

The Gospel and Romantic Love

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I once heard President Holland tell about a conversation he overheard between two freshman women talking about their favorite subject. One of them said, “Do you believe in college marriage?” The other replied, “Well, yeah, if the colleges really love each other.” I would like to believe that there are no two colleges anywhere who “love each other” more than BYU and Ricks. I am in love with both places and consider both as my home. I must admit I think it is a blessing to the BYU campus to have several thousand former Ricks students here. The blessings also flow the other way, as we at Ricks are continually assisted in many ways by our BYU friends. When you catch cold in Provo, we sneeze in Rexburg. When you itch, we scratch. Indeed, when your able academic vice president, Jae Ballif, was given the title of “Provost” at the BYU campus, we immediately began to consider if our academic vice president should be called our “Rexburgst.”

I’d like to say just a word about President Holland. For all his abundant gifts of personality and intellect, I think the core of Jeff Holland’s soul is essentially spiritual. I believe the Lord has brought him here for a mission that is primarily spiritual in nature. He and Pat will bless this campus now and for years to come with their own unique blend of spiritual

courage, insight, and devotion. Happily, the Lord has prepared the two of them in such a way that the intellectual life of this campus will only be made richer by the abundant brand of spiritual life the Hollands inspire.

Today’s audience includes a few students who were at Ricks College earlier this year when I talked about “The Gospel and Romantic Love.” I apologize to them because I am talking on that subject again today. I would add, however, that it is primarily because of the response of the Ricks students that I feel impressed to give this talk here. As I do so, I pray for inspiration, not only because of the importance and sensitivity of the subject, but also because of my great love and respect for the students of Brigham Young University.

Elder Boyd K. Packer once said to a group of students on this campus:

The powers awakened earlier in your life have been growing. You have been responding to them, probably clumsily, but they now form themselves into a restlessness that cannot be ignored. You are

Bruce C. Hafen was the president of Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho, when this -devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 28 September 1982.

old enough now to fall in love—not the puppy love of the elementary years, not the confused love of the teens, but the full-blown love of eligible men and women, newly matured, ready for life. I mean romantic love, with all the full intense meaning of the word, with all of the power and turbulence and frustration, the yearning, the restraining, and all of the peace and beauty and sublimity of love. No experience can be more beautiful, no power more compelling, more exquisite. Or if misused, no suffering is more excruciating than that connected with love. [“Eternal Love,” BYU Fireside, 3 November 1963]

In approaching this topic, I feel I am walking on holy ground. This subject, delicate as it is, inspires my deepest reverence. The idea of romantic love, so commonplace that it is touched upon in virtually every book or movie or magazine, is also at the very center of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is one of the greatest of God’s laws that a man shall “leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). As Elder Packer put it, “Romantic love is not only a part of life, but literally a dominating influence of it. It is deeply and significantly religious. There is no abundant life without it. Indeed, the highest degree of the celestial kingdom is unobtainable in the absence of it.”

The other side of this coin, of course, is represented by what Alma told his wayward son, Corianton, who had gone after the Lamanite harlot Isabel. He said to his son: “Know ye not . . . that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost?” (Alma 39:5).

I once saw, at close range, the face of a faithful father who had just learned that his handsome and promising young son had violated the law of chastity and that the boy’s immature young girlfriend was pregnant. I’ll never forget the look in that man’s eyes as it dawned on him

that his child of promise had willfully rejected what his parents had taught and what they wanted him to be. The father just sat in stunned silence, staring sadly at the rain outside his window in a grief that knew no comfort. As the tears ran freely down his face, he asked himself out loud: “Why? Why would he turn his back on all he knows to be right?” There came no answer but the gentle sound of the falling rain.

