

# *Love and Marriage*

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## **The Great Love Story**

From my point of view, one of the greatest love stories of all time has never been recognized as such even though it is filled with romance. In fact, when you first read the story, you would probably not recognize it as a love story at all. The reason we pass over this story so easily is that in order for us to recognize love, we must first have a great understanding in our own hearts of what love really is. Love is a peculiar attribute. It very seldom appears suddenly like a mushroom. Usually it grows slowly like a bud that unfolds and develops into a beautiful flower.

In order to love something you have to get to know and understand it. For instance, the way we learn to love a sunset is to study sunsets carefully. We then learn to observe how one color blends into another so beautifully and harmoniously. Then we recognize how clouds add character to the scene and how the rays of the sun shining behind those clouds highlight them and give variety and beauty to the view. The more you watch sunsets, the more you appreciate and learn to love them.

This is the way you young mothers learn to love a child. Being with that child so much and serving and watching over the child so carefully causes you to love it. You overlook its

faults and appreciate its virtues. Service to another person or to a cause is an excellent way to develop love for that person or cause. But love doesn't always have to grow so slowly. Love can blossom very suddenly. The particular love story I am talking about began suddenly and has been blossoming brightly for thousands of years. This love story is found in the Bible in the book of Genesis and is the story of Adam and Eve.

When Adam was placed on the earth he was a perfect physical and mental specimen made in the likeness and image of God. But Adam had a basic weakness. He had no memory of where he came from or of what he had known before he was placed on the earth. Here on the earth he was required to learn everything from scratch. After Adam was created, the Lord God said: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). God did not say "helpmate" or "helpmeet," but used that good, solid, Anglo-Saxon word "meet" that means of the

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same worthiness, the same intelligence, the same quality or nobility, worthy to stand beside the man as a fit companion and helper.

So Eve was created and became Adam's companion and was married and sealed to him as his wife. Remember they were created as perfect beings without blemish or sin and were immortal. At that time death had not yet entered into the world. Therefore they were bound together in a marriage union that was to endure for all eternity. Now comes the great love story.

When Adam saw Eve, that glorious being who had been sealed to him as his wife, he was filled with love for her, for she had been taken symbolically from his rib next to his heart. She was not taken from his head to stand over him, nor from his breast to go before him, nor from his back to walk three paces behind him, nor from his foot to be trodden upon. She was taken symbolically from his side—close to his heart to stand by him as a noble companion.

As his heart filled with love for her, he said: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23). What Adam meant by these words can be paraphrased thusly: "I love her with all my heart. She is as important to me as life itself. She is as vital to me as my own flesh and bone. I treasure her as I do my own body—as much as my own life. Without her life would be meaningless. I love her!"

And the Father then answered and said to Adam: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). What God meant by these words was as if to say: "Adam, you are absolutely right. You two shall remain together forever to begin your own family on earth and to become one indeed in everything you do in an eternal companionship, never to be broken." As Jesus later explained this eternal type of marriage, he said:

*For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh.*

*Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. [Matthew 19:5–6]*

Considered in that light, when one speaks of the Father, meaning God the Father, one also speaks of the Father's wife (our Heavenly Mother), for they are one flesh. We use this same expression on earth. When, for instance, we speak of the Bensons, the Hollands, or the Burtons, we speak of a pair. If these married partners were as perfect as our Heavenly Parents are, these couples would act and do things as a team, working together in perfect harmony and oneness—literally as one flesh. I personally believe that the word "Elohim" (a plural word) is a title and includes this connotation of oneness, even though when I write or speak of God the Father, I speak of a living, single being, but realize in my heart that they make up a heavenly pair.

### **A Holy and Eternal Order**

One of the things that concerns us as General Authorities about marriage, and particularly about temple marriage and sealing, is the light-mindedness with which some of our Church members enter into this holy and eternal order. It appears that too many people now enter into temple marriage with the idea that it is pretty much like any other type of marriage. People today tend to regard all marriage light-heartedly without remembering that a civil marriage is an arrangement invented by man, which therefore includes man's imperfections. A temple marriage, on the other hand, is performed under special priesthood authorization and with authority from God. It is therefore a holy ordinance that should be taken very seriously. It is an eternal marriage meant to last forever.

