

the scriptures of how we should consider and evaluate the commandments of the Lord. If we choose to react like Joshua, and Abraham, and Rebekah and Rachel, our response will be, simply, to go and do the thing that the Lord has commanded.

There is good reason to make our decision *now* to serve the Lord. On this Sunday morning, when the complications and temptations of life are somewhat removed, and when we have the time and more of an inclination to take an eternal perspective, we can more clearly evaluate what will bring us the greatest happiness in life. We should decide now, in the light of the morning, how we will act when the darkness of night and when the storms of temptation arrive.

I pray that we will have the

strength to decide now to do what we ought to do. I pray that we will decide now to serve the Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Choir sang "On Great Lone Hills" without announcement.

President Hinckley

We extend our appreciation to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have offered their facilities as a public service to make the proceedings of this conference available to a large audience throughout many areas of the world. Our next speaker will be President Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

President Ezra Taft Benson

Family life ordained of God

Marriage is the rock foundation, the cornerstone, of civilization. No nation will ever rise above its homes.

Marriage and family life are ordained of God.

In an eternal sense, salvation is a family affair. God holds parents responsible for their stewardship in rearing their family. It is a most sacred responsibility.

Today we are aware of great problems in our society. The most obvious are sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, drug abuse, alcoholism, vandalism, pornography, and violence.

These grave problems are symptoms of failure in the home—the disregarding of principles and practices established by God in the very beginning.

Because parents have departed

from the principles the Lord gave for happiness and success, families throughout the world are undergoing great stress and trauma. Many parents have been enticed to abandon their responsibilities in the home to seek after an elusive "self-fulfillment." Some have abdicated parental responsibilities for pursuit of material things, unwilling to postpone personal gratification in the interest of their children's welfare.

It is time to awaken to the fact that there are deliberate efforts to restructure the family along the lines of humanistic values. Images of the family and of love as depicted in television and film often portray a philosophy contrary to the commandments of God.

If one doubts that the family as an institution is being restructured, consider these facts:

Nearly one out of every three marriages ends in divorce.

The traditional family—one which has a husband, a wife not working outside the home, and children—constitutes only 14 percent of American households. (Current Population Reports, 1980.)

Nearly fifty percent of the work force is now female.

About 56 percent of these female workers are mothers with preschool children, and nearly 60 percent of them have teenagers at home.

In the United States alone it is estimated that eight to ten million youngsters, six and under, are in child-care situations outside the home.

Almost one-fifth of all children in the United States live in a one-parent home.

No society will long survive without mothers who care for their young and provide that nurturing care so essential for their normal development.

Innocent sounding phrases are now used to give approval to sinful practices. Thus, the term "alternative life-style" is used to justify adultery and homosexuality, "freedom of choice" to justify abortion, "meaningful relationship" and "self-fulfillment" to justify sex outside of marriage.

If we continue with present trends, we can expect to have more emotionally disturbed young people, more divorce, more depression, and more suicide.

The family is the most effective place to instill lasting values in its members. Where family life is strong and based on principles and practices of the gospel of Jesus Christ, these problems do not as readily appear.

My message this morning is to return to the God-ordained fundamentals that will ensure love, stability, and happiness in our homes. May I offer three fundamentals to happy, enduring family relationships.

Attain righteous unity

First: *A husband and wife must attain righteous unity and oneness in their goals, desires, and actions.*

Marriage itself must be regarded as a sacred covenant before God. A married couple have an obligation not only to each other, but to God. He has promised blessings to those who honor that covenant.

Fidelity to one's marriage vows is absolutely essential for love, trust, and peace. Adultery is unequivocally condemned by the Lord.

Husbands and wives who love each other will find that love and loyalty are reciprocated. This love will provide a nurturing atmosphere for the emotional growth of children. Family life should be a time of happiness and joy that children can look back on with fond memories and associations.

Hear these simple admonitions from the Lord which may be applied to the marriage covenant.

First: "See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires. . . . Cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another" (D&C 88:123-24).

Second: "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else. . . . Thou shalt not commit adultery." (D&C 42:22, 24.)

Third: "He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention" (3 Nephi 11:29).

And there are many more scriptural admonitions.

Restraint and self-control must be ruling principles in the marriage relationship. Couples must learn to bridle their tongues as well as their passions.

Prayer in the home and prayer with each other will strengthen your union. Gradually thoughts,

aspirations, and ideas will merge into a oneness until you are seeking the same purposes and goals.