Why indeed? Why such a commandment? Sometimes we give as reasons for the law of chastity the risk of pregnancy or abortion, the possibility of an unwanted or embarrassing marriage, or the chance of a terrible venereal disease. With adultery, we talk about the damage of destroying an existing marriage or family. As serious as these things are, I’m not sure they are the fundamental reason for the Lord’s having placed this commandment ahead of armed robbery, fraud, and kidnapping in the seriousness of sins. Think of it—unchastity is second only to murder. Perhaps there is a common element in those two things—unchastity and murder. Both have to do with *life*, which touches upon the highest of divine powers. Murder involves the wrongful *taking* of life; sexual transgression may involve the wrongful *giving* of life, or the wrongful tampering with the sacred fountains of life-giving power. Perhaps we should not expect the reasons for this commandment to be fully understandable to our finite minds. So often with our deepest feelings of joy or testimony or gratitude, we may attempt to describe their meaning with words, but our words fail us when we try to plumb the depths of those precious things that are too sacred, too significant, and even too mysterious to be susceptible to quickly understood explanations. Why is nature so exquisitely beautiful and full of harmony? Why do our hearts respond to the sight of little children laughing? Why, especially, do our hearts respond to overflowing when those little children we see laughing before us are our very

own children? All we know is that God himself has said, time after time, over all the generations of man, “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else” (D&C 42:22), “Thou shalt not . . . commit adultery, . . . nor do anything like unto it” (D&C 59:6).

I have been around enough to know that this is not the first time you have ever heard this subject mentioned from the pulpit. But I have also been around enough to know, especially recently, that no matter what you have heard and no matter how often, today we live in a world so completely soaked through with tragically wrong and evil ideas about sex that you must be *warned*—in love and kindness, but warned—lest the moral sleeping sickness that has overcome this nation’s atmosphere claim you into deadly slumber. There have always been violators of the moral code, but the last few years have witnessed in this country a staggering revolution in sexual attitudes. Our social norms apparently began to unravel during the unrest of the 1960s, among students to start with. Research shows that in the period from 1970 to 1975, the number of college students who accepted the practice of premarital sex grew from about 50 percent to nearly 90 percent (Katz and Cronin, “Sexuality and College Life,” *Change*, February–March 1980, p. 44). College students are the most permissive of all groups, and they are *your* peer group. You cannot help being influenced by their general attitudes.

It would be of no help to you, by the way, to seek counsel about sexual norms in America from a typical professional therapist. The American Psychiatric Association recently voted to remove homosexuality from its list of disorders, even though one study pointed out by our own Allen Bergin showed that 50 percent of the male homosexuals surveyed in one American city had at least 500 sexual partners and 28 percent of them had had 1,000 partners (see “Bringing the Restoration to the Academic

World: Clinical Psychology As a Test Case,” *BYU Studies* 19 [1979]: 449, 464). If that is normal behavior, we’ve got problems. A representative of today’s mainstream attitude among psychotherapists recently wrote in a professional journal that most people in his field believe “that human disturbance is largely associated with and springs from absolutistic thinking—from dogmatism, inflexibility, and that [being extremely religious] is essentially emotional disturbance” (Ellis, “Psychotherapy and Religious Values,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 48 [1980]: 635). In other words, the way to relieve one’s guilt about an immoral life is to begin believing there is no such thing as an immoral life. Whatever you want to do is moral if you want to do it. This same psychologist expressed his concern about the mental stability of people who commit themselves to “unequivocal loyalty to any interpersonal commitments, especially marriage.” You can imagine what this man and his professional associates would think of temple marriage. The same attitudes are springing up everywhere in other fields. I’ve done a lot of reading in my own field of law; I’ve read widely in the social sciences. It’s now simply a fact that most of those who write and most of those who produce today’s movies, TV programs, and popular music, as well as those who set the editorial policies of many national magazines, believe that sex outside of marriage is really quite harmless, if not rather healthy. I recently heard Mormon filmmaker Keith Merrill express his opinion that today’s movie producers have no more hesitation about showing sexual acts on the screen than they do about showing people eating dinner.

Something deep within our national soul has gone wrong, brothers and sisters, and it cannot help but influence our attitudes and dull our normal senses in frightening ways. Twenty years ago there was much public support for the things you and I believe in, despite some occasional straying from those

principles. All that is different now. Now we are almost suffocated by a dense fog of sensuality. Kenneth Kolson has described this basic change in national attitude in talking about *Playboy* magazine:

While Playboy is much the same thing that it was during the 1950's, it is not exactly the same thing, and the difference is crucial. During the 50's, there was, of course, pornography. We used to get it at the newsstand from the old man with the black cigar who would produce it, literally, from "under-the-counter." Sometimes it would circulate through the boys' locker room—usually pictures of fat [women] with missing teeth. It was available, all right, but one came by it ["out behind the barn," so to speak]. But now that the Playboy philosophy has been declared innocent by the grand jury of public opinion, now that it "is involved in the mainstream of our culture and values," it is acquired, and consumed, as thoughtlessly as a pound of bologna. You pack Mildred and the kids in the station wagon, buzz down to the local drugstore, plunk your two bucks down on the counter, and bring home artful pictures of young women who have straight teeth, deep suntans, and college educations. Every one of them is a former cheerleader, a current jogger, concerned about ecology. Middle class. When you get home, you throw your copy on the coffee table promiscuously [alongside Time and Newsweek], a public pronouncement that you buy Playboy for the literature. It's true: the difference between the 50's and [today] is that we don't give pornography a second thought any more. [Chronicles of Culture, September–October 1979, p. 18]

And that is exactly what has gone wrong. We don't give it a second thought. The attitude of acceptance here and what I've seen in Europe is so widespread that there is nothing to compare with it in the last several centuries, in any civilized society; not since Rome, not since Sodom and Gomorrah.

The enormous scope of the drift is what makes it so treacherous. Even as we are

surrounded by abnormality, everything somehow seems so normal. As written by Pascal:

When everything is moving at once, nothing appears to be moving, as on board ship. When everyone is moving towards depravity, no one seems to be moving, but if someone stops, he shows up the others who are rushing on, by acting as a fixed point. [Blaise Pascal, Pensées, vol. 33 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Great Books of the Western World, 1952)]

We—you and I—must be that fixed point.

I want you to know that it isn't easy for me to paint such an extreme picture. I am usually a pretty calm and reasonable guy. But on this particular subject of sexual morality, I honestly believe our society is within the grip of the evil one, even in the moment when so many Americans feel more "free" than ever before. There is a reason why the scriptures record the word *devilish* after the words *carnal* and *sensual*. We read in the Pearl of Great Price that "Satan came among them, . . . and they loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish" (Moses 5:13). And then when Cain slew Abel, he said, "I am free" (Moses 5:33). Cain was never more in bondage than when he said, "I am free." In exactly the same way, the American people have never been in greater moral bondage than in this time when they glory in being "free" to pursue pleasure in any form they fancy as if there will never be any tomorrow.

Can you see why the Brethren tell us to stay away from X- and R-rated movies? Can you see why they plead with us to avoid drugs, alcohol, vulgar music, and the other products of the carnal environment that now surrounds us almost as water surrounds the fish of the sea? These aren't trivial things, brothers and sisters. This isn't just a modern version of a fussy Victorian concern about bobby sox, social dancing, and driving over twenty miles an

hour. This is not just Coke and makeup and nylons for twelve-year-olds. If the H-bomb symbolizes our age, we are playing now not just with fire, but with nuclear power. The prince of darkness has dragged out the heavy artillery. He is no longer limited to arrows and swords and BB guns. Now he is Darth Vader, with laser guns, light speeds, and the Death Star. We are near the end of a fight to the finish, and no holds are barred.

Let me talk now, on the other hand, about the more positive aspects of the law of chastity, because that part of the law is fundamental and important. Elder Packer said,

Oh, youth, the requirements of the Church are the highway to love, with guardrails securely in place, with help along the way. How foolish is the youth who feels the Church is a fence around love to keep him out. How fortunate is the young person who follows the standards of the Church, even if just from sheer obedience or habit, for he will find rapture and a joy fulfilled.

I'd like to read a provocative statement about the positive side of the law of chastity from an English writer:

Never was an age more sentimental, more devoid of real feeling, more exaggerated in false feeling, than our own. . . . The [TV] and the film are mere counterfeit emotion all the time, the current press and literature the same. People wallow in emotion: counterfeit emotion. They lap it up: they live in it and on it. . . .

. . . A young couple fall in counterfeit love, and fool themselves and each other completely. But, alas, counterfeit love is good cake but bad bread. It produces a fearful emotional indigestion. . . .

. . . The peculiar hatred of people who have not loved one another, but who have pretended to, . . . is one of the phenomena of our time. . . .