Many Church members fail to understand the sacredness of this temple marriage covenant. It is as if they say: "If this marriage doesn't work out, we can make a change. If I tire of my partner, I can get a cancellation of this sealing and try it again with another companion!" If we enter into a celestial marriage with that attitude, whatever love formed the basis for that relationship in the first place will sooner or later change to dislike or perhaps even hatred. Then unhappiness and sorrow will rob the marriage partners of the great joy and comfort that Adam and Eve found in each other when they were sealed unto this holy order and took that calling and ordinance with appropriate seriousness.

The question becomes: "How does this dislike and hatred originate in a marriage?" To understand how this change can come about, we must observe the great difference between the attitudes and actions of Jehovah and Satan. This difference represents the difference between love and hatred. Jesus did not think only of himself, but caught the greater view of true love that the Father held. Jesus thought not only of his own interests, but also of others and what his actions might and could do for them. He didn't seek just his own advantage. He was unselfish and accepted the Father's plan of salvation not only for himself, but also for the whole family of God's children.

Jesus knew the Father's plan was vital for the growth and development of mankind. He even offered to give his own future mortal life as a Savior for us; thereby we might all return to the presence of our Heavenly Father and Mother. Back in their presence we could regain our places in God's eternal family, but would be added upon through this earthly experience. We could return to God with perfected, resurrected bodies, having gained greater light and knowledge through experiences received during mortality. This advantage would enable us, during the eternities, to grow to become more like our Father and Mother in Heaven,

possessing greater light, greater knowledge, greater experience, and greater skills. In other words, Jehovah believed implicitly in the Father's plan and advised us as intelligent spirits to do likewise.

Hatred begins with selfishness; hence, Lucifer thought only of himself. He thought he knew more about life than God the Father did. He felt he had a better and safer plan than the Father had proposed.

Not willing to offer himself as a Savior under the Father's plan, Lucifer wanted to be God himself. In his arrogance and vanity he wanted to force us to be righteous, whether or not we wanted to be. He felt that since he had developed what he thought was a better, safer plan, why of course no Savior was needed. And since he, as a Son of the Morning, was the author of this new plan, he wanted full credit for it. As for the Father's plan, his advice to the spirit children of God was: "Believe it not."

That refusal to believe and accept the Father's plan is the course Lucifer followed and was what he persuaded those spirits to do who listened to him. Lucifer's plan was refused by the Father because it took our agency and freedom away from us. This freedom of action was our most precious possession and one for which we were willing to fight to retain. This plan of negativism is the satanic gospel that Lucifer is preaching today and that so many are deceived into accepting. People who do so fail to see its traps and pitfalls. It is a gospel of opposition, of tearing down, destroying, denigrating, and of making things ugly. It is contention, dissension, and wickedness that tear apart marriages and families.

Satan's plan is just opposite from the Father's plan of salvation. Since the Savior sustained and adopted the Father's plan, it is the only wise and correct plan for us to consider. It is a positive, effective plan that all of us should follow. Jesus says simply: "Believe!" It is the difference between positive and negative things—between the beautiful and the ugly,

between love and hatred, between joy and sorrow, between success for all eternity or eternal unhappiness. It is something for us to consider seriously in courtship and marriage.

If we are to understand the importance of a temple marriage, we must first understand and believe with all our hearts that we are spirit children of God. It is imperative to realize that we are all of divine origin, that God is real and that he lives. If we can have that absolute faith and assurance in God the Father, we can then know with certainty that God will do everything he can to bless us. If we will only keep our covenants with him, he will provide for our eventual return into his presence.

Our heavenly parents want us back with them. That is their goal, their work, and their glory. We must have hope and faith in that divine plan in order to live righteously, keeping the covenants that make that return possible. Failures may come, disappointments may arise, some opportunities may be lost, but if only we maintain faith in God's love and try as best we can to recognize and repent of whatever mistakes we make, we can return to the presence of God. That is the promise God gives us.

