

Hanging Out, Hooking Up, and Celestial Marriage

BRUCE A. CHADWICK

The topic I selected to discuss this morning was motivated by a research report I read last summer. A study of young women attending colleges and universities across the United States reported that dating has disappeared from campus, and young women have been left to wander in a social wilderness in their search for Mr. Right. The vast majority of the young women interviewed stated that marriage is a “very important” goal for them. In addition, a majority indicated they hoped to find Mr. Right while attending college. They lamented that dating has been replaced by hanging out with acquaintances and then hooking up with young men. Hooking up generally involves drinking alcohol and some degree of sexual activity. These young women, more often than not, felt frustrated and lonely, and most reported they had not found Mr. Right. Drinking and promiscuity are not the Lord’s way to find someone to marry! Heavenly Father loves you and desires you to be happy, and thus He has given you righteous procedures to follow in your pursuit of an eternal marriage.

In response to this study, my friend and colleague Brent Top—a member of the Religious Education faculty—and I decided to examine the dating culture among LDS youth, particu-

larly those young adults at BYU. Let me compare the desire to marry among college women across the nation to both women and men attending BYU. As mentioned earlier, marriage is a very important goal to 83 percent of the national sample of women college students. Happily, marriage is very important to nearly all BYU students—both men (95 percent) and women (97 percent). It appears almost all of you have the appropriate goal; it seems that it is the implementation that falls a little short.

I am confident that each of you has a copy of the proclamation on the family. This is pure doctrine straight from the Lord through His prophet and apostles. There have been only four proclamations in this dispensation, and each teaches important eternal truths. Please take the time to read, ponder, and pray about this counsel from the Lord concerning the eternal significance of the family.

Satan still thinks he has a chance to win the war he initiated against God’s plan in the premortal existence. One of his most cunning strategies is to turn away the sons and daughters of God from eternal relationships sealed

Bruce A. Chadwick was a BYU professor of sociology when this devotional address was given on 7 May 2002.

in holy temples. Satan is giving special attention to you, my young friends—both single and married—to create doubt in your minds about marriage and your being ready to marry, increase your fear of failure to find the right one and your fear of divorce, and heighten your concern about having children. He is providing alluring sexual temptations. All are designed to hinder your embracing and keeping sacred covenants with your companion.

Today I want to share with those of you who are single some of the appropriate ways to establish an eternal relationship. For those of you who are married, these suggestions will assist you in nurturing a strong marriage.

One of the joys of teaching at BYU is the opportunity to mingle scripture with the philosophy of men in a righteous fashion. I appreciate teaching sociology within a gospel context by linking intellect with inspiration. This morning I will mingle a little social science with the scriptures—revelation with the best research and sound reason.

I have five suggestions that I want to share with you today to assist in establishing and strengthening a celestial marriage.

The first suggestion is *for all Cinderellas and Prince Charmings to throw away their glass slippers*. Following Satan's encouragement, contemporary society greatly emphasizes courtship, the hunt, or the conquest. The rest of the story, the most significant part of the life story, is dismissed with six words: "And they lived happily ever after."

There is a very dangerous misperception embedded in this Cinderella and glass slipper syndrome. It is the focus on finding the perfect person to marry with whom you will live happily ever after. I am convinced that the Lord's plan is to find *a* right one rather than *the* one. I admit there may be rare cases where two people covenanted in the premortal existence to find each other and marry in this life. They see each other across the Marriott Center parking lot, and it is love at first sight. Occasionally

students ask if I knew my wife in the premortal existence. What can I say? Of course I did. But then I add that I knew all of my sisters in the premortal existence, and no matter who I married, she would be an acquaintance. Let me be crystal clear: this is not Church doctrine; rather, it is a flippant response to a question for which I don't have an answer. The First Presidency has affirmed that premortal covenanted marriages—glamorized by *Saturday's Warrior*—are rare indeed. To most of us Heavenly Father says, "There are thousands of my sons and daughters attending BYU who are worthy to enter my house and covenant to be your eternal mate. You pick one you like who is worthy, and I will give you my blessing." There are actually many whose foot will nicely fit within the glass slipper.

