

# *Embrace the Plan*

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**B**rothers and sisters, it is a joy to be with you today. I love you, and I love this university. I remember what it felt like to be a student. I remember the stress of papers and exams and the worry and the uncertainty about the future. But I also remember the sense of possibilities and opportunities ahead and the feelings of hope and faith in the Savior.

Now, looking back on those years, I can see that the Lord Jesus Christ was way ahead of me, working in my life and preparing the way before me. I want each of you to know that He is working in your life right now and preparing the way before you. It is all part of Heavenly Father's plan. That is what I want to talk about today. My message is a simple invitation: embrace the plan!

I will begin with a story that I hope will help you begin to understand what that invitation means.

Almost twenty years ago I was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease. My kidney doctor told me that in ten to twelve years I would need to go on dialysis or have a transplant.

In my mind I said to myself, "No, I won't. I will be disciplined and diligent, and the Lord will bless me. I will die of something else."

That was my plan. And for several years it worked pretty well. But then my kidneys began to fail. My doctor told me I needed to prepare for a transplant.

With my plan not working, I went to my Heavenly Father in prayer and asked Him for His help and His guidance. I received a very clear impression: my plan was not His plan. His plan had a transplant in it, and I needed to get ready.

So I sent out a simple message to my children and my siblings: "I need a transplant. If any of you would like to give me a kidney, please call this number."

On August 2, 2011, my son Andrew gave me a kidney.

As I prepared for the operation, I felt impressed to embrace Heavenly Father's plan—every bit of it. Here is an example: Every night that I was in the hospital, the nurses woke me several times to give me a shot, check my fluids and my vital signs, weigh me, or give me medicine. Every time they woke me up, I said to them, "I am so happy to see you." Those nurses helped give me new life. That was the plan, and I embraced it.

My dear brothers and sisters, with all my heart I invite you to follow Jesus Christ and embrace Heavenly Father's great plan of salvation. I use the word *embrace* because I want you to accept the

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plan gladly and eagerly—to adopt it into your life fully and completely.<sup>1</sup> I want you to put your arms around the plan and draw it in close to your heart with love and gratitude for your Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

I love this description of the Father’s great plan in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”:

*In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life.*<sup>2</sup>

At the very heart of the Father’s plan is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Our Father knew that mortality would be hard and blessed, dangerous and peaceful, and full of adversity and glorious opportunities. He knew we would all sin and all face the challenges of mortal life. So He sent His Son to be our Savior and Redeemer. As Alma taught:

[Jesus] will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death . . . ; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy . . . , that he may know . . . how to succor his people. . . .  
. . . The Son of God . . . [will] take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance.<sup>3</sup>

The Atonement of Jesus Christ makes the Father’s plan of happiness a reality. Not only will all be resurrected, but those who come unto Christ, repent of their sins, and make and keep sacred covenants with Him may receive peace in this life and the great gift of exaltation and eternal life with their families in the world to come.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the redeeming power of Jesus Christ

*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.*<sup>5</sup>

This is the Father’s great plan of happiness. All of you, no matter what your situation is, may come unto Christ and become the seed of Abraham—the covenant people of the Lord—with a special place in the Father’s plan.<sup>6</sup> Each of you has been given a combination of personality, gifts and talents, experiences, and capacities that is unique in God’s universe.<sup>7</sup> There is no one else like you, and the Lord has a special place in His plan for you.<sup>8</sup>

If you act with faith in Jesus Christ to embrace the plan, He will direct your path, open doors for you, put you where He wants you, and give you opportunities to serve Him in the greatest of all the causes on the earth—the cause of Christ.<sup>9</sup> You will be the means of bringing hope, joy, happiness, and salvation to your family, to your friends and loved ones, and to literally thousands of God’s children.<sup>10</sup>

Embracing the plan is not something we do once; we embrace the great plan of salvation and our role in it by the choices we make all through our lives. Every wonderful opportunity in the Father’s plan comes to us in a “crucible of choice.” Every crucible contains two things: the opportunities created by Heavenly Father’s plan and opposition. No matter what the opportunity may be, there is always opposition.

It is the combination of opportunity and opposition that creates the need for choice. Which path will you walk? Whose voice will you hear? Whose plan will you follow? The crucible of choice is a test of your faith in Jesus Christ.

I will focus on three crucibles of choice that are essential to eternal life and that are particularly important for you at this wonderful time in your lives. They are (1) deep learning, (2) serving the Lord, and (3) creating an eternal family. My purpose is to help you see what you must do to embrace the plan and to receive the marvelous blessings Heavenly Father has prepared for you.

