

many quiet but significant ways; to those who are the salt of the earth and the strength of the world and the backbone of each nation—to you we would simply express our admiration. If you endure to the end, and if you are valiant in the testimony of Jesus, you will achieve true greatness and will live in the presence of our Father in Heaven.

As President Joseph F. Smith has said, "Let us not be trying to substitute an artificial life for the true one." (*Juvenile Instructor*, p. 753.) Let us remember that "out of small things proceedeth that which is great." (D&C 64:33.) Let us remember that doing the things that have been ordained by God to be important and needful and necessary, even though

the world may view them as unimportant and insignificant, will eventually lead us to true greatness.

That we may never be discouraged in doing those daily tasks which God has ordained to the common lot of man is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Romney

Elder Howard W. Hunter, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Robert L. Simpson, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Robert L. Simpson

My thoughts today are centered in the concern we all share over a growing crisis in today's world, a sort of spreading cancer which continues to eat away at the family unit, which has been ordained of God.

Divorce rate

Divorce, with all of its diabolic side effects, threatens the very foundations of society. President Joseph F. Smith observed: "Marriage is the preserver of the human race. Without it, the purposes of God would be frustrated; virtue would be destroyed to give place to vice and corruption, and the earth would be void and empty." (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1939, p. 272.) Each prophet of this dispensation has said essentially the same thing in his own way.

According to data from the National Center for Health Statistics, nearly two million divorces are being granted this year in the United States. This is the highest number ever record-

ed and three times the number reported just twenty years ago. Most nations of the world seem to be following a similar trend. Today, more than one out of every three marriages is terminating in divorce. Families within the Church, unfortunately, are following this world pattern to an alarming degree, and it should not be so.

Lack of communication

U.S. News & World Report recently quoted Herbert A. Gliberman, a recognized authority on divorce and domestic relations, as follows: "The biggest rise in the divorce rate has been among couples married 10 years or longer. It's not uncommon today for couples 25 and 30 years into their marriage to seek and obtain a divorce." He then identifies the main cause:

"No. 1," he states, "is the [couples'] inability to talk honestly with each other, bare their souls and treat each other as their best friend. . . . They [talk] about mostly

superficial things in order to impress one another."

And then he continues, "I find that too many people talk right through each other rather than to each other." He concludes: "The lack of communication brings on drinking, infidelity or physical or mental abuse. . . ."

"For many, there is a lack of tolerance, an inability to bear discomfort or to recognize that they're not perfect and neither is their mate." ("Why So Many Marriages Fail," *U.S. News & World Report*, 20 July 1981, pp. 53-54.)

Family council and reasoning together

There is really only one way to ensure good family communication, and that is the Lord's way. He advocates the council method.

The Church is made up of councils. Certainly, one of the most important of all Church councils must be the family council, presided over by the husband and the wife. In this council parents should stand equally yoked together, just as they are meant to share equally in every priesthood blessing that accrues to their family circle. Through the eternities the Lord's eternal objective for a married couple is that they become one!

Next, the Lord instructs us to "reason together" (D&C 50:10)—no arguing, no haranguing, no backbiting, but rather reasoning together with soft-spoken voices. What a great example for the children! How can a family go wrong if each major decision is carefully measured by gospel teachings? And then, after reasoning together, the decision can be made to move forward confidently and in harmony with divine law.

Pillow-talk

The Savior taught the extra mile (see Matt. 5:41), which means unselfishness. By just going the extra mile almost every couple could make

their marriage relationship successful. But an extra effort on just one side of the boat means imbalance, and a capsized marriage is likely. Unselfishness must come from both sides.

Every couple, whether in the first or the twenty-first year of marriage, should discover the value of pillow-talk time at the end of the day—the perfect time to take inventory, to talk about tomorrow. And best of all, it's a time when love and appreciation for one another can be reconfirmed. The end of another day is also the perfect setting to say, "Sweetheart, I am sorry about what happened today. Please forgive me."

You see, we are all still imperfect, and these unresolved differences, allowed to accumulate day after day, add up to a possible breakdown in the marital relationship—all for the want of better communication, and too often because of foolish pride.

Dictatorship—against gospel teaching

The Church has always taken a firm stand against dictatorships of any form. Any man who chooses to administer the office of his calling as a priesthood leader in the home by dictatorial methods is out of harmony with gospel teaching. He will not enjoy the spiritual rewards of reasoning together. His pillow talk will cease to be a two-way communication, and rebellion will usually follow.

Dictators are always quick to issue an ultimatum; and in case you have not discovered, an ultimatum to today's youth is almost guaranteed failure. It is the equivalent of waving a red flag; it is like declaring war on those you love.

The Lord warns us that "no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned:

“By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile.” (D&C 121:41-42.)

