

D&C LESSON #45  
“THE FAMILY IS ORDAINED OF GOD”  
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**INTRODUCTION:** Satan is laboring mightily to impede the progress of the Kingdom. If you had been assigned by him to decide where to attack in order to lessen the power of the church, where would you focus your efforts? Which doctrines or organizations would you be most determined to undermine? Elder Boyd K. Packer named the number one target on Lucifer’s hit list.

The ultimate purpose of the adversary who has “great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time,” is to disrupt, disturb, and to destroy the home and the family (“The Father and the Family,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 19).

Who will oppose his efforts? What earthly institution will stand as a defender of the family and the home? There may be many organizations with concern for the welfare of the family, but there is one that must, by divine decree, be deeply involved in safeguarding the family, and that is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

As a part of the fulfillment of this duty, the church issued, in 1995, *A Proclamation to the World on the Family*. It follows:

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 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. 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’ (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, 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.
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.” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 101)

## **1. THE *FAMILY* IS CENTRAL TO GOD’S PLAN.**

I have begun a lesson on the family by showing students photos of certain animals, such as the red-crowned crane, the giant panda, the golden takin, the gibbon ape, and the snow leopard, followed by a picture of a family. I have then asked, “What do all of these have in common?” The answer is that they are all endangered species.

Elder Pacer warned of our danger:

Now we are caught in a current so strong that unless we correct our course, civilization as we know it will surely be wrecked to pieces. (Boyd K. Packer, “The Father and the Family,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 19)

For example,

Nearly half of all American children will experience the divorce or separation of their parents. There were 1.2 million divorces [in 1999], and slightly more than half involved minor children. Some 1.3 million children were born to unmarried women. In addition, millions of children live with step-parents. (*U.S. News and World Report*, Jan. 17, 2000, p. 46)

Elder Kimball reinforced this concern when he said,

. . . many of the social restraints which in the past have helped to reinforce and to shore up the family are dissolving and disappearing. The time will come when only those who believe deeply and actively in the family will be able to preserve their families in the midst of the gathering evil around us. (Spencer W. Kimball, "Families Can Be Eternal," *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 4)

And President Hinckley:

Never before, at least not in our generation, have the forces of evil been so blatant, so brazen, so aggressive as they are today. Things we dared not speak about in earlier times are now constantly projected into our living rooms.

Some to whom we have looked as leaders have betrayed us. We are disappointed and disillusioned. And their activity is only the tip of the iceberg. In successive layers beneath that tip is a great mass of sleaze and filth, of dissolute and dishonest behavior.

There is a reason for it. I feel it is simple to define. I believe our problems, almost every one, arise out of the homes of the people. If there is to be reformation, if there is to be a change, 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.

The home is under siege. So many families are being destroyed.

(Gordon B. Hinckley, "Walking in the Light of the Lord," Ensign, Nov. 1998, 98,99)

The proclamation tells us that "the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children." This doctrine is as essential as it is true. I feel like so many of you about my family. If I must go to heaven without the relationships that I have nurtured and loved here, it will not be much of a heaven. The D&C tells us that David lost his eternal companions, "and he shall not inherit them out of the world, for I gave them unto another, saith the Lord." (D&C 132:39) No need for fire and brimstone. If this were to happen to me, it would be hell enough.

## **2. SACRED ORDINANCES MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR FAMILIES TO BE TOGETHER ETERNALLY.**

This foundational concept of the eternal nature of the family is the basis for the sealing ordinances of the temple. If the family matters eternally, then a way must be found to make it eternal. Thus we come to the need for temples and temple experiences in our lives. All of our best efforts to strengthen and eternalize our families will come short of celestial glory if our families are not recipients of the sealing ordinances.

There are actually two ingredients necessary for families to be together forever. One is an eternal ordinance of sealing; the other is an eternal lifestyle. We must live in such a way that we become the kinds of beings that can live together eternally in a perfect environment of love and service. I have been involved at times with husbands and wives who speak much of eternal unity, but can hardly endure to be with each other for five minutes. Being sealed eternally to a person who angers us or despises us or offends us or belittles us is not my idea of heaven. Theologically speaking, there are other kingdoms where such people will be happier.

## **3. THE POWER TO CREATE MORTAL LIFE IS SACRED.**

Among the many doctrines taught in the proclamation, this one deserves special attention. In paragraph 4 we read

God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are

to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

And in paragraph 5,

We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed.

This doctrine is rich in its implications. The relationship between the sexes when sanctified by marriage, and particularly a temple marriage, is “divinely appointed.”

The earth cannot justify nor continue its life without marriage and the family. Sex without marriage, for all people, young or older, is an abomination to the Lord, and it is most unfortunate that many people have blinded their eyes to these great truths. (Spencer W. Kimball, “God Will Not Be Mocked,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 8)

This is another doctrine undergoing a full, frontal assault by Lucifer and those who uphold his work. I have occasionally reflected on the old Virginia Slims advertisements that used to appear on the back of national publications. An old photo and caption would be compared to some modern event with rampant liberties and lack of restraint, always with this concluding thought: “You’ve come a long way, baby.”