A second suggestion is *don't wait for others to carry your glass slipper about the campus looking for a match*. In other words, don't wait for your Heavenly Father to write the name of the person you are to marry on your kitchen wall or to deliver him or her to your front door. Instead, be a little more proactive and seek someone you like, someone who is worthy, and someone who inspires you to be a better person. The Spirit will guide you but won't do the courting or make the choice for you.

Those of you who are married will agree that this Cinderella mentality of "If I marry the right person, we will live happily ever after" fails to prepare couples for married life. When problems arise in a marriage—and they will arise—a husband or wife is tempted to think, "Oh no, I married the wrong person because I am not happy ever after." Nonsense! Good marriages are created after you get up from your knees at the altar of the temple. Strong marriages emerge out of helping each other obtain your education, struggling financially, dealing with sickness, and coping with the shock produced by the birth of your first child. Life changes and moves ahead in many unanticipated ways. Changing jobs, moving

to a different city, raising teenagers, caring for an aged parent, retirement, and similar activities and events are what produce eternal marriages. Overcoming these problems as a team—helping and supporting each other along the way—are what produce a happy marriage. I loved my dear wife when we married 40 years ago this summer, but the love I felt for her then is insignificant to my love for her after these many years of trials and triumphs.

There are no written “money-back” guarantees for marital happiness. There is no anti-divorce insurance. Occasionally a spouse changes in ways that make maintaining a marriage impossible. But I fear that the Cinderella complex encourages people to give up on a relationship too quickly and to start another search for the perfect spouse. The best marriage guarantee you can have is the one you sign in the presence of your bishop—and it has to be renewed once a year. Using this recommendation in the companionship of your husband or wife is the best antidivorce guarantee available—not just because you have entered the temple but also because of what temple worthiness represents. This guarantee requires supporting each other in Church callings, working out the payment of tithing, praying together, studying the scriptures together, and giving service together.

In rejecting the Cinderella complex, I am not suggesting that you marry just anyone. But I am suggesting that some of us may have raised the bar a little too high. There are very few perfect people in the world, and if you do get lucky and find one, he or she probably won’t want to marry you anyway. But don’t despair. The traits and characteristics we are looking for in a spouse will emerge out of the years of experience together. My advice is to look for the potential in a spouse and then help each other achieve your desires. In other words, good marriages are earned by experience, not found with glass slippers.

My third suggestion is to *exercise faith and to have courage in dating and marriage*. It is scary to marry! It is scary to stay married during troubled times! It is scary to be responsible for children! Some people are afraid of marriage and parenthood. Perhaps their parents or close friends divorced and they fear the same happening to them.

Have faith in God your Father and in His Son. They will guide and strengthen us because we are on Their errand of creating eternal families and raising children in righteousness. This message is simply stated in the words of President Ezra Taft Benson to young adults: “Those fears must be replaced with faith” (“To the Single Adult Brethren of the Church,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 52).

Let me share a scriptural example that I think is applicable to those considering marriage or parenthood. The children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years because they *feared* to enter the land promised them by Jehovah. They eventually wandered up the east side of the Jordan River. They were camped on Mount Nebo, looking across at the promised land. Moses was instructed to pass the prophetic mantle to Joshua. Jehovah was ready to perform a miracle to impress upon the children of Israel that Joshua was the new prophet and also to test their courage one last time. A miracle parallel to Moses’ parting of the Red Sea was to demonstrate the Lord’s power resting on Joshua.

Joshua had the camp of Israel move close to the river and asked each man and woman to “sanctify” themselves (Joshua 3:5). In this day that would mean to wash your clothes, turn off trashy television, catch up on your tithing, read the scriptures for an hour, and say your prayers. These activities would encourage the Spirit to dwell with you. In the morning the children of Israel were not left as spectators high on the riverbanks when it was time to part the waters. Rather,

12 men carried the ark of the covenant to the water's edge. Then, as the Lord explained:

And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap. [Joshua 3:13]

It took faith and courage for those 12 men and the children of Israel who followed to step off the bank into the swirling waters of the spring runoff. As the water covered the soles of their feet, the miracle then happened, and the waters were stopped.

