

President Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

Elder James E. Faust, also of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder James E. Faust

Strengthening the family

At this Easter season I extend to all who are participating in these services my warmest greetings and prayers for your happiness and well-being. On this day we remember that the risen Lord has charged us with the responsibility to build the kingdom of God on earth. With this charge in mind, I hope to add a few thoughts that may strengthen the most important of all institutions—the family.

In recent times, society has been plagued with a cancer from which few families have escaped. I speak of the disintegration of our homes. Immediate corrective treatment is urgent. In what I have to say, I do not wish to offend anyone. I affirm my profound belief that God's greatest creation is womanhood. I also believe that there is no greater good in all the world than motherhood. The influence of a mother in the lives of her children is beyond calculation. Single parents, most of whom are mothers, perform an especially heroic service.

Importance of caring fathers

I hasten to acknowledge that there are too many husbands and fathers who are abusive to their wives and children and from whom the wives and children need protection. Yet modern sociological studies powerfully reaffirm the essential influence of a caring father in the life of a child—boy or girl. In the past twenty years, as homes and families have struggled to stay intact, sociological studies reveal this alarming fact: much of the crime and many of the behavioral disorders in the United States come from homes where the father has abandoned the chil-

dren. In many societies the world over, child poverty, crime, drug abuse, and family decay can be traced to conditions where the father gives no male nurturing. Sociologically it is now painfully apparent that fathers are not optional family baggage.

We need to honor the position of the father as the primary provider for physical and spiritual support. I state this with no reluctance because the Lord has revealed that this obligation is placed upon husbands. "Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken" (D&C 83:2). Further, "All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age" (D&C 83:4). In addition, their spiritual welfare should be "brought to pass by the faith and covenant of their fathers" (D&C 84:99). As regards little children, the Lord has promised that "great things may be required at the hands of their fathers" (D&C 29:48).

Both parents are important

It is useless to debate which parent is most important. No one would doubt that a mother's influence is paramount with newborns and in the first years of a child's life. The father's influence increases as the child grows older. However, each parent is necessary at various times in a child's development. Both fathers and mothers do many intrinsically different things for their children. Both mothers and fathers are equipped to nurture children, but their approaches are different. Mothers seem to take a dominant role in preparing children to live within their families, present and future. Fathers seem best equipped to prepare children to

function in the environment outside the family.

One authority states: "Studies show that fathers have a special role to play in building a child's self-respect. They are important, too, in ways we really don't understand, in developing internal limits and controls in children." He continues: "Research also shows that fathers are critical in establishment of gender in children. Interestingly, fatherly involvement produces stronger sexual identity and character in both boys and girls. It is well established that the masculinity of sons and the femininity of daughters are each greater when fathers are active in family life" (Karl Zinsmeister, "Do Children Need Fathers?" *Crisis*, Oct. 1992).

Parents in any marital situation have a duty to set aside personal differences and encourage each other's righteous influence in the lives of their children.

The status of women

Is it not possible to give to woman-kind all the rights and blessings that come from God and legal authority without diminishing the nobility of God's other grand creation, manhood? Eliza R. Snow stated in 1872:

"The status of women is one of the questions of the day. Socially and politically it forces itself upon the attention of the world. Some . . . refuse to concede that woman is entitled to the enjoyment of any rights other than . . . the whims, fancies or justice . . . men may choose to grant her. The reasons which they cannot meet with argument they decry and ridicule; an old refuge for those opposed to correct principles which they are unable to controvert. Others . . . not only recognize that woman's status should be improved, but are so radical in their extreme theories that they would set her in antagonism to man, assume for her a separate and opposing existence; and . . . show how entirely independent she should be." Indeed, she continued, they "would make her adopt the more reprehensible phases of character

which men present, and which should be shunned or improved by them instead of being copied by women. These are the two extremes, and between them is the 'golden mean'" ("Woman's Status," *The Woman's Exponent*, 15 July 1872, p. 29).

The priesthood: guiding authority

Many people do not understand our belief that God has wisely established a guiding authority for the most important institutions in the world. This guiding authority is called the priesthood. The priesthood is held in trust to be used to bless all of God's children. Priesthood is not gender; it is blessings from God for all at the hands of the servants He has designated. Within the Church this authority of the priesthood can bless all members through the ministration of home teachers, quorum presidents, bishops, fathers, and all other righteous brethren who are charged with the administration of the affairs of the kingdom of God. Priesthood is the righteous power and influence by which boys are taught in their youth and throughout their lives to honor chastity, to be honest and industrious, and to develop respect for, and stand in the defense of, womanhood. Priesthood is a restraining influence. Girls are taught that through its influence and power to bless, they can fulfill many of their desires.

Holding the priesthood means following the example of Christ and seeking to emulate his example of fatherhood. It means constant concern and caring for one's own flesh and blood. The man who holds the priesthood is to honor it by eternally cherishing, with absolute fidelity, his wife and the mother of his children. He is to extend lifelong care and concern for his children, and their children. The plea of David for his rebel son is one of the most moving in all of the scriptures, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33).

