

LESSON 45
“The Family Is Ordained of God”
The Family: A Proclamation to the World

OVERVIEW:

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.

The Proclamation was presented by President Gordon B. Hinckley in September 1995 at the general Relief Society meeting. (On 13 November, about two months after the proclamation was issued, President Hinckley met with William Jefferson Clinton, the president of the United States, at the White House in Washington, D.C. The prophet presented him with a copy of the proclamation, which led to a discussion on the family. “It is our feeling that if you’re going to fix the nation, you need to start by fixing families. That’s the place to begin.” The leaders discussed “the need for parents to be actively involved in their children’s lives.” After giving him bound copies of his and his wife’s family histories and describing the Church’s family home evening program, President Hinckley suggested that the nation’s leaders get his family together and “sit down with those books and have a family home evening.” Church News, 18 Nov. 1995, p. 1. Church History in the Fulness of Times, p. 632.)

SCRIPTURES:

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

The family is central to God’s plan

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. (President Gordon B. Hinckley: Why do we have this proclamation of 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, p. 5)

Sacred ordinances make it possible for families to be together eternally

(What is the purpose of our mortal life?) In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped 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 his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be

perpetuated beyond the grave. (What is necessary for a marriage and family to be eternal?) 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. (How can we strengthen our commitment to keep our temple covenants? How can we teach our children to prepare to enter the temple? By example.)

The power to create mortal life is sacred

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. (What has God commanded regarding the use of the power to create mortal life? Why is obedience to this commandment important?) 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. (Henry B. Eyring: Children are the inheritance of the Lord to us in this life, but 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 feelings in this life, how could our Father give them to us in the eternities? Family life here is the schoolroom in which we prepare for family life there. And to give us the opportunity for family life there was and is the purpose of creation. Ensign, Feb 1998, p. 15. Jeffrey R. Holland: The body is an essential part of the soul. This distinctive and very important Latter-day Saint doctrine underscores why sexual sin is so serious. 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, "the very key" to life, as President Boyd K. Packer once called it. In exploiting the body of another—which means exploiting his or her soul—one desecrates the Atonement of Christ, which saved that soul and which makes possible the gift of eternal life. And when one mocks the Son of Righteousness, one steps into a realm of heat hotter and holier than the noonday sun. You cannot do so and not be burned. Please, never say: "Who does it hurt? Why not a little freedom? I can transgress now and repent later." Please don't be so foolish and so cruel. You cannot with impunity "crucify Christ afresh." "Flee fornication," Paul cries, and flee "anything like unto it," the Doctrine and Covenants adds. Why? Well, for one reason because of the incalculable suffering in both body and spirit endured by the Savior of the world so that we could flee. We owe Him something for that. Indeed, we owe Him everything for that. "Ye are not your own," Paul says. "Ye [have been] bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." In sexual transgression the soul is at stake—the body and the spirit. CR, Oct 1998, p. 99-100)

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.

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

Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. (President Gordon B. Hinckley: And when you are married, be fiercely loyal one to another. Selfishness is the great destroyer of happy family life. I have this one suggestion to offer. 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 through eternity. ("A Three-Point Challenge," BYU Commencement Address, April 27, 1995.)) "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, (What are parents to teach their children?) to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to 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. (Mosiah 4:14-15 - 14 And ye will not suffer your ^achildren that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye ^bsuffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and ^cquarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin, or who is the ^devil spirit which hath been spoken of by our fathers, he being an enemy to all righteousness. 15 But ye will ^ateach them to ^bwalk in the ways of truth and ^csoberness; ye will teach them to ^dlove one another, and to serve one another. D&C 68:25-28 - 25 And again, inasmuch as ^aparents have children in Zion, or in any of her ^bstakes which are organized, that ^cteach them not to understand the ^ddoctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when ^eeight years old, the ^fsin be upon the heads of the parents. 26 For this shall be a law unto the ^ainhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized. 27 And their children shall be ^abaptized for the ^bremission of their sins when ^ceight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands. 28 And they shall also ^ateach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord. D&C 93:40 - But I have commanded you to bring up your ^achildren in ^blight and truth. **What is the Church's role in teaching children?** President Spencer W. Kimball: It is the responsibility of the parents to teach their children. The Sunday School, the Primary [Mutual] and other organizations of the Church play a secondary role. Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p. 332)

Successful marriages and families are based on righteous principles

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. (What is the primary responsibility of fathers?)** 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. **(What primary responsibility does the proclamation describe for mothers?)** 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. (President Gordon B. Hinckley: 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. They live in a world of evil. The forces are all about them. I am proud of so many of your sons and daughters who are living good lives. But I am deeply concerned about many others who are gradually taking on the ways of the world. 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 if, 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, p. 99)

Strengthening families is everyone's responsibility

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. (President Gordon B. Hinckley: 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. U.S. Conference of Mayors, Ensign, Nov 1998, p. 109)

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.

