

## **Honorable, Happy, Successful Marriage**

“Chapter 18: Honorable, Happy, Successful Marriage,” *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 189–201

### **From the Life of Spencer W. Kimball**

Before his call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Spencer W. Kimball was part-owner of an insurance and realty company in Safford, Arizona. One of his employees, Carmen Richardson Smith, recalled the faithfulness of Spencer and Camilla Kimball when their son Edward was stricken with polio in the early 1930s:

“The relationship between Brother Kimball and his wife was something I admired very much. When Eddie was in California, receiving extended treatment, Sister Kimball stayed with him and President Kimball traveled there at critical times. During periods of recuperation following Eddie’s surgery, Brother Kimball would return home to take care of the rest of the family, while his wife stayed with Eddie.

“I believe he wrote to her every single day. Not just a short 50-word letter, either. Sometimes when he was particularly pressed for time he would dictate a letter to me, and I remember how I felt: it was almost a sacred honor.

“Theirs was a good, happy marriage, and they seemed to have great regard for each other. It seemed that their worlds revolved very much around each other.”<sup>1</sup>

Spencer and Camilla Kimball’s love for one another, which was so evident when they were young, grew stronger and deeper as they grew older. President Kimball often expressed gratitude for the relationship he and his wife shared: “Camilla has been by my side in every experience. We have buried our parents and other loved ones, and have given up our own little children prematurely born. We have been in the depths and soared to the heights. . . . We have wept together and we have laughed together. . . . Our life has been full of fun in spite of all the sad and serious things. We have danced; we have sung; we have entertained; we have loved and been loved. With a wife like Camilla Eyring, life becomes inclusive, full, and abundant.”<sup>2</sup>

Having experienced a long and happy marriage, he observed: “We need an unspoiled companion who will not count our wrinkles, remember our stupidities nor remember our weaknesses; . . . we need a loving companion with whom we have suffered and wept and prayed and worshipped; one with whom we have suffered sorrow and disappointments, one who loves us for what we are or intend to be rather than what we appear to be in our gilded shell.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball**

**Eternal marriage is ordained of God, and the family is essential in Heavenly Father’s plan for us.**

Marriage, *honorable* marriage, is ordained of God. He decreed that the basic unit of society should be the home and the family, and we must be warned that the false culture of the day is turning away from this God-ordained plan. ...

There seems to be a growing trend against marriage from degenerate areas of the world and a very strong trend toward marriage without children. Naturally the next question is, “Why marry?” And the “antimarrriage revolution” comes into focus. Arguments are given that children are a burden, a tie, a responsibility. Many have convinced themselves that education, freedom from restraint and responsibility—that is the life. And unfortunately this benighted and destructive idea is taking hold of some of our own people.<sup>4</sup>

To offset and neutralize the evil teachings in the media and on the cameras and in the show and on the street, we must teach marriage, proper marriage, eternal marriage.<sup>5</sup>

A basic reason for eternal marriage is that life is eternal; and marriage, to be in harmony with eternal purposes, must be consistent with life in duration. Marriage by civil officers, or by Church officers outside of the temples, is made for time only, “till death do you part” or “so long as you both shall live.” It terminates with death. ... Eternal marriage is performed by the prophet of the Lord or by one of the very few to whom he has delegated the authority. It is performed in holy temples erected and dedicated for that purpose. Only such marriage transcends the grave and perpetuates the husband-wife and parent-child relationships into and through eternity.<sup>6</sup>

Honorable, happy, and successful marriage is surely the principal goal of every normal person. Marriage is designed of the Lord to make strong and happy homes and posterity. Anyone who would purposely avoid marriage is not only not normal, but is frustrating his own program.

I defend the term *normal* because the Lord set the norm himself by bringing together Adam and Eve, his first male and first female on this earth, and performing a holy marriage ceremony to make them husband and wife. They were quite different in their makeup, with different roles to play. Hardly had he performed the ceremony than he said to them: “Multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion” (Gen. 1:28).

It is normal to marry and normal and proper to bear children. Every person should want and plan to be married because that is what God in heaven planned for us. That is the way he worked it out.<sup>7</sup>

The [Lord’s] whole program was intelligently organized to bring children into the world with love and filial interdependence. Had the superficial ideas of many mortals of today prevailed, the world, the human race, and all proper things would long ago have come to an end. ...