So it may be with you in your quest for an eternal partner or for an eternal relationship. We cannot sit in our apartments, we cannot spend long hours at work, we cannot endlessly play video games and wait for the Lord to bring a spouse to the altar for us. We cannot wait for the Lord to create a special love between our spouse and us. He does not magically cause the perfect family to appear when there has been little, if any, effort on our part. Waving at a group of girls or guys across the cultural hall, driving your spouse to the grocery store once a week, or just knowing the names of your children is not resting the soles of your feet in the waters of marriage and family life.

During the 1970s cohabitation became popular, allowing couples to *ease* into marriage, to try out being married without the commitments and responsibilities of marriage. Social scientists in general applauded this emerging social custom and argued that cohabiting would increase marital satisfaction and reduce divorce. They reasoned that cohabiting is an opportunity to confirm real compatibility and that a marriage that followed would be happier and more stable. This pronouncement was not one of social sciences' finest hours. The truth of the matter is that 30 years of research has made it clear that couples who cohabit and then wed

are less happy and are more likely to divorce! Why? Because cohabiting couple are not willing to exercise the faith to make a lifelong commitment, and their commitment does not increase much when they marry.

In defense of the social sciences, they are starting to figure this marriage thing out a little better. For example, a recent book entitled *In Defense of Marriage* analyzes mountains of statistical data demonstrating that married men and women are happier, healthier, and live longer than single or divorced men and women. Marriage is part of God's great plan. It is good for both the body and soul.

I realize that not all will have the opportunity to marry in this life, but, with faith and courage, most will. And eventually all righteous men and women will share these blessings. It is estimated that 95 percent of all Americans have been married at least once by age 45. Please don't wait until you are 44 to seriously pursue marriage. Social research reveals that marrying in the 20s somewhat increases marital happiness and reduces the likelihood of divorce. I promise you that if you pursue marriage and family life with sincere intent that the Father will bless you to eventually achieve this blessed state.

The fourth suggestion that I offer to establish and nurture an eternal relationship is *to keep physical intimacy at an appropriate level so as to enjoy the presence of the Spirit and to be worthy to seal your commitment to each other in the temple*. Elder Holland gave a talk here at BYU entitled "Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments." Because of its powerful, pure doctrine, he was asked to repeat it in general conference. If you don't have a copy, please ask your campus bishop for one. It is pure doctrine that lovingly explains how chastity is a necessary condition for eternal life.

As I mentioned in my introduction, hooking up and dating among non-LDS almost always involve sexual activity. Such must not be the case for Latter-day Saints. I am happy to report

that Brother Top's and my research with LDS high school students reveals that their premarital sexual activity is substantially below the national level. But at times it seems like we members of the Church get caught up in the ways of the world and end up adopting them to a degree. We may not be going as fast as the world, but, unfortunately, we sometimes are headed in the same direction.

Let me illustrate this worldly marching attitude with an example. A friend of mine was serving as the bishop of a BYU ward. He was teasing the elders quorum president about not being married.

He received the stock reply from the quorum president: "I just haven't found the right girl yet."

My friend then asked, "What kind of girl are you looking for?"

The reply was, "A girl worthy to go to the temple." But then, with a grin, the elders quorum president added, "But just barely."

What was this young man saying? He was joking, I hope. But it sounds like he was willing to keep the strict letter of the law but wanted to push as close to the edge of serious sin as he could get. It is highly unlikely that the Spirit will be companion to anyone holding such an attitude. Such a person is heading in a worldly direction away from God's plan.

I am not suggesting that you never kiss someone until you kneel across the altar, but I am suggesting that you keep physical intimacy within the bounds set by the Lord. I don't have time to say any more about appropriate intimate behavior, but I am sure your campus bishops frequently discuss the topic.

I do want to say a word or two about a different consequence of inappropriate intimacy. Young people sometimes justify inappropriate intimacy on the grounds that it is an expression of their special love and that it strengthens their relationship. I am convinced that more often than not such activity actually destroys a potential eternal relationship. Let me illustrate with a scriptural example.

