

Two Great Commandments

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We must try to keep both of the great commandments. To do so, we walk a fine line between law and love.

My dear sisters in the gospel of Jesus Christ, I greet you as divinely assigned guardians of the eternal family. President Russell M. Nelson has taught us, “This Church was restored so that families could be formed, sealed, and exalted eternally.”¹ That teaching has important implications for persons who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, commonly referred to as LGBT.² President Nelson has also reminded us that we don’t “have to [always] agree with each other to love each other.”³ These prophetic teachings are important for family discussions to answer the questions of children and youth. I have prayerfully sought inspiration to speak to this audience because you are uniquely affected by these questions, which directly or indirectly affect every family in the Church.

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I begin with what Jesus taught were the two great commandments.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”⁴

This means we are commanded to love everyone, since Jesus’s parable of the good Samaritan teaches that everyone is our neighbor.⁵ But our zeal to keep this second commandment must not cause us to forget the first, to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. We show that love by “keep[ing] [His] commandments.”⁶ God requires us to obey His commandments because only through that obedience, including repentance, can we return to live in His presence and become perfect as He is.

In his recent talk to the young adults of the Church, President Russell M. Nelson spoke of what he called the “strong connection between God’s love and His laws.”⁷ The laws that apply most significantly to the issues relating to those identifying as LGBT are God’s law of marriage and its companion law of chastity. Both are essential in our Father in Heaven’s plan of salvation for His children. As President Nelson taught, “God’s laws are motivated entirely by His infinite love for us and His desire for us to become all we can become.”⁸

President Nelson taught: “Many countries ... have legalized same-sex marriage. As members of the Church, we respect the laws of the land ... , including civil marriage. The truth is, however, that in the beginning ... marriage was ordained by God! And to this day it is defined by Him as being between a man and a woman. God has not changed *His* definition of marriage.”

President Nelson continued: “God has also not changed His law of chastity. Requirements to enter the temple have not changed.”⁹

President Nelson reminded all of us that “our commission as Apostles is to teach nothing but truth. That commission does *not* give [Apostles] the authority to modify divine law.”¹⁰ Thus, my sisters, the leaders of the Church must always teach the unique importance of marriage between a man and a woman and the related law of chastity.

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The work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is ultimately concerned with preparing the children of God for the celestial kingdom, and most particularly for its highest glory, exaltation or eternal life. That highest destiny is possible only through marriage for eternity.¹¹ Eternal life includes the creative powers inherent in the combination of male and female¹²—what modern revelation describes as the “continuation of the seeds forever and ever.”¹³

In his talk to young adults, President Nelson taught, “Abiding by God’s laws will keep you safe as you progress toward eventual exaltation”¹⁴—that is, to become like God, with the exalted life and divine potential of our Heavenly Parents. That is the destiny we desire for all we love. Because of that love, we cannot let our love supersede the commandments and the plan and work of God, which we know will bring those we love their greatest happiness.

But there are many we love, including some who have the restored gospel, who do not believe in or choose not to follow God’s commandments about marriage and the law of chastity. What about them?

God’s doctrine shows that all of us are His children and that He has created us to have joy.¹⁵ Modern revelation teaches that God has provided a plan for a mortal experience in which all can choose obedience to seek His highest blessings or make choices that lead to one of the less glorious kingdoms.¹⁶ Because of God’s great love for all of His children, those lesser kingdoms are still more wonderful than mortals can comprehend.¹⁷ The Atonement of Jesus Christ makes all of this possible, as He “glorifies the Father, and *saves all the works of his hands.*”¹⁸

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I have spoken of the first commandment, but what of the second? How do we keep the commandment to love our neighbors? We seek to persuade our members that those who follow lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender teachings and actions should be treated with the love our Savior commands us to show toward all our neighbors. Thus, when same-sex marriage was declared legal in the United States, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve declared: “The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us to love and treat all people with kindness and civility—even when we disagree. We affirm that those who avail themselves of laws or court rulings authorizing same-sex marriage should not be treated disrespectfully.”¹⁹

Further, we must never persecute those who do not share our beliefs and commitments.²⁰ Regretfully, some persons facing these issues continue to feel marginalized and rejected by some members and leaders in our families, wards, and stakes. We must all strive to be kinder and more civil.

IV.

For reasons we do not understand, we have different challenges in our mortal experiences. But we do know that God will help each of us overcome these challenges if we sincerely seek His help. After suffering and repenting for violations of laws we have been taught, we are all destined for a kingdom of glory. The ultimate and final judgment will be by the Lord, who alone has the required knowledge, wisdom, and grace to judge each of us.

Meanwhile, we must try to keep both of the great commandments. To do so, we walk a fine line between law and love—keeping the commandments and walking the covenant path, while loving our neighbors along the way. This walk requires us to seek divine inspiration on what to support and what to oppose and how to love and listen respectfully and teach in the process. Our walk demands that we not compromise on commandments but show forth a full measure of understanding and love. Our walk must be considerate of children who are uncertain about their sexual orientation, but it discourages premature labeling because, in most children, such uncertainty decreases significantly over time.²¹ Our walk opposes recruitment away from the covenant path, and it denies support to any who lead people away from the Lord. In all of this we remember that God promises hope and ultimate joy and blessings for all who keep His commandments.

V.

Mothers and fathers and all of us are responsible to teach both of the two great commandments. For the women of the Church, President Spencer W. Kimball described that duty in this great prophecy: “Much of the major growth that is coming to the Church in the last days will come because many of the good women of the world ... will be drawn to the Church in large numbers. This will happen to the degree that the women of the Church reflect righteousness and articulateness in

their lives and to the degree that the women of the Church are seen as distinct and different ... from the women of the world. ... Thus it will be that female exemplars of the Church will be a significant force in both the numerical and the spiritual growth of the Church in the last days.”²²

Speaking of that prophecy, President Russell M. Nelson declared that “the day that President Kimball foresaw is today. You are the women he foresaw!”²³ Little did we who heard that prophecy 40 years ago realize that among those the women of this Church may save will be their own dear friends and family who are currently influenced by worldly priorities and devilish distortions. My prayer and blessing is that you will teach and act to fulfill that prophecy, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.