

one month before his son left for his mission. So the whole family is now united in the faith!

Brother and Sister Cannon really have seen the fruits of their labors, and they have choice memories of the time they spent with our Heavenly Father's children in Africa.

I share the experiences of these two couples with you to let you feel the importance of missionary service for senior couples and the blessings that come to all who are engaged in the work of the Master.

I testify, as a convert to the Church, that no greater joy can come to men than being involved in carrying the gospel to all nations, kin-

dreds, tongues, and people.

I humbly pray that the missionary spirit will be with us all in the time ahead and that we may be an instrument in the hand of the Lord to build his kingdom here on earth prior to his glorious return, and do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Romney

Elder Jacob de Jager, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

Elder Boyd K. Packer, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

The prophet Jacob foretold the destruction of a people because they were blind to ordinary things, "which blindness," he said, "came by looking beyond the mark." (Jacob 4:14.)

We often seek for things we cannot seem to find when they are within easy reach—ordinary, obvious things.

I wish to talk about an ordinary word. I have tried for months—really tried—to find some way to hold this word up in such a way that you would be very impressed with what it means.

Marriage

The word is *marriage*.

I have wished that I could set before you a finely carved chest, placing it where the light is just right. I would carefully unlatch it and reverently uncover the word—*marriage*.

Perhaps then you would see that it is priceless!

I cannot show it to you that way, so I will do the best I can using other ordinary words.

It is my purpose to endorse and to favor, to encourage and defend marriage.

Many regard it nowadays as being, at best, semiprecious, and by some it is thought to be worth nothing at all.

I have seen and heard, as you have seen and heard, the signals all about us, carefully orchestrated to convince us that marriage is out of date and in the way.

Counterfeit of marriage

There is a practice, now quite prevalent, for unmarried couples to live together, a counterfeit of marriage. They suppose that they shall have all that marriage can offer without the obligations connected with it. They are wrong!

However much they hope to find in a relationship of that kind, they will lose more. Living together without marriage destroys something inside all who participate. Virtue, self-esteem, and refinement of character wither away.

Claiming that it will not happen does not prevent the loss; and these virtues, once lost, are not easily reclaimed.

To suppose that one day they may nonchalantly change their habits and immediately claim all that might have been theirs had they not made a mockery of marriage is to suppose something that will not be.

One day, when they come to themselves, they will reap disappointment.

One cannot degrade marriage without tarnishing other words as well, such words as *boy, girl, manhood, womanhood, husband, wife, father, mother, baby, children, family, home*.

Such words as *unselfishness* and *sacrifice* will then be tossed aside. Then self-respect will fade and love itself will not want to stay.

If you have been tempted to enter such a relationship or if you now live with another without marriage, leave! Withdraw from it! Run away from it! Do not continue with it! Or, if you can, make a marriage out of it.

Marriage is sacred

Even a rickety marriage will serve good purpose as long as two people struggle to keep it from falling down around them.

And now a word of warning. One who destroys a marriage takes upon himself a very great responsibility indeed. Marriage is sacred!

To willfully destroy a marriage, either your own or that of another couple, is to offend our God. Such a thing will not be lightly considered in the judgments of the Almighty and in the eternal scheme of things will not easily be forgiven.

Do not threaten nor break up a marriage. Do not translate some disenchantment with your own marriage partner or an attraction for someone

else into justification for any conduct that would destroy a marriage.

This monumental transgression frequently places heavy burdens upon little children. They do not understand the selfish yearnings of unhappy adults who are willing to buy their own satisfaction at the expense of the innocent.

God Himself decreed that the physical expression of love, that union of male and female which has power to generate life, is authorized only in marriage.

Marriage is the shelter where families are created. That society which puts low value on marriage sows the wind and, in time, will reap the whirlwind—and thereafter, unless they repent, bring upon themselves a holocaust!

Trouble attracts attention

Some think that every marriage must expect to end in unhappiness and divorce, with the hopes and dreams predestined to end in a broken, sad wreck of things.

Some marriages do bend, and some will break, but we must not, because of this, lose faith in marriage nor become afraid of it.

Broken marriages are not typical.

Remember that trouble attracts attention! We travel the highway with thousands of cars moving in either direction without paying much attention to any of them. But should an accident occur, we notice immediately.

If it happens again, we get the false impression that no one can go safely down the road.

One accident may make the front page, while a hundred million cars that safely pass are not regarded as worth mentioning.

Writers think that a happy, stable marriage does not have the dramatic appeal, the conflict worth

featuring in a book or a play or a film. Therefore, we constantly hear about the ruined ones and we lose our perspective.