This example involves two of King David's children. His son Amnon fell "in love" with his half-sister, Tamar. They had the same father but different mothers. He had it bad. He thought about her all day and dreamed about her all night. His friend—actually his cousin—noticed Amnon's funk and offered to help him in his pursuit of the maid Tamar. The scriptures say Jonadab, Amnon's friend, was "a very subtil man" (2 Samuel 13:3). In other words, he was a devious man. Jonadab suggested that Amnon fake illness, and when his father asked about his sickness, he should plead that Tamar be sent to cook him some cakes—the Hebrew equivalent of chicken soup. The plan worked perfectly. When Tamar finished cooking the cakes, Amnon sent away the servants and made a strong advance. Tamar resisted: "And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly" (2 Samuel 13:12).

In modern English, she told him to stop, that what he was doing was wrong and also rather stupid. She explained that their father, King David, loved Amnon, that he was his favorite son, and David would give him anything he asked, including her as a bride. But Amnon was beyond reason and was driven by his passion: "Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her" (2 Samuel 13:14).

What had happened was really bad. But now comes the point I want to make from this example of inappropriate intimacy: "Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone" (2 Samuel 13:15).

Amnon did not send Tamar flowers, nor did he call her to express his undying love. Instead, he hated her so strongly that he shamed her before the king's court and all of Israel. He loved her, and then a half-hour later he hated her. Why? Tamar was associated

with the guilt he felt for the terrible deed he had done. In his mind she became the cause of his sin, and thus he hated her. So it is in today's world. A couple may have the potential for a celestial marriage, but if they become too intimate, then the feelings of tenderness and love turn to guilt, then to dislike, and perhaps even to hate. Too much intimacy too soon is not the Lord's way.

In this example I have focused on the single members of the Church, but let me stress that married couples have the same responsibility to obey the law of chastity. Forbidden love will have the same terrible consequences. Chastity—which requires virtue in our minds and hearts as well as in our actions—is absolutely necessary for an eternal marital relationship.

My final suggestion is appropriate for those seeking a mate, for married couples, and for everyone else, for that matter. Many years ago a couple asked if I would provide them marriage counseling. I resist such requests since I am not a trained counselor—and, besides, I really don't enjoy doing it. But occasionally circumstances conspire against me and I am forced to do so. This was one of these cases. I had worked with the couple for several weeks, and they had not made any real progress in reducing the anger and conflict. One evening as I waited for them to come to our home, I had a few minutes and opened the scriptures. I decided to read the New Testament to get me in a spiritual mood. One of my favorite sections of the New Testament is the Sermon on the Mount. When I read Matthew 5:43–44, I was struck with a powerful insight.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. [Matthew 5:43–44]

When the couple arrived, I had the husband wait in the living room while I met with the wife in the family room. When I asked her if we could kneel and pray for her husband, she looked at me like I was crazy. When I explained that I did not want her to pray that he would get run over by a large truck, develop a disfiguring disease, or obey her every wish but rather wanted her to sincerely pray for the Father to bless her husband with those things that would bring him true happiness, she simply replied, "I can't do it." I had anticipated this response. It is not easy to love your enemy or to do good to him. But I was hoping we could at least pray for him. I asked if we could kneel and pray that she be given the compassion, mercy, and love necessary to do so. We both took turns voicing a prayer, and after she shed a few tears she informed me she was ready to pray for her husband. She then offered a beautiful prayer for him. A remarkable change in her demeanor toward her husband was immediately obvious. This was real progress.

I ushered her into the living room and invited the husband into the family room. We repeated the same sequence of events. His initial reaction to my request was one of shocked dismay. But later, after offering a sincere prayer for his wife, his attitude and his feelings toward her changed, and some of the earlier love reappeared. I could see it in his countenance, and he could feel it in his heart.

This was our last counseling session. I think the story had a happy ending for the couple. I haven't seen them for several years, but the last time we had contact they were still happily married.

I don't know whether they ever repeated this simple exercise. But I learned a great lesson that has affected how I live my life, and I pass it on to you as my fifth suggestion: "Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Most of us probably don't like those who hate us, and, sadly, these feelings of dislike

canker our souls. Amazingly, praying for our enemies reverses our feelings. Maybe the person still hates you, but that does not matter. What matters is that your heart is softened and the Spirit abides with you. Usually a change in your feelings and subsequent actions will initiate a reduction of the other person's hatred of you. Perhaps even reconciliation may occur.