The second thing to remember is that Jesus Christ is our Anointed Savior or Redeemer. He loves each of us so much that he gave his life to atone for our sins if we repent and sanctify ourselves. This means that whenever we make a mistake we must admit it and renew our covenants by recommitting ourselves (with the help of Jesus Christ, of course) to keep those covenants in the future; to make restitution for those sins through service to others in order to pay back for the damages caused by breaking the law; and finally, to forsake whatever evil was done, and with the help of God never return to these or similar acts of disobedience. If Jesus is a god of love—and he truly is—then such a course of action must be the foundation for both courtship and marriage. The true love of Christ involves service to others in which a

person is willing to give a part of himself to serve and help others. Such service is the complete opposite of selfishness and manifests the true spirit of Jesus Christ.

Our Heavenly Father expects each of us to be wise. If you choose a partner for a decision as important as eternal marriage, you should not rush into such an important covenant without knowing your partner as thoroughly as you reasonably can. Many people think only of exciting romantic concepts they get from books and movies without realizing that such a romance is often selfish. All too frequently it is the opposite of true love. To marry a person you have known only a short time is most unwise. That person's faith, as well as your own faith, first needs to be tested. Is that person honest and reliable in keeping his or her commitments? In other words, can he or she be trusted? This is an important question in marriage, for to be trusted is greater than to be loved.

### **Mature Preparation**

My special assignment for the past six years has been to assist the First Presidency in recovering people who have transgressed. In doing so I have come to comprehend causes that lead to transgression. What are they? Generally they are various personal indulgences based on selfishness. One of the greatest of these is the use of pornography. The use of pornography is a basic sin that leads to self-abuse, homosexuality, fornication, adultery, child and spouse abuse, incest, rape, and cruelty. No love ever develops out of pornography, only self-gratification.

To protect yourself against such evils you have to stay clean yourself and have a clean partner. You should get to know something about the history of your partner and his or her family. You have to observe what habits and ideals that person has, and what experiences that person has had. You should know something about the environment in which that

person was raised. It is well to know as much as you reasonably can about your future partner, for you will be playing for keeps.

Although repentance is possible, it must be sincere and requires a considerable period of time to make that change permanent.

There is a rather strange circumstance that I observe all too often in marriage situations. Namely, if a woman divorces a man for physical abuse, it seems that each following marriage is with partners who have that same failing. If she divorces an alcoholic husband, all too often her next partner has the same problem. We might say that such a person is a "born loser." It is not so much that particular trait as much as it is that a person all too often does not change his or her way of thinking. Nor does a person often change concepts and habits. Repentance begins in a person's mind by changing his manner of thinking. Firm commitments must be made and a complete determination to change must take place in a person's mind before any change can be made in his actions.

If you marry a person who has difficulty with honesty, or with the Word of Wisdom, thinking to bring about a reformation in that person's life through marriage, it is seldom successful. If repentance is to occur, that change must begin before the marriage takes place, not after. What change takes place must be so complete there is little likelihood that former traits or habits will reoccur in marriage. Marriage is probably the most important decision we make in life, and one should give it prayerful thought and careful consideration before taking such a step.

Another cause for unhappiness in marriage is the immaturity of those who enter into the marriage covenant. When people marry too young, they are not prepared physically, mentally, or financially for the strains that come as children are added to the family. The duties and responsibilities of parenthood bear down on the marriage partners. No marriage can

succeed if the husband is unable because of lack of education or job experience to take care of his family financially. No marriage can succeed if the wife has had no experience or training in how to care for a home and children or how to solve homemaking problems and lacks the maturity to learn. Marital happiness comes from maturity and experience. No amount of professed love, physical attraction, or romantic inclination can bring happiness to a home where the husband cannot provide a living, or where the wife cannot prepare a good, nourishing meal, or where the husband (and/or the wife) does not know how to face emergencies that come because of illness, loss of a job, accidents, or financial strain.

You must realize it is better to solve serious problems before marriage than to try to resolve such problems after marriage. If you start out right with mature preparation for the marriage venture, it can be a glorious, wonderful experience. If you start out wrong because of lack of proper preparation and mature experience, marriage can be a disaster. One thing I have noticed in handling numerous cases is that divorce seldom solves marriage problems.

