

Saturday, October 1

First Day

### President Kimball

We cordially welcome those who have just joined us and announce that we are gathered in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in the First Session of the 147th Semi-Annual Conference.

Elder James E. Faust, a President of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will now address us. Following Elder Faust, we shall hear from Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder James E. Faust

Some years ago, I was consulted by a woman who desired a divorce from her husband on grounds which, in my opinion, were justified. After the divorce was concluded, I did not see her again for many years. A chance meeting with her on the street was very surprising. The years of loneliness and discouragement were evident in her once beautiful face.

After passing a few pleasantries, she was quick to say that life had not been rich and rewarding for her and that she was tired of facing the struggle alone. Then came a most startling disclosure, which, with her permission, I share. She said, "Bad as it was, if I had to do it over again, knowing what I do now, I would not have sought the divorce. This is worse."

### Divorce

Statistically, it is difficult to avoid a divorce because in the United States with every one hundred marriages there are now about fifty divorces. (*World Almanac*, 1976.) Unless the present rate of ever-increasing divorces diminishes, in the early 1980s with every one hundred marriages there will be seventy divorces.

Divorce can be justified only in the most rare of circumstances, because it often tears people's lives apart and shears family happiness. Frequently in

a divorce the parties lose much more than they gain.

The traumatic experience one goes through in divorce seems little understood and not well enough appreciated; and certainly there need to be much more sympathy and understanding for those who have experienced this great tragedy and whose lives cannot be reversed. For those who are divorced, there is still much to be hoped for and expected in terms of fulfillment and happiness in life, in the forgetting of self and in the rendering of service to others.

### Difficult questions

Why is happiness in marriage so fragile and fleeting for so many, yet so abundant for others? Why does the resulting train of heartache and suffering have to be so long and have so many innocent people on board?

What are the missing enriching ingredients in so many marriages, all begun with such happiness and so many high hopes?

I have long pondered these difficult questions. Having spent almost a lifetime dealing with human experiences, I am somewhat familiar with the problems of unhappy marriages, of divorce, and of heartbroken families. I can also speak of great happiness, for, thanks to my beloved Ruth, I have found in mar-

riage the richest fulfillment of human existence.

### Reasons for divorce

There are no simple, easy answers to the challenging and complex questions of happiness in marriage. There are also many supposed reasons for divorce. Among them are the serious problems of selfishness, immaturity, lack of commitment, inadequate communication, unfaithfulness; and all of the rest, which are obvious and well known.

In my experience there is another reason which seems not so obvious but which precedes and laces through all of the others. It is the lack of a constant enrichment in marriage. It is an absence of that something extra which makes it precious, special, and wonderful, when it is also drudgery, difficult, and dull.

### Enriching a marriage

You might wonder, "How can a marriage be constantly enriched?" Adam, speaking of Eve, said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." (Gen. 2:23.)

We build our marriages with endless friendship, confidence, integrity, and by administering and sustaining each other in our difficulties.

There are a few simple, relevant questions which each person, whether married or contemplating marriage, should honestly ask in an effort to become "one flesh." They are:

First, am I able to think of the interest of my marriage and partner first before I think of my own desires?

Second, how deep is my commitment to my companion, aside from any other interests?

Third, is he or she my best friend?

Fourth, do I have respect for the dignity of my partner as a person of worth and value?

Fifth, do we quarrel over money? Money itself seems neither to make a

couple happy, nor the lack of it, necessarily, to make them unhappy, but money is often a symbol of selfishness.

Sixth, is there a spiritually sanctifying bond between us?

I commend to all the excellent discussion by President Kimball, "Marriage and Divorce," in which he reminds us, "[There are] no combination[s] of power [which] can destroy [a] marriage except the power within either or both of the spouses themselves." (*Marriage and Divorce*, Deseret Book, p. 17.)

### Prayer

Marriage relationships can be enriched by better communication. One important way is to pray together. This will resolve many of the differences, if there are any, between the couple before sleep comes. I do not mean to overemphasize differences, but they are real, and make things interesting. Our differences are the little pinches of salt which can make the marriage seem sweeter. We communicate in a thousand ways, such as a smile, a brush of the hair, a gentle touch, and remembering each day to say "I love you" and the husband to say "You're beautiful." Some other important words to say, when appropriate, are "I'm sorry." Listening is excellent communication.

### Trust

Complete trust in each other is one of the greatest enriching factors in marriage. Nothing devastates the core of mutual trust necessary to maintain a fulfilling relationship like infidelity. There is never a justification for adultery. Despite this destructive experience, occasionally marriages are saved and families preserved. To do so requires the aggrieved party to be capable of giving unreserved love great enough to forgive and forget. It requires the errant party to want desperately to repent and actually forsake evil.

Our loyalty to our eternal companion should not be merely physical, but mental and spiritual as well. Since there are no harmless flirtations and no place for jealousy after marriage, it is best to avoid the very appearance of evil by shunning any questionable contact with another to whom we are not married.

### Virtue

Virtue is the strong glue which holds it all together. Said the Lord, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else." (D&C 42:22.)

Of all that can bless marriages, there is one special enriching ingredient, which above all else will help join a man and a woman together in a very real, sacred, spiritual sense. It is the presence of the divine in marriage. Shakespeare, speaking in *Henry the Fifth*, said, "God, the best maker of all marriages, combine your hearts in one." (*Henry V*, 5:2.) God is also the best keeper of marriages.

There are many things which go into making a marriage enriching, but they seem to be of the husk. Having the companionship and enjoying the fruits of a Holy and Divine Presence is the kernel of a great happiness in marriage. Spiritual oneness is the anchor. Slow leaks in the sanctifying dimension of marriage often cause marriages to become flat tires.

Divorces are increasing because in many cases the union lacks that enrichment which comes from the sanctifying benediction which flows from the keeping of the commandments of God. It is a lack of spiritual nourishment.

### Tithing

I learned in serving almost twenty years as bishop and stake president that an excellent insurance against divorce is the payment of tithing. Payment of tith-

ing seems to facilitate keeping the spiritual battery charged in order to make it through the times when the spiritual generator has been idle or not working.

There is no great or majestic music which constantly produces the harmony of a great love. The most perfect music is a welding of two voices into one spiritual solo. Marriage is the way provided by God for the fulfillment of the greatest of human needs, based upon mutual respect, maturity, selflessness, decency, commitment, and honesty. Happiness in marriage and parenthood can exceed a thousand times any other happiness.

### Parenthood

The soul of the marriage is greatly enriched and the spiritual growing process is greatly strengthened when a couple become parents. Parenthood should bring the greatest of all happiness. Men grow because as fathers they must take care of their families. Women blossom because as mothers they must forget themselves. We understand best the full meaning of love when we become parents.

Our homes should be among the most hallowed of all earthly sanctuaries.

In the enriching of marriage the big things are the little things. It is a constant appreciation for each other and a thoughtful demonstration of gratitude. It is the encouraging and the helping of each other to grow. Marriage is a joint quest for the good, the beautiful, and the divine.

The Savior has said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20.)

May the presence of God be found enriching and blessing all marriages and homes, especially those of His Saints, as part of His eternal plan, I pray humbly in the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Amen.