. . . [But there is a] profound instinct of fidelity in a man, which is, as shown by world-history, just a little deeper and more powerful than his instinct

of faithless sexual promiscuity. . . . The instinct of fidelity is perhaps the deepest instinct in the great complex we call sex. Where there is real sex there is the underlying passion for fidelity. And the prostitute knows this, because she is up against it. She can only keep men who [want the counterfeit: and these men] she despises. . . .

. . . The [Chief Thinkers of our generation know] nothing of [this]. To [them,] all sex is infidelity and only infidelity is sex. Marriage is sexless, null. Sex is only manifested in infidelity, and the queen of sex is the chief prostitute. . . .

This is the teaching of the . . . Chief Thinkers of our generation. And the vulgar public agrees with them entirely. Sex is a thing you don't have except to be naughty with. Apart from . . . infidelity and fornication, sex doesn't exist. . . .

[However, the truth is that the Christian] Church created marriage by making it a sacrament, a sacrament of man and woman united in . . . communion, . . . and never to be separated, except by death. And even when separated by death, still not freed from the marriage. . . . Marriage, making one complete body out of two incomplete ones, and providing for the complex development of the man's soul and the woman's soul in unison, throughout a life-time. Marriage sacred and inviolable, the great way of earthly fulfilment for man and woman, in unison. . . .

. . . And this, this oneness gradually accomplished throughout a life-time in twoness, is the highest achievement of time or eternity. From it all things human spring, children and beauty and well-made things; all the true creations of humanity. . . . The will of God is that He wishes this, this oneness, to take place, fulfilled over a lifetime. . . .

*. . . The oneness of . . . man and woman in marriage completes the universe, as far as humanity is concerned, completes the streaming of the sun and the flowing of the stars. [D. H. Lawrence, *Essays on Sex, Literature and Censorship* (New York: Twayne, 1953), pp. 96–111]*

Properly understood, then, the scriptures counsel us to be virtuous not because romantic love

is bad, but precisely because romantic love is so good. It is not only good; it is pure, precious, even sacred and holy. For that reason, one of Satan's cheapest and dirtiest tricks is to make profane that which is sacred. Building on a metaphor from President Harold B. Lee, it is as though Satan holds up to the world a degraded image of sexual love suggested by imagining the drunken, boisterous laughter of filthy men in a brothel, located on some crowded, dusty highway of life, where the flower of fair womanhood is jeered at, dirtied, brutalized, and ultimately crushed with unclean hands. Meanwhile, far, far away from the madding crowd, high up in the cool protected valleys of tall mountains, grows the priceless flower of virtue—untarnished, pure, and unsullied. It waits as a noble prize for those valiant few who are willing to climb to its heights by paying the price of patience, obedience, and a lifetime of devotion—an endless, unselfish loyalty to spouse and children.

May I suggest now eight brief, practical steps for those who would one day be true sweethearts, based on a foundation of righteous living.

First, have reverence for the human body and the life-giving powers of that body. That basic attitude is what I have hoped to convey in most of what I have said today. Your body is a temple. It is sacred and holy. Have the same reverence for it that you have for any temple that seeks to be the dwelling place for the Spirit of the Lord. It is also the dwelling place of the seeds of human life, the nurturing of which, with your chosen companion, within the bounds set by God himself, is lovely, of good report, and praiseworthy.

Second, during the time of courtship, please be emotionally honest in the expression of affection. Sometimes you are not as careful as you might be about when, how, and to whom you express your feelings of affection. You must realize that the desire to express affection

can be motivated by other things than true love. As Erich Fromm put it,

Desire can be stimulated by the anxiety of aloneness, by the wish to conquer or be conquered, by vanity, by the wish to hurt and even to destroy, as much as it can be stimulated by love. It seems that sexual desire can easily blend with and be stimulated by any strong emotion, of which love is only one. Because sexual desire is in the minds of most people coupled with the idea of love, they are easily misled to conclude that they love each other when they want each other physically. . . . [But] if [this] desire . . . is not stimulated by love, . . . it . . . leaves strangers as far apart as they were before—sometimes it makes them ashamed of each other, or even makes them hate each other, because when the illusion has gone they feel their estrangement even more markedly than before. [The Art of Loving (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), pp. 45–46]

In short, save your kisses—you might need them someday. And when any of you—men or women—are given entrance to the heart of a trusting young friend, you stand on holy ground. In such a place you must be honest with yourself—and with your friend—about love and the expression of its symbols.