What other proclamations have been issued by the Church?

15 January 1841 from Nauvoo, Illinois – The progress of the kingdom of God on earth. (Proclamation of the First Presidency of the Church to the Saints Scattered Abroad (15 January 1841, Nauvoo, Illinois). At the time this proclamation was published the First Presidency was comprised of Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith. The proclamation speaks of the development of the Church in spite of all the persecution suffered in Missouri and discusses the settlement of Nauvoo and the opportunities available there. Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History. See below for the full text.)

6 April 1845, from New York City, and 22 October 1845 from Liverpool, England – A warning voice to the rulers and people of all nations. (See lesson 29 for the complete text of this proclamation. Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles (6 April 1845, in New York City, and on 22 October 1845, in Liverpool, England). On 19 January 1841, Joseph Smith had received a significant revelation commanding him to "make a solemn proclamation" to the rulers of all nations (D&C 124:2-14, 16-17, 107). It was not until 1845, however, after the death of the Prophet, that the Quorum of the Twelve under the leadership of Brigham Young finally completed this assignment. The resulting 16-page pamphlet was printed in New York and reprinted in Liverpool. Some discrepancy exists with regard to the author of this document. James R. Clark (1:252) quoted William H. Reeder Jr.'s statement that Wilford Woodruff was the author. While it is certain that Wilford Woodruff published the proclamation, B. H. Roberts, in a footnote in the History of the Church, indicates that the author was Parley P. Pratt (7:558). The proclamation was signed by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles because there was no First Presidency at the time it was published. In this proclamation, the Twelve announced to the rulers of the nations of the earth that God has spoken once again in our day and that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been fully restored to the earth. The solemn warning spoke not only of blessings, but of impending judgments that would come to a wicked world. All were invited to come unto Christ and assist in preparing the world for the coming of the Savior. Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History)

21 October 1865 from Salt Lake City, Utah – The right of the First Presidency to declare and clarify doctrine. (Proclamation of the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles (21 October 1865). This proclamation was written for the benefit of the members of the Church. A member of the Quorum of the Twelve (Orson Pratt) had published his own ideas and theories about the nature of the Godhead in official Church publications without clearing them with his brethren. This proclamation clarified that "no member of the Church has the right to publish any doctrines, as the doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, without first submitting them for examination and approval to the First Presidency and the Twelve" (Clark, 2:239). Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History)

6 April 1980, from Fayette, New York – Commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the organization of the Church. (See lesson 29 for the complete text of this proclamation. Proclamation of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (6 April 1980). This proclamation was an important part of the general conference commemorating the 150th anniversary of the organization of the Church. Part of the Sunday morning session was broadcast

from the restored Peter Whitmer Sr. home in Fayette, New York. President Spencer W. Kimball spoke about the Restoration of the Church on that location 150 years earlier. Elder Gordon B. Hinckley then read the proclamation which was broadcast via satellite to the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, and was published as part of the conference proceedings. The proclamation bore testimony of the Restoration, summarized the extent of Church growth, and called upon all people to forsake evil and turn to God ("Proclamation"). Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History)

A Proclamation of the First Presidency of the Church to the Saints Scattered Abroad (January 15, 1841, Nauvoo, Illinois)

[This document, signed by Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith, reviews the progress of the Church in spite of hardships and persecution, and speaks at length on the prospects of the settlement of Nauvoo, as the following excerpts illustrate.]

Beloved brethren:--The relationship which we sustain to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, renders it necessary that we should make known from time to time, the circumstances, situation, and prospects of the Church, and give such instructions as may be necessary for the well being of the Saints, and for the promotion of those objects calculated to further their present and everlasting happiness.

We have to congratulate the Saints on the progress of the great work of the "last days," for not only has it spread through the length and breadth of this vast continent, but on the continent of Europe, and on the islands of the sea, it is spreading in a manner entirely unprecedented in the annals of time. This appears the more pleasing when we consider, that but a short time has elapsed since we were unmercifully driven from the state of Missouri, after suffering cruelties and persecutions in various and horrid forms. . . .

It would be impossible to enumerate all those who, in our time of deep distress, nobly came forward to our relief, and, like the good Samaritan, poured oil into our wounds, and contributed liberally to our necessities, and the citizens of Quincy en masse, and the people of Illinois, generally, seemed to emulate each other in this labor of love. . . .

