

living room, below a beautiful white porcelain *Christus*. They are a constant reminder for us to live Christ-centered lives.

One day our son was reading the scriptures with his family. Our seven-year-old grandson Clatie read, “‘And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ’—Hey, that’s what Granny and Grandpa have on their wall!” Now that’s one of his favorite scriptures.

On another occasion we were at the visitors’ center on Temple Square with these same grandchildren. Two-year-old Ashley was tired and wanted to leave. Sister Mask asked her if she wanted to see a big Jesus like the one on our wall. She asked, “Is He as big as me?” “Even bigger,” Sister Mask replied. When that tiny, little girl looked up at the majestic *Christus*, she ran and stood at the feet and gazed up reverently for several minutes. When her father indicated it was time to go, she said, “No, no, Daddy. He loves me and wants to give me hugs!”

The road of life is strewn with spiritual mud slides. Whatever our sins and imperfections, may we attack them with

the same missionary zeal that those elders attacked their mud slides. And may we thank our Father daily for sending us His Son, Jesus Christ, to forgive us our mud spots so that we may stand spotless before Him. Ashley was right. He does love us and will say to us at that great day, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21).

I bear witness that He lives and He loves us. He is our Savior and Redeemer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

The choir and congregation will sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” Elders W. Douglas Shumway and Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy will then address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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## Elder W. Douglas Shumway

### **Today’s assault on marriage and family**

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

Today we are witnessing an unending assault on marriage and the family. They seem to be the adversary’s prime targets for belittlement and destruction. In a society where marriage is often shunned, par-

enthood avoided, and families degraded, we have the responsibility to honor our marriages, nurture our children, and fortify our families.

### **Honoring marriage**

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

The prophet Malachi taught: “The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou

hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. . . . Therefore take heed . . . and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth” (Malachi 2:14–15). To live our life with the wife of our youth, keeping covenants, acquiring wisdom, and sharing love now and throughout eternity is a privilege indeed.

I am reminded of the expression, “When the satisfaction or the security of another person becomes as significant to one as is one’s own satisfaction or security, then the state of love exists” (Harry Stack Sullivan, *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry* [1953], 42–43).

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

### Nurturing children

Parents have been given the sacred duty to “bring . . . up [children] in the nurture . . . of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). “The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Our responsibility, then, not only is for the well-being of our spouse but extends to the watchful care of our children, for “children are an heritage of the Lord” (Psalm 127:3). We can make the choice to nurture our children accordingly and “teach [them]

to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:28). As parents we must regard our children as gifts from God and be committed to making our homes a place to love, train, and nurture our sons and daughters.

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

### Infinite worth of our sons and daughters

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

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

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

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

"Horace Mann looked at him and said, 'Yes, my friend. It would be worth it if that one boy were my son; it would be worth it'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 64–65; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 61).

Loving, protecting, and nurturing our children are among the most sacred and eternally important things we will do. Worldly belongings will vanish, today's number-one movie or song will be irrelevant tomorrow, but a son or a daughter is eternal.

### **Cultivating family relationships**

"The family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Therefore parents and children must work together in unity to fortify family relationships, cultivating them day in and day out.

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

Young men and women, you can be a great influence for good in your homes as you help to achieve worthy family objectives. I shall never forget the family home evening years ago in which the name of

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

### **The gospel guides us in our families**

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