

“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.”

“Through the restored gospel we learn there is an *ideal family*. It is a family composed of a righteous Melchizedek Priesthood bearer with a righteous wife sealed to him and children born in the covenant or sealed to them. With a mother in the home in an environment of love and service, the parents teach their children, through example and precept, the ways of the Lord and His truths. They fulfill their divinely appointed roles mentioned in the family proclamation. Their children mature by living teachings instilled from birth. They develop characteristics of obedience, integrity, love of God, and faith in His holy plan” (Richard G. Scott, “First Things First,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 7).

“Throughout your life on earth, seek diligently to fulfill the fundamental purposes of this life *through the ideal family*. While you may not have yet reached that ideal, do all you can through obedience and faith in the Lord to consistently draw as close to it as you are able. Let nothing dissuade you from that objective. . . . Never do anything that would make you unworthy of it. If you have lost the vision of eternal marriage, rekindle it. If your dream requires patience, give it” (Richard G. Scott, “First Things First,” 7).

President Joseph F. Smith taught what we must do if we are to have ideal homes:

“What . . . is an ideal home . . . ? It is one . . . in which the father is devoted to the family with which God has blessed him, counting them of first importance, and in which they in turn permit him to live in their hearts. One in which there is confidence, union, love, sacred devotion between father and mother and children and parents” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 302–3).

Although all of us are trying to achieve ideal homes, we all occasionally experience conflicts. Even the Prophet Joseph Smith felt disharmony in his home at times. One morning, for example, when he was translating the Book of Mormon, he became upset about something his wife had done.

Later, as he tried to translate some of the Book of Mormon, he found he could not. He went to an orchard and prayed, and when he came back he asked for Emma’s forgiveness. Only then was he able to translate. (See B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:131.)

“Our hope in the Atonement empowers us with eternal perspective. Such perspective allows us to look beyond the here and now on into the promise of the eternities” (Steven E. Snow, “Hope,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 54).

“To declare the fundamental truths relative to marriage and family is not to overlook or diminish the sacrifices and successes of those for whom the ideal is not a present reality. Some of you are denied the blessing of marriage for reasons including a lack of viable prospects, same-sex attraction, physical or mental impairments, or simply a fear of failure that, for the moment at least, overshadows faith. Or you may have married, but that marriage ended, and you are left to manage alone what two together can barely sustain. Some of you who are married cannot bear children despite overwhelming desires and pleading prayers. . . . With confidence we testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ has anticipated and, in the end, will compensate all deprivation and loss for those who turn to Him. No one is predestined to receive less than all that the Father has for His children” (D. Todd Christofferson, “Why Marriage, Why Family,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 52).

Strengthening the Family: Adapting to Circumstances, *Ensign*, Dec. 2005

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

President Spencer W. Kimball mentioned one weakness in particular: “A couple may have poverty, illness, disappointment, failures, and even death in the family, but these will not rob them of their peace. The marriage can be successful so long as selfishness does not enter in. Troubles and problems will draw [partners] together into unbreakable unions if there is total unselfishness there” (*Marriage and Divorce* [1976], 19, 22).