



Lesson #45: "The Family Is Ordained of God" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World")

Introduction



This lesson discusses "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," which contains the Lord's teachings regarding the family, given through the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. By following these teachings, we can strengthen and unify our families now and prepare to live as eternal families.

The family is central to God's plan.

"The Family: A Proclamation to the World" was presented by President Gordon B. Hinckley at the general Relief Society meeting in September 1995. Since that time, it has been reprinted in many languages for Church members and others throughout the world. It has also been presented to government leaders in many lands.

(See the title, subtitle, and first two paragraphs of the *Proclamation*.)

President Gordon B. Hinckley taught: "Why do we have this proclamation on the family now? Because the family is under attack. All across the world families are falling apart. The place to begin to improve society is in the home. Children do, for the most part, what they are taught. We are trying to make the world better by making the family stronger" ("Inspirational Thoughts," *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 5).

The proclamation states that marriage and family are "ordained of God" and "central to [His] plan for the eternal destiny of His children." **D&C 131:1-4** teaches that an eternal family is required for exaltation in the celestial glory.

Genesis 1:26-27 says that we were created in the image of God and the Proclamation states that we are all spirit children of God. This knowledge reveals the potential that each of us has as a member of Heavenly Father's family.

Next Week

#46 "Zion—The Pure in Heart" (D&C 57:1-3; 64:33-43; 97:8-28; 105:1-12; Moses 7:12-19, 61-63, 68-69; Articles of Faith 1:10; Our Heritage, pp. 37-38, 145-46)

Lesson Highlights

- The family is central to God's plan.
- Sacred ordinances make it possible for families to be together eternally.
- The power to create mortal life is sacred.
- Parents have a sacred duty to care for each other and teach their children.
- Successful marriages and families are based on righteous principles.
- Strengthening families is everyone's responsibility.

A study of this lesson will help us understand the eternal importance of the family and inspire us to strengthen our families.



Sacred ordinances make it possible for families to be together eternally.

See **paragraph 3** of the **Proclamation... "In the premortal realm..."**. This paragraph reminds us of the purpose of mortality and indicates that we are to obtain a body, gain experience and knowledge, progress to perfection, merit eternal life, establish eternal family relationships, and enter into and faithfully observe the covenants which enable us to return to Father with our family.

The power to create mortal life is sacred.

See **paragraphs 4 and 5** of the **Proclamation**. **Elder Henry B. Eyring** taught: "*Children are the inheritance of the Lord to us in this life and also in eternity. Eternal life is not only to have forever our descendants from this life. It is also to have eternal increase... We can understand why our Heavenly Father commands us to reverence life and to cherish the powers that produce it as sacred. If we do not have those reverential feelings in this life, how could our Father give them to us in the eternities?*" (Ensign, Feb. 1998, 15).

Parents have a sacred duty to care for each other and teach their children.

See **paragraph 6** of the **Proclamation**. Married couples should strengthen their love for each other. As **President Hinckley** taught: "*When you are married, be fiercely loyal to one another. Selfishness is the great destroyer of happy family life. If you will make your first concern the comfort, the well-being, and the happiness of your companion, sublimating any personal concern to that loftier goal, you will be happy, and your marriage will go on throughout eternity*" (Ensign, Dec. 1995, 67).

Children are blessed when they have parents who love and care for each other.

Successful marriages and families are based on righteous principles.

See **paragraph 7** of the **Proclamation**. Another teaching of the Proclamation is that "*happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.*" It further states that "*successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.*"

The Proclamation points out specific responsibilities of fathers—to preside over the home, provide the necessities of life, and provide protection. **D&C 121:41-46** gives direction on how this is to be accomplished in righteousness.

We know that to be an eternal family, we must receive the sealing ordinance in the temple and keep the covenants associated with that sealing ordinance. We should pay strict attention to those covenants and strengthen our commitment to keeping them. Because we make covenants to be bound together forever, our behavior toward family members should be influenced by our covenants.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught: "*The body is an essential part of the soul... We declare that one who uses the God-given body of another without divine sanction abuses the very soul of that individual, abuses the central purpose and processes of life... In sexual transgression the soul is a stake—the body and the spirit*" (Ensign, Nov. 1998, 76). In teaching our children about this sacred power, review *For the Strength of Youth* [34285] or *A Parent's Guide* [31125].

D&C 68:25-28; 93:40 remind us of principles which parents are required to teach their children. Teaching of families can be accomplished in varied settings such as family home evenings, family prayers, mealtimes, bedtime, traveling together, and working together at home or in the community.

The role of the Church in teaching children was stated by **President Spencer W. Kimball**: "*It is the responsibility of the parents to teach their children. The Sunday School, the Primary, [the Mutual], and other organizations of the Church play a secondary role*" (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 332).

Primary responsibilities for mothers are also given—and mothers should be teaching their daughters how to nurture through their daily example. **President Gordon B. Hinckley** taught: "*If there is to be a return to old and sacred values, it must begin in the home. It is here that truth is learned, that integrity is cultivated, that self-discipline is instilled, and that love is nurtured... Sisters, guard your children... Nothing is more precious to you as mothers, absolutely nothing. Your children are the most valuable thing you will have in time or all eternity. You will be fortunate indeed is, as you grow old and look at those you brought into the world, you find in them uprightness of life, virtue in living, and integrity in their behavior*" (Ensign, Nov. 1998, 99).

There is a need within the Church to remind our children of the important responsibilities of marriage and bearing children, for this is the foundation of eternal life and existence. We need to remind our young people not to trade their birthright for a bowl of porridge.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks stated, "*This tendency to postpone adult responsibilities, including marriage and family, is surely visible among our LDS young adults. The average age at marriage has increased in the last few decades, and the number of children born to LDS married couples has decreased.*"

(CES fireside, Oakland, California, May 5, 2005 posted at Meridian Magazine)



While prime responsibilities are assigned to each parent, fathers should help nurture and the best parents work together as equal partners.

Strengthening families is everyone's responsibility.

See the **final two paragraphs** of the **Proclamation**. The proclamation concludes by warning of the serious consequences of family disintegration and by calling upon all people to strengthen the family.

Speaking to a gathering of mayors and other public officials, **President Gordon B.**

Hinckley said: *"To you men and women of great influence, you who preside in the cities of the nation, to you I say that it will cost far less to reform our schools, to teach the virtues of good citizenship, than it will to go on building and maintaining costly jails and prisons... But there is another institution of even greater importance than the schools. It is the home. I believe that no nation can rise higher than the strength of its families"* (Ensign, Nov. 1998, 109).

Conclusion

It is incumbent upon us as parents or future parents to think about how we would answer these questions: Do all my family members sense my love for them? Are we striving to live as an eternal family? What can I do to strengthen my family?

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve: *"The plan of the Father is that family love and companionship will continue into the eternities. Being ... in a family carries a great responsibility of caring, loving, lifting, and strengthening each member of the family so that all can righteously endure to the end in mortality and dwell together throughout eternity. It is not enough just to save ourselves. It is equally important that parents, brothers, and sisters are saved in our families. If we return home alone to our Heavenly Father, we will be asked, 'Where is the rest of the family?'"* (Ensign, Nov. 1996, 65).

Our number one responsibility is to strengthen our own families. The Proclamation reminds us of many things that we need to do. As we do so, we send strong children out into the world who believe in the Lord and have a moral basis upon which to operate. We set an example to the world that attracts that which is good.

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- What are some of the things you have done that have helped bring greater strength and unity in your family?



THE FAMILY

A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

WE, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

HUSBAND AND **WIFE** have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness,

to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

WE WARN that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

WE CALL UPON responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.