Rely on the Lord, the teachings of the prophets, and the scriptures for guidance and help, particularly when there may be disagreements and problems.

Spiritual growth comes by solving problems together—not by running from them. Today's inordinate emphasis on individualism brings egotism and separation. Two individuals becoming "one flesh" is still the Lord's standard. (See Genesis 2:24.)

The secret of a happy marriage is to serve God and each other. The goal of marriage is unity and oneness, as well as self-development. Paradoxically, the more we serve one another, the greater is our spiritual and emotional growth.

The first fundamental, then, is to work toward righteous unity.

Nurture children with love

Second: *Nurture your children with love and the admonitions of the Lord.*

Rearing happy, peaceful children is no easy challenge in today's world, but it can be done, and it is being done.

Responsible parenthood is the key.

Above all else, children need to know and feel they are loved, wanted, and appreciated. They need to be assured of that often. Obviously, this is a role parents should fill, and most often the mother can do it best.

Children need to know who they are in the eternal sense of their identity. They need to know that they have an eternal Heavenly Father on whom they can rely, to whom they can pray, and from whom they can receive guidance. They need to know whence they came so that their lives will have meaning and purpose.

Children must be taught to pray, to rely on the Lord for guidance, and to express appreciation for the blessings that are theirs. I recall kneeling at the bedsides of our young children, helping them with their prayers.

Children must be taught right from wrong. They can and must learn the commandments of God. They must be taught that it is wrong to steal, lie, cheat, or covet what others have.

Children must be taught to work at home. They should learn there that honest labor develops dignity and self-respect. They should learn the pleasure of work, of doing a job well.

The leisure time of children must be constructively directed to wholesome, positive pursuits. Too much time viewing television can be destructive, and pornography in this medium should not be tolerated. It is estimated that growing children today watch television over twenty-five hours per week.

Communities have a responsibility to assist the family in promoting wholesome entertainment. What a community tolerates will become tomorrow's standard for today's youth.

Families must spend more time together in work and recreation. Family home evenings should be scheduled once a week as a time for recreation, work projects, skits, songs around the piano, games, special refreshments, and family prayers. Like iron links in a chain, this practice will bind a family together, in love, pride, tradition, strength, and loyalty.

Family study of the scriptures should be the practice in our homes each Sabbath day.

Daily devotionals are also a commendable practice, where scripture reading, singing of hymns, and family prayer are a part of our daily routine.

Prepare children for gospel ordinances

Third: *Parents must prepare their children for the ordinances of the gospel.*

The most important teachings in the home are spiritual. Parents are commanded to prepare their sons and daughters for the ordinances of the gospel: baptism, confirmation, priesthood ordinations, and temple marriage. They are to teach them to respect and honor the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Most importantly, parents are to instill within their children a desire for eternal life and to earnestly seek that goal above all else.

Eternal life may be obtained only by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

When parents themselves have complied with the ordinances of salvation, when they have set the example of a temple marriage, not only is their own marriage more likely to succeed, but their children are far more likely to follow their example.

Parents who provide such a home will have, as the Lord has said, "a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, . . . a house of order, a house of God" (D&C 88:119). Regardless of how modest or humble that home may be, it will have love, happiness, peace, and joy. Children will grow up in righteousness and truth and will desire to serve the Lord.

One past Church President gave this counsel to parents:

"The home is what needs reforming. Try today, and tomorrow, to make a change in your home by praying twice a day with your family. . . . Ask a blessing upon every meal you eat. Spend ten minutes . . .

reading a chapter from the words of the Lord in the [scriptures]. . . . Let love, peace, and the Spirit of the Lord, kindness, charity, sacrifice for others, abound in your families. Banish harsh words, . . . and let the Spirit of God take possession of your hearts. Teach to your children these things, in spirit and power. . . . Not one child in a hundred would go astray, if the home environment, example and training, were in harmony with . . . the gospel of Christ." (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939, p. 302.)

I testify that, by following these precepts and practices, serious problems with the family can and will be avoided.

Thank God for the joys of family life. I have often said there can be no genuine happiness separate and apart from a good home. The sweetest influences and associations of life are there.

God bless us to strengthen our homes with love and unity and by following his precepts, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just heard President Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. Thank you, President Benson. Our concluding speaker will be Elder J. Thomas Fyans, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Following his remarks the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Father in Heaven, We Do Believe." The benediction will then be pronounced by Elder Jack H. Goasling, Jr., a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.