### **Crucible 1: Deep Learning**

In the crucible of choice that governs learning, there are many wonderful opportunities created by Heavenly Father’s plan. Indeed, as Elder David A. Bednar has taught, “The overarching

purpose of Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness is to provide His spirit children with opportunities to learn."<sup>11</sup>

The learning that fulfills the "overarching purpose of Heavenly Father's great plan" is "*deep learning*: learning of the whole soul—the mind, the heart, the body, and the immortal spirit."<sup>12</sup> Learning is deep when it increases our power to do three things: (1) to know and understand; (2) to take effective, righteous action; and (3) to become more like our Heavenly Father.<sup>13</sup> That is Heavenly Father's plan.

We are the spirit children of Heavenly Father. Every single one of us has the potential to become like Him. We all have different gifts and talents and we all have different challenges in mortality, but our Father has blessed us with the opportunity and the capacity to learn deeply through His eternal plan.

The power of deep learning has great value in your family, in your service in the Church, in your work, and in your community. It also brings great joy. Think of a time when you figured out how to solve an important problem or challenge you faced. It probably felt like a light went on in your mind and in your heart. The scriptures use words such as *enlarge*, *enlighten*, *delicious*, *quicken*, and *joyous* to describe what happens when we learn deeply.<sup>14</sup>

Deep learning applies to all truth, in any field of knowledge. However, the most important knowledge we need to acquire is a knowledge of the things of God. Spiritual knowledge, therefore, must have the first place in our hearts and in our priorities.<sup>15</sup>

Making spiritual knowledge a priority means making time every day for personal prayer and study of the Book of Mormon and other scriptures. It means taking religion classes. It means treasuring up what we learn by writing it down. And it means worshipping in the temple often. Putting spiritual knowledge first ensures that we will rely on the Lord and the Holy Spirit in all our learning. We will see everything we study in the light of the Father's plan.

I have spent my life trying to deepen my learning and trying to help others learn deeply too. That lifetime of experience has taught me that deep learning must be done in the Lord's way—by systematic study and by teaching one another, attended by the grace of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Ghost, who reveals truth, sanctifies us, and changes our very natures.<sup>16</sup>

Embracing the plan and seizing the opportunities for deep learning means working diligently with faith in Jesus Christ. It means humbling ourselves before the Lord and seeking the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Arrayed against those wonderful attributes of diligence, humility, and righteousness stands the opposition: laziness, pride, sin, and the distractions of the world.

Of these, I believe the most dangerous is pride.<sup>17</sup> In fact, deep learning creates the potential for pride to work its way into your heart. Deep learning will increase your value in the world. Recognition, rewards, good jobs, and admission to graduate schools may come your way. Along with all of this good will come the temptations of pride.

I want to share with you an experience from my first semester in graduate school. I took a class from a very prominent professor. I worked hard in that class all semester, prepared for the final exam, and prayed to Heavenly Father for His help. The exam assignment was really simple but also really hard: we had to read and critique two very complex research papers.

As I read the first paper, something wonderful happened. In the analysis I did and in the writing of my critique, I was blessed with insights and help beyond my own. When I finished, I picked up the second paper and had exactly the same experience. I have never forgotten that day.

When good things come, it is easy to get prideful. In fact, if we do not resist diligently with faith in the Savior's power to change our hearts, it is easy to get puffed up with pride. If we do, we stop learning deeply. I know that is true.

The way to overcome pride—and every other form of opposition—and to make righteous

choices about deep learning is to humbly embrace the Father’s great plan of redemption. Remember with gratitude who you really are, where you came from, and what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you. Always, always give the glory to the Lord for all good things that happen in your life.<sup>18</sup> He will help you keep pride out of your heart and help keep your learning deep.

### **Crucible 2: Serving the Lord**

The crucible of service to the Lord contains great opportunities and blessings. There are many ways to serve, but serving with the Lord Jesus Christ in His Church is very special. Just think how amazing it is to do His work, in His name, with His power and authority, in His true and living Church.

If we choose to be yoked together with the Lord, He will work through us to bless others.<sup>19</sup> We act with faith in Jesus Christ in many callings and assignments to help our brothers and sisters feel the love of the Lord and change their lives through His redeeming power.