Marriage is the first priority

I urge each husband and father of this Church to be the kind of a man your wife would not want to be without. I urge the sisters of this Church to be patient, loving, and understanding with their husbands. Those who enter into marriage should be fully prepared to establish their marriage as the first priority in their lives.

It is destructive to the feeling essential for a happy marriage for either party to say to the other marriage partner, "I don't need you." This is particularly so because the counsel of the Savior was and is to become one flesh: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh" (Matthew 19:5-6).

It is far more difficult to be of one heart and mind than to be physically one. This unity of heart and mind is manifest in sincere expressions of "I appreciate you" and "I am proud of you." Such domestic harmony results from forgiving and forgetting, essential elements of a maturing marriage relationship. Someone has said that we should keep our eyes wide open before marriage and half shut afterward (Magdeleine de Scudéry, in John P. Bradley, et al., comp., *The International Dictionary of Thoughts* [Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1969], p. 472). True charity ought to begin in marriage, for it is a relationship that must be rebuilt every day.

I wonder if it is possible for one marriage partner to jettison the other and become completely whole. Either partner who diminishes the divine role of the other in the presence of the children demeans the budding femininity within the daughters and the emerging manhood of the sons. I suppose there are always some honest differences between husband and wife, but let them be settled in private.

Covenants between men and women

The importance of this subject emboldens me to say a word about covenant

breaking. It must be recognized that some marriages just fail. To those in that circumstance, I extend understanding because every divorce carries heartache with it. I hope what I say will not be disturbing. In my opinion, any promise between a man and a woman incident to a marriage ceremony rises to the dignity of a covenant. The family relationship of father, mother, and child is the oldest and most enduring institution in the world. It has survived vast differences of geography and culture. This is because marriage between man and woman is a natural state and is ordained of God. It is a moral imperative. Those marriages performed in our temples, meant to be eternal relationships, then, become the most sacred covenants we can make. The sealing power given by God through Elijah is thus invoked, and God becomes a party to the promises.

"Just cause" for breaking covenants

What, then, might be "just cause" for breaking the covenants of marriage? Over a lifetime of dealing with human problems, I have struggled to understand what might be considered "just cause" for breaking of covenants. I confess I do not claim the wisdom or authority to definitively state what is "just cause." Only the parties to the marriage can determine this. They must bear the responsibility for the train of consequences which inevitably follows if these covenants are not honored. In my opinion, "just cause" should be nothing less serious than a prolonged and apparently irredeemable relationship which is destructive of a person's dignity as a human being.

At the same time, I have strong feelings about what is not provocation for breaking the sacred covenants of marriage. Surely it is not simply "mental distress" or "personality differences" or having "grown apart" or having "fallen out of love." This is especially so where there are children. Enduring divine counsel comes from Paul:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

"That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, [and] to love their children" (Titus 2:4).

Cure for decaying family life

In my opinion, members of the Church have the most effective cure for our decaying family life. It is for men, women, and children to honor and respect the divine roles of both fathers and mothers in the home. In so doing, mutual respect and appreciation among the members of the Church will be fostered by the righteousness found there. In this way the great sealing keys restored by Elijah, spoken of by Malachi, might operate "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse" (D&C 110:15; see also Malachi 4:6).

The sealing power in our daily lives

President Joseph Fielding Smith stated concerning the keys of Elijah: "This sealing power bestowed upon Elijah, is the power which binds husbands and wives, and children to parents for time and eternity. It is the binding power existing in every Gospel ordinance. . . . It was the mission of Elijah to come, and restore it so that the curse of confusion and disorder would not exist in the kingdom of God" (*Elijah the Prophet and His Mission* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957], p. 5). Confusion and disorder are all too common in society, but they must not be permitted to destroy our homes.

Perhaps we regard the power bestowed by Elijah as something associated only with formal ordinances performed in sacred places. But these ordinances become dynamic and productive of good only as they reveal themselves in our daily lives. Malachi said that the power of Elijah would turn the *hearts* of the fathers

and the children to each other. The heart is the seat of the emotions and a conduit for revelation (see Malachi 4:5-6). This sealing power thus reveals itself in family relationships, in attributes and virtues developed in a nurturing environment, and in loving service. These are the cords that bind families together, and the priesthood advances their development. In imperceptible but real ways, the "doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul [and thy home] as the dews from heaven" (D&C 121:45).

"Fathers, come home"

I so testify that the blessings of the priesthood, honored by fathers and husbands and revered by wives and children, can indeed cure the cancer that plagues our society. I plead with you, Fathers, come home. Magnify your priesthood calling; bless your families through this sacred influence, and experience the rewards promised by our Father and God. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Faust.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time. We emphasize that's mountain standard time because tomorrow we'll be on mountain daylight saving time. And therefore it's very important that before you retire tonight you turn your clocks ahead one hour so you'll be here on time tomorrow.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. daylight saving time. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which immediately follows must be in their seats no later than 9:15 in the morning.

We express gratitude to the single-adult choir from the Ephraim, Logan, Ogden, Orem, and Salt Lake institutes