

Come Follow Me Lesson 51
December 13-19
The Family: A Proclamation to the World

“The family is central to the Creator’s plan.”

“[The Family: A Proclamation to the World](#)” is clearly about families. But it is equally about God’s plan of salvation. One way to study the proclamation is to look for what it teaches about our premortal, mortal, and postmortal life. What do you learn when you study the proclamation this way? How does this help you understand why marriage and family are essential to God’s plan?

See also Dallin H. Oaks, “[The Plan and the Proclamation](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 28–31.

“Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Think of paragraphs six and seven of [the family proclamation](#) as a pattern for “happiness in family life.” As you read these paragraphs, identify principles of “successful marriages and families.” Then think about a family relationship you would like to strengthen. What do you feel inspired to do? How will you involve the Savior in your efforts?

See also Richard J. Maynes, “[Establishing a Christ-Centered Home](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 37–39; “What Matters Most,” video, ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

I “will be held accountable before God” for the way I treat my family.

[The family proclamation](#) includes marvelous blessings that Heavenly Father promises for those who follow His counsel. It also includes strong warnings for those who do not. Consider making a list of the blessings and warnings you find.

How are you acting on God’s counsel in the proclamation? If you stood before God today, what would you be confident discussing with Him about your family relationships? What would you need to improve?

See also [Alma 5:15–22](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 42:22–25](#); [93:39–44](#).

Alma 5:15-22 – 15 Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who ^acreated you? (This question to counter the teachings of the Nehors.) Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption ^braised in incorruption, to stand before God to be ^cjudged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?

16 I say unto you, can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me ye ^ablessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?

17 Or do ye ^aimagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and ^bsay—Lord, our

works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth—and that he will save you?

18 Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect^a remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God? (Sterling W. Sill said: “That calls for an important ability (to imagine Judgment Day), and the best way to avoid possible tragedy is to focus our imagination upon [Judgment] Day before we actually get there. We can be absolutely certain that we will all want to be a faithful, devoted, hard-working, enthusiastic full tithe-paying member of God's kingdom when we stand before the judgment bar. But we must get the impulse to faithfulness ahead of time; as someone has said that hell is ‘truth seen too late.’” (*Conference Report*, Apr. 1964, p. 16) Neal A. Maxwell said: “At the judgment we will not only have the Book of Mormon's prophesied ‘bright recollection’ and ‘perfect remembrance’ of our misdeeds (see Alma 5:18; 11:43). The joyous things will be preserved too—we shall know ‘even as we know now’ (Alma 11:43; see also D&C 93:33). Among the ‘all things [that] shall be restored’ (Alma 40:23) will be memory, including eventually the memory of premortal events and conditions. What a flood of feeling and fact will come to us when, at a time a loving God deems wise, this faculty is restored! Surely it will increase our gratefulness for God's long-suffering and for Jesus' atonement! Hence one of the great blessings of immortality and eternal life will be the joy of our being connected again with the memories of both the first and the second estates.” (*Men and Women of Christ*, p. 132) Repentance alone has the power to edit from the book of life the account of unworthy deeds. DCBM, 3:31.)

19 I say unto you, can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? (“If we do righteous acts and refrain from evil acts, we have clean hands. If we act for the right motives and if we refrain from forbidden desires and attitudes, we have pure hearts. Dallin H. Oaks, *Pure in Heart*, p. 1) I say unto you, can you look up, having the^a image of God engraven upon your countenances?

20 I say unto you, can ye think of being saved when you have yielded yourselves to become^a subjects to the devil? (Neal A. Maxwell said: “The Lord has given us all the vital answers we need in order to be saved and to become men and women of Christ; in fact, ‘enough and to spare.’ But His questions are also revealing, as are the questions emanating from His prophets.... Why not, therefore, take full advantage of the answers contained in the tutoring questions and their emerging and instructive one-liners from the Lord? Though asked of others, these questions are full of generic insights and needed directions for us as well as for the actual addressees. “The questions asked by the Lord also tell us much about the questioner and His substance and style, which we are to emulate. Thus these interrogatories are placed in the holy scriptures to inspire us, to encourage us, and to be pondered by us.” (*Men and Women of Christ*, pp. 110-12))

21 I say unto you, ye will know at that day that ye cannot be^a saved; for there can no man be saved except his^b garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be^c purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins.

22 And now I ask of you, my brethren, how will any of you feel, if ye shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with^a blood and all manner of^b filthiness? Behold, what will these things testify against you?