I like the advice given by President Joseph F. Smith. He said this to fathers: “It is only when men depart from the right spirit, when they digress from their duty, that they will neglect or dishonor any soul that is committed to their care. They are bound to honor their wives and children.” (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 285.)

Family finances

There is yet another major cause for divorce that should not go unattended: the mismanagement of family financial resources. To pay tithes and offerings while ignoring the balance of Heavenly Father’s advice concerning sound judgment in family finances will probably cause the windows of heaven to stick a little bit. The promised blessings will not likely be forthcoming as expected.

Every prophet in this dispensation has taught in clear, unmistakable terms that the Saints should stay out of debt (we heard it again this morning from President Kimball), that we should not participate in “something-for-nothing” schemes, which has been stressed today. He advises us to be frugal, to save, and to earn our money the old-fashioned way, by the sweat of our face. We are admonished to teach our children the ethic of work. We have been encouraged at every turn to set the proper example of industry and thrift and also to be generous and consistent in our offerings to the poor and the needy.

During these days of a strained economy it is imperative that the family live within these divine injunctions. Each husband and wife needs to reason together about the family budget on a regular basis. If downward adjustments need to be made in the family spending habits, it is far better to do what needs to be done now rather than build up to an impossible financial

crisis later on—a crisis that too often leads to the divorce courts.

Few things are as destructive in a marriage as the statement, “Sweetheart, I just signed up today for a \$200 course at the local health spa.” A well-planned health course may be just the thing, but not as a surprise addition to an already strained budget. This could have been and should have been a prime topic for pillow talk beforehand. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell told us so well recently, “If your companion is going to participate in a crash landing, then she should also help file the flight plan.”

Faith, obedience, loyalty

Now, quickly, just to mention three items as foundation stones to a secure marriage:

First: *faith*, the first principle of the gospel. It must be the first principle of your marriage—not only faith in God and in His beloved Son, not only in the living prophet, but, may I also suggest, a sincere and ever-growing faith in each other, and also in your children.

Second: *obedience*, often referred to as the first law of heaven. Without obedience to God’s laws there could be no blessings. Obedience to our covenants with the Lord is a prerequisite to peace and love within the family circle.

Third: *loyalty*. Loyalty to a companion through thick and thin will develop a basic character trait so strong that loyalty to the Church and true principles will follow just as naturally as the night follows the day.

The law of chastity is one of the Ten Commandments. This demands loyalty in marriage. Brothers and sisters, protect this sacred principle as though your life depended upon it, because gospel truth confirms that your eternal life most certainly does depend upon fidelity in your marriage.

The scriptures confirm the eternal truth that “marriage is ordained of God.” (D&C 49:15.) And then this:

“Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 11:11.)

And according to a prophet in this dispensation, “God not only commends but he commands marriage. While man was yet immortal, before sin had entered the world, our heavenly Father himself performed the first marriage. He united our first parents in the bonds of holy matrimony, and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. This command he has never changed, abrogated or annulled; but it has continued in force throughout all the generations of mankind.” (Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 274.)

Mark confirms: “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Mark 10:9.)

Unselfishness is the key

Now, brothers and sisters, every divorce in the Church affects the work of the kingdom adversely. There needs to be greater effort on the part of each companion threatened by divorce. There needs to be more counseling, not only one with another, but also with appropriate priesthood leaders. There needs to be a more universal understanding about the eternal nature of the marriage covenant.

Time and experience have proven that unselfishness is the key to successful marriage, for, you see, unselfishness invites reasoning together.

Unselfishness insists on an extra-mile effort.

Unselfishness paves the way for family financial security.

Unselfishness stops divorce.

And don't you agree that perhaps the most important questions that will need to be answered by a divorced person in the hereafter will be these:

1. “Did you do everything possible to save your marriage?”
2. “Were gospel truths applied to the fullest?”
3. “Did you seek out, listen to, and abide by priesthood counsel?”

May He bless us to regard every marriage as an act ordained of God; for, as President Joseph F. Smith said, it is the hope of the human race.

And these thoughts I leave with you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Romney

We have just listened to Elder Robert L. Simpson, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, also a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will now address us.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Pondering can open spiritual eyes

In a revelation given to President Joseph F. Smith, which has recently been added to the Doctrine and Covenants as section 138, there is an important message for all of us.

“On the third of October,” writes President Smith, “in the year nineteen hundred and eighteen, I sat in my room pondering over the scriptures;

“And reflecting upon the great atoning sacrifice that was made by the Son of God, for the redemption of the world. . . .

“As I pondered over these things which are written, the eyes of my understanding were opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me.” (Verses 1-2, 11.)

It is about pondering and what can be gained therefrom that I should like to address my remarks today.