I believe in marriage. I believe it to be the ideal pattern for human living. I know it to be ordained of God. The restraints relating to it were designed to protect our happiness.

Keep faith in marriage

I do not know of any better time in all of the history of the world for a young couple who are of age and prepared and who are in love to think of marriage. There is no better time because it is *your* time.

I know that these are very troubled times. Troubles like we have now are very hard on marriages.

Do not lose faith in marriage. Not even if you have been through the unhappiness of a divorce and are surrounded with pieces of a marriage that has fallen apart.

If you have honored your vows and your partner did not do so, remember God is watching over us. One day, after all of the tomorrows have passed, there will be recompense. Those who have been moral and faithful to their covenants will be happy and those who have not will be otherwise.

Some marriages have broken up in spite of all that one partner could do to hold the marriage together. While there may be faults on both sides, I do not condemn the innocent one who suffers in spite of all that was desired and done to save the marriage.

And to you I say, do not lose faith in marriage itself. Do not let your disappointment leave you bitter or cynical or justify any conduct that is unworthy.

If you have had no opportunity for marriage or if you have lost your companion in death, keep your faith in marriage.

Some years ago an associate of mine lost his beloved wife. She died after a lingering illness, and he watched in helpless agony as the doctors withdrew all hope.

One day near the end she told him that when she was gone she wanted him to marry again and he was not to wait too long a time. He protested! The children were nearly grown and he would go the rest of the way alone.

She turned away and wept and said, "Have I been such a failure that after all our years together you would rather go unmarried? Have I been such a failure?"

In due time there came another, and their life together has reaffirmed his faith in marriage. And I have the feeling that his first beloved wife is deeply grateful to the second one, who filled the place that she could not keep.

Joys and tests of marriage

Marriage is yet safe, with all its sweet fulfillment, with all its joy and love. In marriage all of the worthy yearnings of the human soul, all that is physical and emotional and spiritual, can be fulfilled.

Marriage is not without trials of many kinds. These tests forge virtue and strength. The tempering that comes in marriage and family life produces men and women who will someday be exalted.

God has ordained that life should have its beginning within the protecting shelter of marriage, conceived in a consummate expression of love and nurtured and fostered with that deeper love which is accompanied always by sacrifice.

Marriage offers fulfillment all the way through life—in youth and young love, the wedding and on the honeymoon, with the coming of little children and the nurturing of them. Then come the golden years when

young ones leave the nest to build one of their own. The cycle then repeats itself, as God has decreed it should.

**Eternal love, eternal marriage,
eternal increase**

There is another dimension to marriage that we know of in the Church. It came by revelation. This glorious, supernal truth teaches us that marriage is meant to be eternal.

There are covenants we can make if we are willing, and bounds we can seal if we are worthy, that will keep marriage safe and intact beyond the veil of death.

The Lord has declared, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39.)

The ultimate end of all activity in the Church is that a man and his wife and their children can be happy at home and that the family can continue through eternity. All Christian doctrine is formulated to protect the individual, the home, and the family.

These lines express something of the place of marriage in the eternal progress of man:

*We have within a burning flame,
A light to kindle lights,
The sacred fire of life itself,
Which if misused ignites
A smold'ring, suffocating cloud
Of sorrow and distress.
When used by law this power brings
forth
A life, a family, happiness.*

*Temptors from the darkest realm
Seek to pervert this power
In acts of wickedness and waste
Until there comes the hour
Of judgment and of recompense,
When bitter tears are shed
O'er power once held to foster life
That now is gone and dead.*

*I know this power to be a key,
A very key to God's own plan
Which brings to pass eternal life
And immortality for man.
And marriage is the crucible
Where elements of life combine,
Where mortal temples are conceived
Within that plan divine.*

*Then spirit offspring of our God
Can come through mortal birth
To have a choice, to face the test—
The purpose of our stay on earth.
Here good and evil stand alike
Before decision's sovereign nod.
Those who elect the righteous path
Will part the veil, return to God.*

*A gift from God, the plan provides
That mortal beings in humble strait
Be given power, supernal power,
To share their love and help create
A living child, a living soul,
Image of man, and of Deity.
How we regard this sacred gift
Will fix our course, our destiny!*

Eternal love, eternal marriage, eternal increase! This ideal, which is new to many, when thoughtfully considered, can keep a marriage strong and safe. No relationship has more potential to exalt a man and a woman than the marriage covenant. No obligation in society or in the Church supersedes it in importance.

I thank God for marriage. I thank God for temples. I thank God for the glorious sealing power, that power which transcends all that we have been given, through which our marriages may become eternal. May we be worthy of this sacred gift, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Following Elder Packer's talk, the Choir sang "More Holiness Give Me" without announcement.