Third, be friends first and sweethearts second. Lowell Bennion once said that relationships between young men and young women should be built like a pyramid. The base of the pyramid is friendship. And the ascending layers are built of things like time, understanding, respect, and restraint. Right at the top of the pyramid is a glittering little mystery called romance. And when weary travelers in the desert see that glitter on top of the pyramid from far off, they don't see what underlies the jewel to give it such prominence and hold it so high. Now, you don't have to be very smart to know that a pyramid won't stand up very long if you stand it on its point instead of its base. In other words, be friends first and sweethearts later, not the other way around. Otherwise,

people who think they are sweethearts may discover they can't be very good friends, and by then it may be too late.

Fourth, develop the power of self-discipline and self-restraint. Please remember that nobody ever fell off a cliff who never went near one. You've got to be like Joseph, not like David. When Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him, the scripture says, Joseph "fled, and got him out" (Genesis 39:12). Joseph knew that it is wiser to avoid temptation than to resist it. King David, by contrast, somehow developed too much confidence in his own ability to handle temptation. He was tragically willing to flirt—to flirt with evil, and it ultimately destroyed him. In your courtships, even when you feel there is a growing foundation of true love, show your profound respect for that love and the possibilities of your life together by restraining your passions. Please don't be deceived by the false notion that anything short of the sex act itself is acceptable conduct. That is a lie, not only because one step overpoweringly leads to another, but also because the handling of another's body is in an important sense part of the sexual act that is kept holy by the sanctuary of chastity. If ever you are in doubt about where the line is between love and lust, draw the line toward the side of love. Nobody ever fell off a cliff who never went near one.

Fifth, in your searching for the fulfillment of your romantic longings, live for the presence of the Holy Spirit, that you may have it as your constant guide. Don't date someone you already know you would not ever want to marry. If you should fall in love with someone you shouldn't marry, you can't expect the Lord to guide you away from that person after you are already emotionally committed. It is difficult enough to tune your spiritual receiver to the whisperings of heaven without jamming up the channel with the loud thunder of romantic emotion. The key to spiritual guidance is found in one word: worthiness. I won't

take time to discuss it now but would urge you, if you want to do a little scripture study, to compare Doctrine and Covenants 63:16–17 with Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46. You'll find something interesting there. Those who garnish their thoughts with virtue have the Spirit and have confidence in God's presence. Those who have lust in their hearts can't have the Spirit.

Sixth, avoid the habit of feeling sorry for yourself, and don't worry excessively about those times when you feel socially unsuccessful. Everybody in the world doesn't have to marry you—it only takes one. I remember the experience of a choice young woman who had been very popular and successful in many ways in her hometown. She passed up two or three chances to get serious with young men because she planned to attend college at a Church school, where she expected to find more promising opportunities. After she had been at that school for about six months without a date, however, she began to wonder if she had some loathsome disease. Seeing that experience through her eyes was very sobering for me about the risks we take in any large population center for LDS students, because sheer size and numbers can so easily cause people to make incredibly superficial judgments about others in ways that emphasize appearance above far more important but less obvious factors.

The opportunities for developing friendships (as sometimes distinguished from having "dates") with members of the opposite sex are very plentiful at a place like BYU and Ricks. Often these relationships lead to more promising possibilities than does the big social whirl. It's also less expensive. In approaching these opportunities, remember: "Worry not that you are not well known. Seek to be worth knowing." The college-age years are a wonderful time in which to experience a variety of human relationships, to go places and do things, to read widely, to find yourself, to develop the

roots of spiritual and emotional maturity. To gain this kind of ripeness and growth simply takes time, experience, and effort.

The discouragement you may feel as another empty Friday night rolls by is often a form of the insecurity we all encounter as we try to find ourselves. Without the apparent approval of your self-worth that comes through social success, you may begin to doubt whether your life is really worthwhile. That kind of self-doubt is only part of a larger problem that accompanies most of us, married or single, all the days of our lives. There are times when we wonder if the Lord loves us; we wonder if other people love us. And so we mistakenly seek the symbols of success—whether that is being popular or being rich or being famous within our own sphere. Sometimes you may let someone take improper liberties with you, or you may indulge yourself in some practice that seems to bring temporary relief but only makes you feel worse in the long run. Some even make poor marriage choices, just to show the world that *somebody* will have them.