We would likewise make mention of the legislators of this state, who, without respect to parties, without reluctance, freely, openly, boldly, and nobly, have come forth to our assistance, owned us as citizens and friends, and took us by the hand, and extended to us all the blessings of civil, political, and religious liberty, by granting us, under date of December 16, 1840, one of the most liberal charters, with the most plenary powers ever conferred by a legislative assembly on free citizens, "The City of Nauvoo," the "Nauvoo Legion," and the "University of the City of Nauvoo."

. . . The name of our city (Nauvoo) is of Hebrew origin, and signifies a beautiful situation, or place, carrying with it, also, the idea of rest; and is truly descriptive of the most delightful location. It is situated on the east bank of the Mississippi river, at the head of the Des Moines rapids, in Hancock county, bounded on the east by an extensive prairie of surpassing beauty, and on the north, west, and south, by the Mississippi. . . .

Having been instrumental, in the hands of our heavenly Father, in laying a foundation for the gathering of Zion, we would say, let all those who appreciate the blessings of the Gospel, and realize the importance of obeying the commandments of heaven, who have been blessed with the possession of this world's goods, first prepare for the general gathering; let them dispose of their effects as fast as

circumstances will possibly admit, without making too great sacrifices, and remove to our city and county; establish and build up manufactures in the city, purchase and cultivate farms in the county. This will secure our permanent inheritance, and prepare the way for the gathering of the poor. This is agreeable to the order of heaven, and the only principle on which the gathering can be effected. Let the rich, then, and all who can assist in establishing this place, make every preparation to come on without delay, and strengthen our hands, and assist in promoting the happiness of the Saints. . . .

The Temple of the Lord is in process of erection here, where the Saints will come to worship the God of their fathers, according to the order of His house and the power of the Holy Priesthood, and will be so constructed as to enable all the functions of the Priesthood to be duly exercised, and where instructions from the Most High will be received, and from this place go forth to distant lands. Let us then concentrate all our powers, under the provisions of our magna charta granted by the Illinois legislature, at the "City of Nauvoo" and surrounding country, and strive to emulate the action of the ancient covenant fathers and Patriarchs, in those things which are of such vast importance to this and every succeeding generation. . . .

The greatest temporal and spiritual blessings which always flow from faithfulness and concerted effort, never attended individual exertion or enterprise. The history of all past ages abundantly attests this fact. In addition to all temporal blessings, there is no other way for the Saints to be saved in these last days [than by the gathering], as the concurrent testimony of all the holy Prophets clearly proves, for it is written--"They shall come from the east, and be gathered from the west; the north shall give up, and the south shall keep not back." "The sons of God shall be gathered from far, and His daughters from the ends of the earth."

It is also the concurrent testimony of all the Prophets, that this gathering together of all the Saints, must take place before the Lord comes to "take vengeance upon the ungodly," and to be glorified and admired by all those who obey the Gospel." The fiftieth Psalm, from the first to the fifth verse inclusive, describes the glory and majesty of that event.

The mighty God, and even the Lord hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth (that He may judge the people). Gather my Saints together unto me; those that have made covenant with me by sacrifice.

We might offer many other quotations from the Scriptures, but believing them to be familiar to the Saints, we forbear.

We would wish the Saints to understand that, when they come here, they must not expect perfection, or that all will be harmony, peace, and love; if they indulge these ideas, they will undoubtedly be deceived, for here there are persons, not only from different states, but from different nations, who, although they feel a great attachment to the cause of truth, have their prejudices of education, and, consequently, it requires some time before these things can be overcome. . . . Therefore, let those who come up to this place be determined to keep the commandments of God, and not be discouraged by those things we have enumerated, and then they will be prospered--the intelligence of heaven will be communicated to them, and they will eventually, see eye to eye, and rejoice in the full fruition of that glory which is reserved for the righteous.

In order to erect the Temple of the Lord, great exertions will be required on the part of the Saints, so that they may build a house which shall be accepted by the Almighty, in which His power and glory shall be manifested. Therefore let those who can freely make a sacrifice of their time, their talents, and their property, for the prosperity of the kingdom, and for the love they have to the cause of truth, bid adieu to their homes and pleasant places of abode, and unite with us in the great work of the last days, and share in the tribulation, that they may ultimately share in the glory and triumph.

We wish it likewise to be distinctly understood, that we claim no privilege but what we feel cheerfully disposed to share with our fellow citizens of every denomination, and every sentiment of religion; and therefore say, that so far from being restricted to our own faith, let all those who desire to locate themselves in this place, or the vicinity, come, and we will hail them as citizens and friends, and shall feel it not only a duty, but a privilege, to reciprocate the kindness we have received from the benevolent and kind-hearted citizens of the state of Illinois.

Joseph Smith,
Sidney Rigdon,
Hyrum Smith,
Presidents of the Church
[HC 4:267-73]