These experiences also change us. We see our brothers and sisters as the Lord sees them, and He helps us love them as He does.<sup>20</sup> He increases our capacity to love, to receive revelation, and to minister with His power in His way. We draw closer to Him through our service, and He helps us become more like Him.<sup>21</sup>

I want to focus on one kind of service that is especially important for you in this time of your lives and powerful in building the kingdom of God. The service I have in mind is sharing the restored gospel of Jesus Christ with your peers—with people ages eighteen to thirty—who are not yet members of the Church. When people in this age group are converted unto the Lord and unite with His Church,<sup>22</sup> they are very likely to become lifelong, faithful Latter-day Saints.

The experience of a few young adults illustrates this principle. One individual, whose name was Christa Cascarelli, was not a member of the Church when she met David Tesky, a Latter-day Saint soldier serving in Germany. David introduced Christa to the Church. She saw the Light of Christ in David, and she felt pure happiness when

he spoke of the things he believed. However, she was not ready to meet with the missionaries.

Not long after Christa met David, she moved to a new city. She missed the light and the happiness she had felt, and she started looking for the Church. One day Christa learned of a new coworker, Karen Lee, who sounded like she was a Latter-day Saint, which she was. Christa sought out Karen and found her reading the Book of Mormon at lunch. Christa saw the same light in Karen that she had seen in David. Karen invited Christa to meet with the missionaries.

My companion and I taught Christa. It was an amazing experience. Christa’s interactions with David and Karen had opened her heart to the Holy Ghost. She was not only prepared but excited to hear the glorious good news of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christa was baptized in May 1970 and later met and fell in love with a member of the branch named Gary Harrell. They were married in the Oakland Temple in 1971. This all got started because David and Karen lived and loved the gospel and shared what they loved with Christa.

Sharing the gospel and helping people to be baptized into the Lord’s Church is a wonderful opportunity, but it comes with opposition, especially in the society in which we live. The enemy of our souls is doing everything he can to keep us from sharing the gospel. He tempts people to believe that they can be more spiritual, even closer to the Lord, without the Church; he tempts them to believe that they don’t need it. And he tempts us with fear of offending others with our invitations, with fear of ridicule, and with fear of persecution because of our beliefs.

Serving the Lord in His Church, especially sharing His gospel, is a crucible of choice and a test of faith in Jesus Christ. President Russell M. Nelson has posed this question for you and for me: “To which cause [will you] commit [your] effort and [your] good name?”<sup>23</sup> Will it be the cause of Christ? Will you always accept and magnify callings and assignments in the Lord’s Church? Will you share His gospel with people you meet? Or will fear silence your voice?

Brothers and sisters, the answer to fear is to embrace the plan! Live and love the gospel of Jesus Christ and His Church so that His light will be in your eyes and in your life.<sup>24</sup> You can learn to share and extend invitations in a natural way, with love and kindness.<sup>25</sup> You can make a covenant with the Lord that you will speak for Him if He puts people in your path. I promise you that the Lord will guide you to people He has prepared. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and love for Him will banish fear from your heart, and you will be an instrument in His hands to bring people to Him and His true and living Church.

### Crucible 3: Creating an Eternal Family

In Heavenly Father's glorious plan of happiness, it is our divine destiny—indeed, our eternal identity and purpose—to have an eternal family, with a celestial marriage to a beloved companion and children sealed to us forever.<sup>26</sup> These are the tremendous opportunities that fill the crucible of choice about the eternal family.

That is why it is so important for every one of us, no matter what our situation, to do everything we can to encourage and promote celestial marriage and eternal families—our own and others'—on both sides of the veil. President Henry B. Eyring taught:

*Everything we do should have celestial marriage as its focus and purpose. That means we must strive to be sealed to an eternal companion in the temple of God. We must also encourage others to make and keep the covenants that bind a husband and wife together, with their family, in this life and in the world to come.*<sup>27</sup>

Given the marvelous blessings of an eternal family, it is not surprising that the crucible of choice about the eternal family is filled with much opposition and many temptations. Perhaps the most powerful forces opposing the creation of an eternal family are fear and selfishness.

In a society in which we see around us divorce, dysfunctional families, and much heartache in marriages, it is understandable that some might look at the prospect of building a strong marriage

and an eternal family with some fear and worry.<sup>28</sup> However, there is also a new kind of fear we find among us today: “the fear of missing out.”<sup>29</sup>

The fear of missing out—or FOMO—explains why so many young people spend so much time on social media. Based on survey data of young adults, it also seems to be affecting decisions about marriage. The classic FOMO line associated with marriage is “What if I find someone better?”