... The Lord has said that in order to obtain the highest of the three heavens or degrees of glory in the celestial kingdom, “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.” (D&C 131:2–3.)

This is the proper way.

There are some men who fail to marry through their own choice. They deprive themselves. There may be many women who also deprive themselves of blessings. There are others who have never married because they have had no opportunity. We know, of course, that the Lord will make ample provision and that no one will ever be condemned for something he or she could not have helped. ...

But, concerning marriage and the roles of man and woman, let no man defy God. ...

I sincerely hope that our Latter-day Saint girls and women, and men and boys, will drink deeply of the water of life and conform their lives to the beautiful and comprehensive roles the Lord assigned to them.

I hope we shall not attempt to perfect an already perfect plan, but seek with all our might, mind, and strength to perfect ourselves in the comprehensive program given to us. Because some of us have failed, certainly it would be unfair to place the blame upon the program. Let us control our attitudes, our activities, our total lives, that we may be heir to the rich and numerous blessings promised to us.<sup>8</sup>

### **Eternal marriage requires careful preparation.**

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

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

... "Soul mates" are fiction and an illusion; and while every young man and young woman will seek with all diligence and prayerfulness to find a mate with whom life can be most compatible and beautiful, yet it is certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage if both are willing to pay the price. ...

Two individuals approaching the marriage altar must realize that to attain the happy marriage which they hope for they must know that marriage is not a legal coverall, but it means sacrifice, sharing, and even a reduction of some personal liberties. It means long, hard economizing. It means children who bring with them financial burdens, service burdens, care and worry burdens; but also it means the deepest and sweetest emotions of all.<sup>9</sup>

Delayed marriage ... is not fully acceptable. All normal people should plan their lives to include a proper temple marriage in their early life and to multiply and have their families in the years of their early maturity.<sup>10</sup>

Those young people who chart their course to a marriage in the temple have already established a pattern of thought which will make them amenable to mutual planning with the chosen partner once he or she is found. Even before their marriage is solemnized in the holy place they will be planning their life together, and will continue the process as bride and groom when they sit down to chart their way through a happy, successful and spiritual life to exaltation in the kingdom of God.<sup>11</sup>

Any of you would go around the world for the sealing ordinance if you knew its importance, if you realized how great it is. No distance, no shortage of funds, no situation would ever keep you from being married in the holy temple of the Lord.<sup>12</sup>

There will be a new spirit in Zion when the young women will say to their boyfriends, "If you cannot get a temple recommend, then I am not about to tie my life to you, even for mortality." And the young returned missionary boys will say to their girlfriends, "I am sorry, but as much as I love you, I will not marry out of the holy temple." ...

... We wonder why, with all these blessings and promises, that people will fail to marry correctly and thus waste their lives in a frozen wilderness that may never thaw. Why will any young person ever give a single thought to a marriage out of the temple and jeopardize those glories that are available?<sup>13</sup>

### **Married couples can follow a never-failing formula to find happiness together.**

Almost all marriages could be beautiful, harmonious, happy, and eternal ones, if the two people primarily involved would determine that it should be, that it must be, that it will be.<sup>14</sup>

The mere performance of a ceremony does not bring happiness and a successful marriage. Happiness does not come by pressing a button, as does the electric light; happiness is a state of mind and comes from within. It must be earned. It cannot be purchased with money; it cannot be taken for nothing.

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

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

One comes to realize very soon after marriage that the spouse has weaknesses not previously revealed or discovered. The virtues which were constantly magnified during courtship now grow relatively smaller, and the weaknesses which seemed so small and insignificant during courtship now grow to sizable proportions. The hour has come for understanding hearts, for self-appraisal, and for good common sense, reasoning, and planning. ...

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

In a marriage commenced and based upon reasonable standards ... , there are not combinations of power which can destroy it except the power within either or both of the spouses themselves; and they must assume the responsibility generally. Other people and agencies may influence for good or bad. Financial, social, political, and other situations may seem to have a bearing; but the marriage depends first and always on the two spouses who can always make their marriage successful and happy if they are determined, unselfish, and righteous.