Whenever I have been angry over the years with my wife, Carolyn, I kneel and pray for this good woman. She is such a kind and loving person that my anger is usually my own fault. Whatever the cause, my angry feelings are turned to increased love by sincere prayer.

On Sunday afternoon Carolyn saw me editing my remarks and asked if she could read them. She offered some insightful suggestions. Later that night, just as we were drifting off to sleep, she whispered to me, "I heard you share your experience about praying for your enemies when you taught our Jerusalem students during the Mount of the Beatitudes field trip. Since then, whenever I have been angry at you, I have prayed for you. It has worked every time."

I did not know how to respond. I did not know whether to be miffed that she had felt I'd done things that justified her anger or to be happy that she had discovered the same results that I had in applying the Savior's words. If I were miffed at her, I would have had to get out of bed and pray for her, and since I was very tired, I decided to just go to sleep a happy man. It should be no great surprise that good things come from following the teachings of the Master.

Besides this suggestion to pray for your spouse, the implication for those of you who are single is *to not only pray for yourself in a dating relationship but also to pray for the young man or woman in whom you are interested*. Pray for what is best for them, which may turn out not to be you. But that is okay. The Lord will bless you, and good things will follow. This simple action will change feelings between husbands and

wives, mothers and fathers, children and parents, and neighbors and co-workers. When you are angry, when a relationship is stretched thin to the limit, sincerely pray for the person who at that moment "hates" you. It will bring a mighty miracle in your feelings and in your ability to bear affliction.

In conclusion I want to encourage you to remember the importance of marriage and family and place them first in your priorities. I want to spare you an experience similar to one I had 15 years ago.

Our family was sharing a Christmas afternoon with another family, and at some point we started playing games like Trivial Pursuit. One game was based on Freudian psychology and involved identifying dominant personality traits. My wife and three sons independently wrote their estimation of my dominant personality trait on small pieces of paper. I was confident I would be labeled by my family as "kind," "righteous," "loving," or similar positive traits.

Imagine my surprise when my wife's paper said, "Bruce is a workaholic." I thought to myself, "That ungrateful woman! The pleasant quality of life she enjoys is the fruit of my hard work." But it was Christmas, and I did not want to spoil the day, so I did not respond.

My three boys confirmed her diagnosis! One son also used the hated *workaholic* word. The other two used similar words that made it clear that in their eyes my career, profession, or work was the most important aspect of my life. At this point, even though it was Christmas, I protested a little.

One of my sons replied, "Dad, we never went on a family vacation that did not involve your work."

Again I wanted to reply: "True, but you—ungrateful son that you are—have been to Disneyland as well as to Walt Disney World, traveled to Central America, traveled Europe, visited the Holy Land, and lived two summers in a beach house on an island in the Pacific Northwest." But it was Christmas, and

I did not want to be a poor sport, so I remained silent.

In the days that followed I tried to justify how I lived my life to myself. But it did not do any good. No matter how I rationalized things, my dear family felt that my career was more important to me than they were. This is not and was not true. But the fact remained that that was the impression I had given by my actions. Since that time I have tried to make my priorities more visible. I occasionally say to Carolyn on Friday morning, “I will be done teaching at noon. Would you like to go to the temple this afternoon? Or go ride around the Alpine Loop, see a movie, or visit the gardens at Thanksgiving Point?” Or, if I am really feeling expansive, “Would you like to go shopping?”

I hope during the past 15 years that somehow I have altered the perceptions of my family. They are most important to me. I share this experience in the hope that you will be spared the anguish of confronting who you are at age 45 or 50 and being disappointed. I don’t want

a list of my publications or administrative positions chiseled on my headstone. Rather, I hope that the following words reflect my life: “Bruce Chadwick, a devoted husband, loving father, and humble follower of Jesus Christ.”

My young friends, remember that marriage is essential to eternal life and that a good marriage and family life is crafted, not found. Please make this an important priority as you finish school and launch a career. Be courageous in seeking after an eternal partner. If you have found him or her, then work together creating an eternal relationship. This is not hard work. In fact, it is rather pleasant and will bring great joy into your life.

May God bless you in your studies at BYU. Be sure to study both the sacred and the secular. You have a great opportunity to do both here at BYU.

I bear testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, especially of the importance of eternal families. I share this testimony in His name, Jesus Christ, amen.