These fears—whether fear of failure or fear of missing out—reflect a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of eternal marriage. We do not “find” the perfect partner for an eternal marriage, nor are we on our own or trapped by the past mistakes of others. The partnership of an eternal marriage is something we build together with the Lord.<sup>30</sup> It is faith in Jesus Christ that will allow you to overcome these fears.

When two faithful, committed Latter-day Saints love each other and marry in the temple of the Lord, they make a covenant with each other and with Him.<sup>31</sup> If they keep that covenant, repent, love, and serve each other, the Lord Jesus Christ will sanctify their hearts; He will knit their hearts and souls together and bind them to Him.<sup>32</sup> Over time they will become one in Christ, equally yoked and beautifully matched, with divine love and joy in their marriage and their family.<sup>33</sup> That is the plan, and it works. I am a witness that it works.

Which brings me to selfishness. In order for the supernal blessings of an eternal family to be yours, you must conquer selfishness.

Brothers and sisters, selfishness is not good. If you act selfishly, you are at grave risk of making critical choices—such as whom to marry, when to marry, how many children to have, how to lead your family, and how to treat your spouse—without the guidance of your Heavenly Father.

Before you marry, selfishness can get in the way of you ever connecting with someone to marry. It will make you unattractive, and it will interact with your fears to cause you to avoid commitments.

After you marry, selfishness will make you either unaware of your spouse's needs or

unmotivated to try to meet them. It will lead to unhappiness and discouragement in your spouse and in your children.

It is easy to be selfish.<sup>34</sup> Let me share with you a story from my marriage. Since Sister Clark does not have a selfish bone in her body, this is another story about me.

Sue and I met here on this campus. I am so grateful to Heavenly Father that He helped us find each other. We were married in June 1971.

Fast-forward a few months. One day I came home from school and turned on our tiny black-and-white TV to catch the Red Sox game. I sat down and opened up a book I needed to read. Soon Sue came home from work. We said hi to each other, and then she went into the kitchen. Then I heard cupboard doors being slammed with great force.

I walked into the kitchen and asked her what was wrong.

She looked at me and said, “Nothing.”

I persisted, and then she taught me the lesson of a lifetime. I had acted selfishly, and I did not even see it. I had been raised in a home where I had always been given a list of chores to do. I had been taught how to iron, cook, sweep, do dishes, and clean, but I thought Sue would just tell me what to do. She helped me understand that she wanted our marriage to be a full partnership, and she wanted me to step up and take some responsibility for our home. I realized that sitting around watching the Red Sox in the afternoon must have seemed pretty selfish to her. That was literally a life-changing moment.

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to read you a poem that I wrote for Sue. I have repented; in fact, I have been repenting for forty-seven years. When I first met Sue, to give you some background, she was dressed in red. I apologize to all the poets.

***The Woman in Red***

*A poem for Sue at Christmas, 2017*

*She stood before me dressed in red  
And bid me come to dinner*

*Intrigued and drawn her way  
I followed the woman in red*

*Who is the woman in red?  
I wondered all that day  
Dinner, dishes, music,  
And a moonlit walk*

*Who is the woman in red?  
Walking by her side I felt  
An answer from heaven  
This is her; she is the one*

*Who is the woman in red?  
She is a woman of courage  
Setting all doubts and fear aside  
She said yes, and so did I in God’s holy house*

*Who is the woman in red?  
She is deep, with depths of love, compassion,  
Humility, joy, diligence, insight,  
And spiritual power*

*Who is the woman in red?  
She is a mother who has travailed  
In the shadow of the valley of death  
To bring seven children into the world*

*Who is the woman in red?  
She is a mother whose example of dedication,  
Consecration, and pure love  
Is in those children to their very core*

*Who is the woman in red?  
She is the angel of mercy  
Bringing light, love, strength,  
And hope to those in need*

*Who is the woman in red?  
She is my best friend  
Who loves, corrects, lifts,  
Inspires, and strengthens me*

*And so, at this Christmastime  
When we celebrate God’s gift*

*Of His Only Begotten Son  
Our Savior and Redeemer*

*I honor and remember God's gift to me  
Love of my life, joy of my soul  
My Sue, forever  
The woman in red*

You can tell I know from my own experience that the way to overcome fear and selfishness and the way to the joy of an eternal marriage and family is to embrace the plan. Embrace the great plan of happiness fully and completely and seek to do the will of the Lord. Your path to an eternal family may be distinctive in its experiences and in its timing.<sup>35</sup> But no matter what your circumstances are, your divine destiny is to be a wife or a husband, a father or a mother, in an eternal family, sealed forever and exalted in glory in the kingdom of God.<sup>36</sup> I know that is true.