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

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

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

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

Fourth, there must be a complete living of the commandments of the Lord as defined in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

With these ingredients properly mixed and continually kept functioning, it is quite impossible for unhappiness to come, misunderstandings to continue, or breaks to occur. Divorce attorneys would need to transfer to other fields and divorce courts would be padlocked.<sup>15</sup>

### **Unselfishness and observance of the commandments lead to success in marriage.**

Sweethearts should realize before they take the vows that each must accept literally and fully that the good of the little new family must always be superior to the good of either spouse. Each party must eliminate the “I” and the “my” and substitute ... “we” and “our.” Every decision must take into consideration that there are two or more affected by it. As she approaches major decisions now, the wife will be concerned as to the effect they will have upon the parents, the children, the

home, and their spiritual lives. The husband's choice of occupation, his social life, his friends, his every interest must now be considered in the light that he is only a part of a family, that the totalness of the group must be considered.<sup>16</sup>

For two people to work out their marriage together, they need a carefully worked out budget, made by both husband and wife, and then careful adherence to the same. Many marriages are defeated in the marketplace when unscheduled purchases are made. Remember that marriage is a partnership and is not likely to be successful otherwise.<sup>17</sup>

A marriage may not always be even and incidentless, but it can be one of great peace. A couple may have poverty, illness, disappointment, failures, and even death in the family, but even these will not rob them of their peace. The marriage can be a successful one so long as selfishness does not enter in. Troubles and problems will draw parents together into unbreakable unions if there is total unselfishness there. ...

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

Total unselfishness is sure to accomplish another factor in successful marriage. If one is forever seeking the interests, comforts, and happiness of the other, the love found in courtship and cemented in marriage will grow into mighty proportions. Many couples permit their marriages to become stale and their love to grow cold like old bread or worn-out jokes or cold gravy. Certainly the foods most vital for love are consideration, kindness, thoughtfulness, concern, expressions of affection, embraces of appreciation, admiration, pride, companionship, confidence, faith, partnership, equality, and interdependence.

To be really happy in marriage, one must have a continued faithful observance of the commandments of the Lord. No one, single or married, was ever sublimely happy unless he was righteous. There are temporary satisfactions and camouflaged situations for the moment, but permanent, total happiness can come only through cleanliness and worthiness. ...

... If two people love the Lord more than their own lives and then love each other more than their own lives, working together in total harmony with the gospel program as their basic structure, they are sure to have this great happiness. When a husband and wife go together frequently to the holy temple, kneel in prayer together in their home with their family, go hand in hand to their religious meetings, keep their lives wholly chaste—mentally and physically—so that their whole thoughts and desires and loves are all centered in the one being, their companion, and both work together for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, then happiness is at its pinnacle.<sup>18</sup>

**Marriage requires total allegiance and total fidelity.**

There are those married people who permit their eyes to wander and their hearts to become vagrant, who think it is not improper to flirt a little, to share their hearts and have desire for someone other than the wife or the husband. The Lord says in no uncertain terms: “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.” (D&C 42:22.)

And, when the Lord says *all* thy heart, it allows for no sharing nor dividing nor depriving. And, to the woman it is paraphrased: “Thou shalt love thy husband with *all* thy heart and shalt cleave unto him and none else.”

The words *none else* eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes preeminent in the life of the husband or wife, and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse. We sometimes find women who absorb and hover over the children at the expense of the husband, sometimes even estranging them from him.

The Lord says to them: “Thou shalt cleave unto *him* and none else.”<sup>19</sup>

Frequently, people continue to cleave unto their mothers and their fathers and their chums. Sometimes mothers will not relinquish the hold they have had upon their children, and husbands as well as wives return to their mothers and fathers to obtain advice and counsel and to confide, whereas cleaving should be to the wife in most things, and all intimacies should be kept in great secrecy and privacy from others.<sup>20</sup>

Marriage presupposes total allegiance and total fidelity. Each spouse takes the partner with the understanding that he or she gives totally to the spouse all the heart, strength, loyalty, honor, and affection, with all dignity. Any divergence is sin; any sharing of the heart is transgression. As we should have “an eye single to the glory of God,” so should we have an eye, an ear, a heart single to the marriage and the spouse and family.<sup>21</sup>

I plead with all those bound by marriage vows and covenants to make that marriage holy, keep it fresh, express affection meaningfully and sincerely and often.

Husbands, come home—body, spirit, mind, loyalties, interests, and affections—and love your companion in an holy and unbreakable relationship.

Wives, come home with all your interests, fidelity, yearnings, loyalties, and affections—working together to make your home a blessed heaven. Thus would you greatly please your Lord and Master and guarantee yourselves happiness supreme.<sup>22</sup>