Ultimately, however, only the Lord's approval of our lives really matters. If you seek to be worth knowing and seek to do his will, all the rest will take care of itself. Never forget that all things work together for good to them who love God (see Romans 8:28). Your time for marriage may not come until the autumn of your life and then, in Elder Packer's phrase: "be more precious for the waiting." Even if your time should not come in this life, the promises of eternal love are still yours in the Lord's view of time if only you are faithful.

Seventh, avoid at all costs, no matter what the circumstances, abortion and homosexuality. As serious as is fornication or adultery, you must understand that abortion and homosexuality are equally wrong and may be worse. Even persons who only assist others, much less pressure them, to have an abortion are in jeopardy of being denied the privilege of missionary service. They may also be called

upon to face a Church court, at the peril of their membership in the Church.

Eighth, if, through some unfortunate experience in your past, you have committed a moral transgression of the kind we have been talking about today, there is a way by which you may receive full forgiveness. There is no more glorious language in all scripture than the words of Isaiah, speaking as if it were by the voice of the Lord himself:

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. [Isaiah 1:18–19]

The steps for the process of repentance are outlined in President Kimball's masterful book *The Miracle of Forgiveness*. If your transgressions are of the serious kind, you will need to see your bishop and voluntarily offer a full and complete confession. As frightening as that experience may seem to you, by this means you will find purpose and a peace of mind more hopeful and uplifting than you can now imagine. As you wonder how you might stand in the eyes of the Lord after such an experience, I commend to you the counsel of Elder Vaughn Featherstone, who talked in the October 1980 general conference about the repentance process for serious transgressions. The most memorable part of that candid and loving sermon was Elder Featherstone's expression of his attitude toward those who have had the courage and the faith to confess their sins and even face Church discipline, if necessary. Because I so much share Elder Featherstone's feelings, I would like to quote a portion of his remarks:

In Exodus 32, Moses had gone up to the mountain. The children of Israel had fashioned a golden calf with a graving tool. The people offered burnt offerings, and they sat down to eat, drink, and play;

and there was great wickedness when Moses came down out of the mountain. He cast the tablets out of his hands, and they were broken; he burned the golden calf and caused the idolaters to be slain.

Then, when the people had repented (and that is the key), Moses went back before the Lord and prayed, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Exodus 32:32).

I have listened to possibly a thousand major transgressions; and each time after a truly repentant transgressor has left my office, I have either knelt behind the desk or bowed my head in prayer and said, "Lord, forgive him or her, I pray thee. If not, blot my name also out of thy book. I do not want to be where they aren't, for they are some of the most Christlike people I have ever met."

Though their sins be as scarlet, they may become white as the driven snow (see Isaiah 1:18), and the Lord has promised he would remember their sins no more (see D&C 58:42). ["Forgive Them, I Pray Thee," Ensign, November 1980, p. 31]

I guess one reason I appreciate Elder Featherstone's feelings so much is that those are also my feelings about you. That's why I am willing to take the risk today that maybe you think I'm being too serious. I'm willing to take that chance because I don't want to be where the students of Ricks College and Brigham Young University are not.

For all that I have said by way of warning about the social conditions of the day or the

limits we must place on ourselves, I'd like you to remember that the teachings of the gospel about romantic love are full of hope and peace and joy of the most uplifting and everlasting kind. I will always remember my straight-arrow friend that I met here in Provo who told me he took his fiancée to the bishop for a recommendation to be married before they had ever experienced *any* physical dimension to their relationship—and I mean any!

After the regular interview, the wise bishop asked them, "Well, do you feel the spark when you hold each other close?"

My friend was perplexed. "The spark?"

The bishop tried to explain, but my friend was having trouble catching on. So the bishop assigned them to take one week to see if they had "the spark" in their relationship. He knew they'd figure it out and still remain worthy.

As my friend told me this story, I couldn't help asking, "Well, what did you find out?"

He blushed a little bit, and then he said, "Well, we finally fulfilled the assignment."

They learned the same thing that I have learned, about being sweethearts on the foundation of everlasting friendship and love. I testify to you with all my heart that the commandments of God are designed for our ultimate happiness, and that being sweethearts in the way the Lord intended it is worth waiting for, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.