Think for a moment of the distance we have traveled in matters of sexual morality in the past half century. We have come a long way. In this matter, as in the case of the family, the Lord’s church has a great responsibility. We have in large measure become the custodians of virtue and chastity. Is there any other organization in the world that cares enough about this doctrine to interview every youth and adult member every year to evaluate compliance with the relevant commandments?

#### **4. PARENTS HAVE A SACRED DUTY TO CARE FOR EACH OTHER AND TO TEACH THEIR CHILDREN.**

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: "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart and shall cleave unto her and none else." (Ibid., 42:22. Italics added.)

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 shall cleave unto him and none else." The words none else eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes preeminent 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."

Marriage presupposes total allegiance and total fidelity. Each spouse takes the partner with the understanding that he or she gives self totally to the spouse: all the heart, strength, loyalty, honor, and affection with all dignity. Any divergence is sin—any sharing the heart is transgression. As we should have "an eye single to the glory of God" so should we have an eye, an ear, a heart single to the marriage and the spouse and family. (Elder Spencer W. Kimball: C.R., October 1962)

The responsibility of parents to teach their children thunders from between the verses of D&C 93. As the Lord offers course corrections to the First Presidency and the Presiding Bishop in the matter of their duty to their children, he appends this note: "What I say unto one I say unto all." (D&C 93:49)

The Lord admonished these brethren for the following problems:

- You have not taught your children light and truth according to the commandments. (93:42)
- The wicked one hath power, as yet, over you (93:42)

- There are many things that are not right in your house (93:43)
- In some things [you] have not kept the commandments concerning your children (93:44)
- You have not kept the commandments (93:47)
- Your family must needs repent and forsake some things (93:48)
- See that they [your family] are more diligent and concerned at home (93:50)

He offered this counsel as a solution to the problems above:

- Set in order your own house (93:43)
- Set in order thy house (93:44)
- Set in order [thy] family (93:50)
- Your family must repent and forsake some things, and give more earnest heed unto your sayings (93:48)
- Pray always lest the wicked one have power in you (93:49)

D&C 68 makes parents responsible for the spiritual preparation of their children.

And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine 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 eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized. And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands. And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord. (D&C 68:25-28)

There is a passage in the D&c that is worth some reflection from all fathers. What is the Lord trying to tell us about our responsibilities to our little children?

But behold, I say unto you, that little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten;



Wherefore, they cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me; For it is given unto them even as I will, according to mine own pleasure, that great things may be required at the hand of their fathers. (D&C 29:46-48)

What are the “great things” that are required at our hands? What does the Lord want us to accomplish before our children arrive at the age of accountability?

## **5. SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES ARE BASED ON RIGHTEOUS PRINCIPLES.**

In paragraph 7 of the proclamation we read,

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.

In our quest for happiness, we would do well to remember this counsel from the First Presidency

We counsel parents to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform” (First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999; cited in Church News, 27 Feb. 1999, 3).

This is such a simple matter. It is like the challenge to exercise faith in the Liahona. All that was required of the family of Lehi was to go the direction the arrows pointed. *Look, and then go!* And so it is with the search for family happiness and solidarity. We are instructed to give the “highest priority” to “family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities” We must go the way the prophetic arrows

point. We see the direction clearly enough. All that is left is to go in that direction.

What? we might say. And miss Monday Night Football? And be late for work? And miss the school bus? And eat a cold dinner? In response we review on those two words: "Highest priority." Could it really matter that much? In could, and it does. Remember the oft-quoted counsel from McKay? ". . . no other success can compensate for failure in the home" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 5)

## **6. STRENGTHENING FAMILIES IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY.**

In the final two paragraphs of the proclamation we read:

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.

If the disintegration of the family will bring calamities to our communities and our nations, we must enlist in the cause of preserving and strengthening the family and the home. We ought to be constantly aware of opportunities to speak for the family. We ought to oppose with all our energies any legislation or procedure that will lessen the power of the home.

We have watched the standards of morality sink ever lower until now they are in a free fall. At the same time we have seen an outpouring of inspired guidance for parents and for families.

The whole of the curriculum and all of the activities of the Church have been restructured and correlated with the home:

- Ward teaching became home teaching.

- Family home evening was reestablished.
- Genealogy was renamed family history and set to collect records of all the families.
- And then the historic Proclamation on the Family was issued by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles.
- The family became, and remains, a prevailing theme in meetings, conferences, and councils.
- All as a prelude to an unprecedented era of building temples wherein the authority to seal families together forever is exercised. (Boyd K. Packer, "Parents in Zion," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 22)

Many of you have seen the involvement of the Church in such matters. A few years ago, Proposition 22 appeared on the ballot in California. The Church, correctly perceiving a threat to the integrity of the family, organized and became politically active in this matter. Signs were placed in the yards of many church members and other locations. The message was simple:

**PROTECT MARRIAGE: YES ON 22.**

Finally, that is what we must do. We must protect marriage and the home by any and every lawful means.

**CONCLUSION:** If we are successful in safeguarding the family, President suggested that something remarkable will happen:

Across the world, those who now come by the tens of thousands will inevitably come as a flood to where the family is safe. (Boyd K. Packer, "The Father and the Family," *Ensign*, May 1994, 21)

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