D&C 42:22-25 – **22 Thou shalt ^alove thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt ^bcleave unto her and none else.** (President Spencer W. Kimball explained: "The words none else eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes pre-eminent in the life of the husband or wife and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse" (Miracle of Forgiveness, 250). There are those married people who permit their eyes to wander and their hearts to become vagrant, who think it is not improper to flirt a little, to share their hearts, and have desire for someone other than the wife or the husband, the Lord says in no uncertain terms: [Sec. 42:22, quoted.] And, when the Lord says all thy heart, it allows for no sharing nor dividing nor depriving. And, to the woman it is paraphrased: "Thou shalt love thy husband with all thy heart and shalt cleave unto him and none else." The words none else eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes pre-eminent in the life of the husband or wife, and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse. We sometimes find women who absorb and hover over the children at the expense of the husband, sometimes even estranging them from him. The Lord says to them: ". . . Thou shalt cleave unto him and none else." (IE, December 1962, 65:928.) **Where all the previous commandments concerning personal behavior have been stated as "thou shalt not," this commandment is a "thou shalt."** "Thou shalt not" commandments may be taken to imply that what is not prohibited is allowed, but "thou shalt" commandments leave no room for guessing. In the law of the Church, all marital conditions *other* than loving "thy wife [or husband] with all thy heart" are prohibited. Men or women who have allowed themselves to fall out of love with faithful, loving spouses are in violation of the law and are under condemnation. Although biological attraction can happen spontaneously, maintaining a long-term, loving relationship in marriage usually does not. It is a goal that must be chosen and diligently pursued, a conscious decision for which husbands and wives may be held accountable. To ignore one's spouse or the relationship that exists between husband and wife is a sin. Sometimes the spouse does not respond to the expression of love, in which case the offending spouse will receive the blame, but for as long as a marriage lasts, true Saints are obligated to love their spouses and maintain a warm and loving relationship to the degree a spouse will allow. Since exaltation requires that man and wife become one not just in the "bonds of matrimony" but in heart, mind, and spirit, they *must* love one another. If they fail to do this, exaltation must be denied the offender who will not love his or her faithful spouse. Our covenant obligation to be one with our spouse is second only to our obligation to become one with the Lord. ACD&C 2:19)

23 And he that ^alooketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the ^bSpirit; and if he repents not he shall be cast out. (David O. McKay: "Tell me what you think about when you do not have to think, and I will tell you what you are." Temptation does not come to those who have not thought of it before. Keep your thoughts clean, and it will be easy to resist temptations as they come. (John A. Widtsoe, Gospel Interpretations, 1953, p. 401.))

24 Thou shalt not commit ^aadultery; and he that committeth ^badultery, and repenteth not, shall be ^ccast out.

25 But he that has committed adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsaketh it, and doeth it ^ano more, thou shalt forgive;

D&C 93:39-44 – 39 And that ^awicked one cometh and ^btaketh away light and truth, through ^cdisobedience, from the children of men, and because of the ^dtradition of their fathers. (We can avoid having light taken from us by being obedient to God’s commandments.)

40 **But I have commanded you to bring up your ^achildren in ^blight and truth.** (Parents are responsible to teach their children the doctrines of the gospel.)

41 But verily I say unto you, my servant Frederick G. Williams, you have continued under this condemnation;

42 You have not ^ataught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your ^baffliction.

43 And now a commandment I give unto you—if you will be delivered you shall set in ^aorder your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house.

44 Verily, I say unto my servant Sidney Rigdon, that in some things he hath not kept the commandments concerning his children; therefore, first set in order thy house.

Can I receive the promised blessings if my family situation is less than ideal?

Elder D. Todd Christofferson taught: “To declare the fundamental truths relative to marriage and family is not to overlook or diminish the sacrifices and successes of those for whom the ideal is not a present reality. ... Everyone has gifts; everyone has talents; everyone can contribute to the unfolding of the divine plan in each generation. Much that is good, much that is essential—even sometimes all that is necessary for now—can be achieved in less than ideal circumstances. ...

With confidence we testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ has anticipated and, in the end, will compensate all deprivation and loss for those who turn to Him. No one is predestined to receive less than all that the Father has for His children” (“[Why Marriage, Why Family](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 52).

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

1 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.

2 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.

3 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.

4 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.

5 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.

6 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.

7 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.

8 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.

9 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.