### Testimony

My dear brothers and sisters, my invitation to embrace Heavenly Father's plan is an invitation to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ with faith in Him. I bear witness that God our Father lives. Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. He lives! The crucibles of choice about learning, service, and an eternal family are real, but the Father's plan is perfect and the Savior's power is complete. If you embrace the plan, the Lord will open the way before you. His redeeming power will flow into your life, and He will wrap you in the arms of His love, now and forever. You will learn deeply, you will serve faithfully, and you will have an eternal family. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### Notes

1. *Embrace* means "to clasp in the arms"; "cherish, love"; "to take up especially readily or gladly"; "to take in or include as a part . . . of a more inclusive whole" (Merriam-Webster.com, s.v. "embrace").

2. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995).

3. Alma 7:12–13.

4. See D&C 59:23; see also 2 Nephi 2:26; 9:18; Alma 24:14; 42:14–15; Helaman 14:12–17; Moroni 7:24.

5. "The Family: A Proclamation."

6. See Abraham 2:9–10; see also D&C 84:32–38; 132:30–32.

7. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught, "Believe in yourself. Believe in your capacity to do great . . . things. . . . You are a child of God, of infinite capacity" ("Be Not Afraid, Only Believe," BYU–Hawaii commencement address, 11 December 2004). See D&C 11:8; 18:10; 46:11; 76:24.

8. See D&C 11:8; 46:10–11. Elder Richard G. Scott said, "God has a specific plan for your life. He will reveal parts of that plan to you as you look for it with faith and consistent obedience" ("How to Live Well Amid Increasing Evil," *Ensign*, May 2004).

Elder Ronald A. Rasband said:

*When we are righteous, willing, and able, when we are striving to be worthy and qualified, we progress to places we never imagined and become part of Heavenly Father's "divine design." Each of us has divinity within us. . . . When our Father in Heaven said, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" [Moses 1:39], He was talking about all of His children—you in particular. ["By Divine Design," *Ensign*, November 2017]*

Note that our personal plans are embedded in the Father's great plan of salvation. We cannot follow one unless we follow the other.

9. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "I am a lover of the cause of Christ" ("Letter from Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, 31 July 1832," Hiram, Ohio, 3, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-william-w-phelps-31-july-1832/3; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*

[Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007], 352).

10. In our own way, we are like Esther—a daughter of the exiled Jews—who became the queen of Persia by the hand of the Lord. At a critical moment for her people, when they were about to be destroyed, Esther’s cousin Mordecai reminded her that she was the Lord’s plan to save His people. He said, “Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14). At the risk of her life, Esther approached the king and saved her people. Esther embraced the Lord’s plan for her (see Esther 2–7).

11. David A. Bednar, *Increase in Learning: Spiritual Patterns for Obtaining Your Own Answers* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 1–2.

12. Kim B. Clark, “Learning for the Whole Soul,” *Ensign*, August 2017; emphasis in original.

13. The pattern of know, do, and become has been used widely as a framework for leadership development and in discussions of the Lord’s plan for the spiritual development of His children (see Thomas S. Monson, “To Learn, to Do, to Be,” *Ensign*, November 2008; and Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, November 2000). For an in-depth treatment of each of the elements of this pattern, see the three-volume series by David A. Bednar: *Increase in Learning; Act in Doctrine: Spiritual Patterns for Turning from Self to Savior* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012); and *Power to Become: Spiritual Patterns for Pressing Forward with a Steadfastness in Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014).

14. See Alma 32:28; D&C 88:11; 1 Nephi 11:23.

15. The Prophet Joseph Smith emphasized the primacy of spiritual knowledge in these words:

*A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God. [HC 4:588; see also Teachings of Presidents: Joseph Smith, 266]*

16. The Lord’s way to learn is described in D&C 88. See verses 63, 66, 78, 84, 116, 118.

17. President Ezra Taft Benson taught:

*The proud depend upon the world to tell them whether they have value or not. Their self-esteem is determined by where they are judged to be on the ladders of worldly success. They feel worthwhile as individuals if the numbers beneath them in achievement, talent, beauty, or intellect are large enough. [“Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989]*

18. See D&C 88:67–88; Moses 1:10; John 7:18; see also Marlin K. Jensen, “An Eye Single to the Glory of God,” *Ensign*, November 1989.

19. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “You Are My Hands,” *Ensign*, May 2010.

20. See Henry B. Eyring, “Walk with Me,” *Ensign*, May 2017.

21. President Henry B. Eyring taught:

*Eternal life is that kind of life which God our Eternal Father lives. God has said that His purpose is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). . . .*

*Every priesthood effort . . . is intended to help Heavenly Father’s children be changed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ to become members of perfected family units. [“Eternal Families,” *Ensign*, May 2016]*

22. Elder D. Todd Christofferson makes this point: “The Book of Mormon expresses it best when it says that the people ‘were converted unto the Lord, and were united unto the church of Christ’ [3 Nephi 28:23; emphasis added]” (“Why the Church,” *Ensign*, November 2015).

23. Russell M. Nelson, “Choices,” *Ensign*, November 1990.

24. President James E. Faust said, “A sacred light comes to our eyes and countenances when we have a personal bond with our loving Heavenly Father and His Son, our Savior and Redeemer. With this bond our faces will mirror that ‘sublime assurance’ that He lives” (“The Light

in Their Eyes,” *Ensign*, November 2005; quoting Paul Harvey, news broadcast, 8 December 1967). See also Alma 5:14–15; 3 Nephi 18:24.

25. President M. Russell Ballard taught:

*Fear will be replaced with faith and confidence when members and the full-time missionaries kneel in prayer and ask the Lord to bless them with missionary opportunities. Then, we must demonstrate our faith and watch for opportunities to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to our Heavenly Father’s children. . . . These opportunities will never require a forced or a contrived response. They will flow as a natural result of our love for our brothers and sisters. [“Put Your Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, November 2013]*

26. “The Family: A Proclamation” states:

*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.*

27. Eyring, “Eternal Families.”

28. For a discussion of these fears and how to overcome them, see Melissa Howell, “Confidence to Marry,” *Ensign*, February 2006.

29. For a discussion of the fear of missing out, see Eric Barker, “FOMO: This Is the Best Way to Overcome Fear of Missing Out,” *Barking Up the Wrong Tree* (blog), 5 June 2016, bakadesuyo.com/2016/06/fomo.

30. President Russell M. Nelson taught: “To qualify for eternal life, we must make an eternal and everlasting covenant with our Heavenly Father. This means that a temple marriage is not only between husband and wife; it embraces a partnership with God” (“Celestial Marriage,” *Ensign*, November 2008).

31. See Malachi 4:5–6; D&C 110:14–15.

32. See Mosiah 5:15; 18:21, 29; 1 Corinthians 11:11.

33. Elder David A. Bednar taught:

*By divine design, men and women are intended to progress together toward perfection and a fulness of glory. . . . The man and the woman contribute differently but equally to a oneness and a unity that can be achieved in no other way. [“Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan,” *Ensign*, June 2006]*

34. The world encourages selfishness. It tells us to make personal fulfillment our top priority and to postpone marriage and children or to not marry at all. Consider the following modern-day advice about marriage and its approval of selfishness:

*You have problems with compromise. While it sounds negative, there’s nothing wrong with it. But if you’re used to doing things your way, and the thought of someone loading a dishwasher incorrectly sends legitimate shivers down your spine, you probably realize that being part of a married couple might just make you miserable. You have a set way of doing things, and you’re more than thankful for a partner who understands—but if they try to interrupt your schedule or tell you how “their way” is far superior, you’ll end up being pretty resentful. [Karen Belz, “Eight Signs You Aren’t Meant to Get Married, and Why That’s Completely Okay,” *Bustle*, 16 February 2016, bustle.com/articles/140397-8-signs-you-arent-meant-to-get-married-and-why-thats-completely-ok]*

35. See D&C 84:38. President Russell M. Nelson taught:

*But what of the many mature members of the Church who are not married? Through no failing of their own, they deal with the trials of life alone. Be we all reminded that, in the Lord’s own way and time, no blessings will be withheld from His faithful Saints. The Lord will judge and reward each individual according to heartfelt desire as well as deed. [“Celestial Marriage”]*

36. President Henry B. Eyring taught:

*Eternal life means to become like the Father and to live in families in happiness and joy forever. . . .*

*The family unit is fundamental not only to society and to the Church but also to our hope for eternal life. We begin to practice in the family, the smaller unit, what will spread to the Church and to the society in*

*which we live in this world, which will then be what we practice in families bound together forever by covenants and by faithfulness. ["The Family," *Ensign*, February 1998]*