### **Searching for Solutions**

The heartbreak that comes from the breakup of a family is one of the greatest tragedies in our modern world. The traumatic effect that divorce has on children is almost impossible to assess. Children of divorced parents often become so resentful that their own lives are filled with unhappiness when they become adults. When it comes time for them to marry, their chances for a successful marriage are frequently handicapped by their remembrance of the difficulties, quarrels, resentments, and patterns they saw in their parents.

When children who have been physically abused marry, they frequently abuse their own children physically. The same is true for mental abuse. Children suffering from incestuous relationships all too often themselves turn to

incestuous activities when they marry. A boy who sees his mother physically abused will all too often physically abuse his own wife in turn. Parents seldom realize the impact and the very often serious consequences such reprehensible behavior has on the actions of their children. It does materially and emotionally affect their lives.

Divorced wives find it difficult to provide for their children. Financial settlements are often inadequate to care for a family. When a mother has to find work to support her children, resentment and sorrow come to her and to the children too. Wives and husbands who are too quick to divorce an errant spouse through an unforgiving attitude all too often bring only added grief to themselves and to their families.

Husbands who are indifferent and careless and thereby cause divorces, or husbands who desert families and divorce their wives, find that the second and subsequent families only add to their financial and emotional burdens. If it is difficult for a man to finance his first family, his financial well-being is not aided by incurring additional financial obligations as a result of subsequent marriages. Court costs and lawyer fees sap the financial resources of even rich men and are disastrous for the ordinary family. Divorce is often a no-win option and can seldom be relied on as a solution to marital problems.

My personal burden in marriage counseling is to try to find a solution to the problem of hatred. Unforgiveness is a horrible sin. People are so intent on vengeance for past or imagined wrongs that they do horrible things to each other. Indifferent silences and/or unkind words can often cut deeper than swords. If we look for faults in someone, we can always find them. But the added problem is that these faults seem to grow and multiply the more we think about them. Resentment leads to tearful frustration and to the most

hurtful kind of words and actions. Oh, if people could only learn to forgive!

I refer often to these following verses in Doctrine and Covenants 64:8–10:

*My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.*

*Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.*

I believe this means that it is a greater sin not to forgive one another than it is to commit some of those sins for which people are disfellowshipped or excommunicated from the Church.

The Lord continues his teaching: “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:10). I thus have an answer for those who refuse to forgive themselves and who make themselves miserable by continually talking about their own sins. They say: “I just can’t forgive myself for the things I have done.” I reply to them: “O you wicked person! Do you think you are more holy than the Lord himself? If he is willing to forgive and forget if you will only repent, shouldn’t you be willing to forgive yourself now that you have repented for your sin?”

We must remember the love of Jesus as he tried to teach us how to be kind one to another. He said:

*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:*

*But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

[Matthew 6:14–15]

When, oh when, will we learn that love can overcome hatred and that kindness and humility really can restore love?

**Have Faith!**

Now one piece of advice to those of you who have never had a companion through no fault of your own, or to those of you who have lost companions in death or through divorce or desertion: Do not despair or think that all is lost! Remember that you are children of God. Have faith in your Heavenly Father. Don't worry about what will happen to you after death. Don't worry about who will have inheritance of your children who are born in the covenant. People make themselves miserable over such questions that cannot be answered at present because earth life is not yet over. Death does not end our possibilities for solutions to often very difficult present problems.

When people tell you that all such problems must be solved during earth life, just ask them this question: "Why then are we to have a thousand years of peace before the final judgment is made?" I think it will be during this period of time that under the direction of a

loving Father in Heaven and a devoted, loving, understanding Savior—who will be our advocate with the Father—that all these problems will be worked out to our best advantage.

Those great men and women who will be officiating on earth in the power of the holy priesthood will be in constant communication with the heavens. Directions can then be given to those on earth to make necessary adjustments in the temples through which all these marital and other problems can and will be solved.

The present solution is a simple one. Have faith! As Jesus said so positively: "Believe!" Remember that God loves you enough to have given his Only Begotten Son to atone for your sins if you will just try, try, try to repent! Jesus in his great mercy was willing to give his life for you because he loved you enough to make that atonement for you if you will only repent. No matter how desperate your personal situation or your marital problems may appear to be to you, there are solutions possible if you will just keep the faith!

I testify of the divine nature of these teachings, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.