

as to how to use our agency. In that Council in Heaven, when the plan of our Father was presented to us—that we would have the opportunity to come to this earth and receive a body—the Beloved Son, who was the Beloved and Chosen of the Father from the beginning, said to His Father, “Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.”⁵

Likewise, we should make our choices using the same criteria. Instead of saying, “I do what I want,” our motto should be “I do what the Father wants me to do.”

If we do this, we can be certain that the blessings of the Lord will be upon us. It may well be that we have to make some of these choices when it is not convenient for us. I have learned, however, that although the time is sometimes not convenient for our schedule, nevertheless, if we make the right choice, the Lord will take care of us in His own way, which at that time is not yet known to us.

When we were transferred in 1989 from the Germany Hamburg Mission to East Germany to preside over the Dresden mission, the time was not convenient for our family. Our children had just adapted to their new school in Hamburg and now had to become acquainted with

the socialistic school system in East Germany. One child could not even come with us because she needed to finish school in the West. However, we have learned from this experience that what seemed to be hard for us in the beginning eventually turned into a great blessing for all of us. The Lord had His own way to take care of our challenges.

My dear brothers and sisters, I am so grateful for the wonderful gift of agency, which our Father in Heaven has given us. I am grateful to know that we are His children. I know from many of my own experiences that He loves us and that He cares for us. I know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, our Savior and Redeemer. I know that the Prophet Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son and that he is the prophet of the Restoration. I know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet of God today.

Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:26–27.
2. *Deseret News*, Oct. 10, 1866, 355.
3. *Millennial Star*, Oct. 14, 1889, 642.
4. Abraham 3:25.
5. Moses 4:2.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Nurturing marriage

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

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

close to him and rest her head upon his shoulder, seeking his companionship.

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

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

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

But these things I do know: I know "that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children."¹ I know that the earth was created and that the Lord's Church was restored so that families could be sealed and exalted as eternal entities.² And I know that one of Satan's cunning methods of undermining the work of the Lord is to attack the sacred institutions of marriage and the family.

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

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

I. Doctrinal foundation

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

"Wherefore, it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be

one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation."⁴

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

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

Scripture further reaffirms that "the man [is not] without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."⁶

Marriage is the foundry for social order, the fountain of virtue, and the foundation for eternal exaltation. Marriage has been divinely designated as an eternal and everlasting covenant.⁷ Marriage is sanctified when it is cherished and honored in holiness. That union is not merely between husband and wife; it embraces a partnership with God.⁸ "Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other."⁹ Children born of that marital union are "an heritage of the Lord."¹⁰ Marriage is but the beginning bud of family life; parenthood is its flower. And that bouquet becomes even more beautiful when graced with grandchildren. Families may become as eternal as the kingdom of God itself.¹¹

Marriage is both a commandment and an exalting principle of the gospel.¹² Because it is ordained of God, the intimate physical expressions of married love are sacred. Yet all too commonly, these divine gifts are desecrated. If a couple allows lewd language or pornography to corrupt their intimacy, they offend their Creator while they degrade and diminish their own divine gifts. True happiness is predicated upon personal purity.¹³ Scripture commands: "Be ye clean."¹⁴ Marriage should ever be a covenant to lift husbands and wives to exaltation in celestial glory.

Marriage was intended by the Lord to endure beyond physical death. His plan offers eternal perpetuation of the family

in the kingdom of God. His plan provides temples and opportunities to officiate therein for the living and the dead. A marriage sealed there launches a husband and wife into that grand order of unity so necessary to the perfection of God's work.¹⁵

Doctrines related to marriage include individual agency and accountability. All of us are accountable for our choices. Couples blessed with children are accountable to God for the care they give to their children.

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

II. Strengthening marriage

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

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

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

Suggestion number two—to *communicate* well with your spouse—is also important. Good communication includes taking time to plan together. Couples need private time to observe, to talk, and really listen to each other. They need to cooperate—helping each other as equal partners. They need to nurture their spiritual as well as physical intimacy. They should strive to elevate and motivate each other. Marital unity is sustained when goals are mutually understood. Good communication is also enhanced by prayer. To pray with specific mention of a spouse's good deed (or need) nurtures a marriage.

My third suggestion is to *contemplate*. This word has deep meaning. It comes from Latin roots: *con*, meaning “with,” and *templum*, meaning “a space or place to meditate.” It is the root from which the word *temple* comes. If couples contemplate often—with each other in the temple—sacred covenants will be better remembered and kept. Frequent participation in temple service and regular family scripture study nourish a marriage and strengthen faith within a family. Contemplation allows one to anticipate and to resonate (or be in tune) with each other and with the Lord. Contemplation will nurture both a marriage and God's kingdom. The Master said, “Seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”¹⁷

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

President Harold B. Lee said “that the most important of the Lord's work you and I will ever do will be within the walls

of our own homes.”¹⁸ And President David O. McKay declared, “No other success can compensate for failure in the home.”¹⁹

When you as husband and wife recognize the divine design in your union—when you feel deeply that God has brought you to each other—your vision will be expanded and your understanding enhanced. Such feelings are expressed in words of a song that has long been a favorite of mine:

Because you come to me with naught
save love,
And hold my hand and lift mine eyes
above,
A wider world of hope and joy I see,
Because you come to me.
Because you speak to me in accents
sweet,
I find the roses waking round my feet,
And I am led through tears and joy to
thee,
Because you speak to me.
Because God made thee mine, I'll
cherish thee
Through light and darkness, through
all time to be,
And pray His love may make our love
divine,
Because God made thee mine.²⁰

That each marriage may be so nurtured is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102, paragraph 1.
2. Whenever scriptures warn that the “earth would be utterly wasted,” the warning is connected to the need for priesthood authority to seal families together in holy temples (see D&C 2:3; 138:48; Joseph Smith—History 1:39).
3. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:76.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–16.
5. Matthew 19:5; see also Mark 10:7–8.
6. 1 Corinthians 11:11.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
8. See Matthew 19:6.
9. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” paragraph 6.
10. Psalm 127:3.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20.
12. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, 10th ed. (1953), 232–33.
13. See Alma 41:10.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 38:42; see also Isaiah 52:11; 3 Nephi 20:41; Doctrine and Covenants 133:5.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:15–18.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 23:3.
17. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 (see Matthew 6:33, footnote *a*).
18. *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 255.
19. Quoted from J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* (1924), 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 116.
20. “Because,” words by Edward Teschemacher (1902).

President Monson

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 p.m. mountain standard time. We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank this combined choir from Brigham Young University for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following the remarks of Brother Perry, the choir will sing “Come, Follow Me,” and at the conclusion of the singing the benediction will be offered by Elder Glenn L. Pace of the Seventy.