouded in commitments that transcend personal choice—commitments to family, God, craft and country.”⁴

One problem is that much of the media and entertainment that the world shares does not reflect the priorities and values of the majority. For whatever reasons, too much of our television, movies, music, and Internet present a classic case of a minority masquerading as a majority. Immorality and amorality, ranging from graphic violence to recreational sex, is portrayed as the norm and can cause those who have mainstream values to feel like we are out of date or from a bygone era. In such a media and Internet-dominated world, it has never been harder to raise responsible children and to keep marriages and families together.

Despite what much of media and entertainment outlets may suggest, however, and despite the very real decline in the marriage and family orientation of some, the solid majority of mankind still believes that marriage should be between one man and one woman. They believe

in fidelity within marriage, and they believe in the marriage vows of “in sickness and in health” and “till death do us part.”

We need to remind ourselves once in a while, as I was reminded in Rome, of the wonderfully reassuring and comforting fact that marriage and family are still the aspiration and ideal of most people and that we are not alone in those beliefs. It has never been more of a challenge to find a practical balance between employment, families, and personal needs than it is in our day. As a church, we want to assist in all that we can to create and support strong marriages and families.

That is why the Church actively participates in and provides leadership to various coalitions and ecumenical efforts to strengthen the family. It is why we share our family-focused values in the media and on social media. It is why we share our genealogical and extended family records with all nations.

We want our voice to be heard against all of the counterfeit and alternative lifestyles that try to replace the family organization that God Himself established. We also want our voice to be heard in sustaining the joy and fulfillment that traditional families bring. We must continue to project that voice throughout the world in declaring why marriage and family are so important, why marriage and family really do matter, and why they always will.

My brothers and sisters, the restored gospel centers on marriage and family. It is also on marriage and family where we can unite most with other faiths. It is around marriage and family where we will find our greatest commonality with the rest of the world. It is around marriage and family that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has the greatest opportunity to be a light on the hill.

Let me close by bearing witness (and my nine decades on this earth fully qualify me to say this) that the older I get, the more I realize that family

is the center of life and is the key to eternal happiness.

I give thanks for my wife, for my children, for my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren, and for all of the cousins and in-laws and extended family who make my own life so rich and, yes, even eternal. Of this eternal truth I bear my strongest and most sacred witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Spiritual Impressions, Feelings, Thoughts or Insights From Your Readings or From the Lesson: