

For Time and All Eternity

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Dear brethren and sisters, the scriptures and the teachings of the Apostles and prophets speak of us in premortal life as sons and daughters, spirit children of God.¹ Gender existed before, and did not begin at mortal birth.²

In the great council in heaven,³ God's plan was presented:⁴ the plan of salvation,⁵ the plan of redemption,⁶ the great plan of happiness.⁷ The plan provides for a proving; all must choose between good and evil.⁸ His plan provides for a Redeemer, an atonement, the Resurrection, and, if we obey, our return to the presence of God.

The adversary rebelled and adopted a plan of his own.⁹ Those who followed him were denied the right to a mortal body.¹⁰ Our presence here confirms that we sanctioned our Father's plan.¹¹

The single purpose of Lucifer is to oppose the great plan of happiness, to corrupt the purest, most beautiful and appealing experiences of life: romance, love, marriage, and parenthood.¹² The specters of heartbreak and guilt¹³ follow him about. Only repentance can heal what he hurts.

The plan of happiness requires the righteous union of male and female, man and woman, husband and wife.¹⁴ Doctrines teach us how to respond to the compelling natural impulses which too often dominate how we behave.

A body patterned after the image of God was created for Adam,¹⁵ and he was introduced into the Garden.¹⁶ At first, Adam was alone. He held the priesthood,¹⁷ but alone, he could not fulfill the purposes of his creation.¹⁸

No other man would do. Neither alone nor with other men could Adam progress. Nor could Eve with another woman. It was so then. It is so today.

Eve, an help meet, was created. Marriage was instituted,¹⁹ for Adam was commanded to cleave unto his *wife* [not just to a *woman*] and "to none else."²⁰

A choice, it might be said, was imposed upon Eve.²¹ She should be praised for her decision. Then "Adam fell that men might be."²²

Elder Orson F. Whitney described the Fall as having "a twofold direction—downward, yet forward. It brought man into the world and set his feet upon progression's highway."²³

God blessed Adam and Eve “and said unto them: Be fruitful, and multiply.”²⁴ And so the family was established.

There is nothing in the revelations which suggests that to be a man rather than to be a woman is preferred in the sight of God, or that He places a higher value on sons than on daughters.

All virtues listed in the scriptures—love, joy, peace, faith, godliness, charity—are shared by both men and women,²⁵ and the highest priesthood ordinance in mortality is given only to man and woman together.²⁶

After the Fall, natural law had far-reaching sovereignty over mortal birth. There are what President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., called “pranks” of nature,²⁷ which cause a variety of abnormalities, deficiencies, and deformities. However unfair they seem to man’s way of reasoning, they somehow suit the purposes of the Lord in the proving of mankind.

The following of every worthy instinct, the responding to every righteous urge, the consummating of every exalting human relationship are provided for and approved in the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ and protected by commandments revealed to His church.

Except Adam and Eve by nature be different from one another, they could not multiply and fill the earth.²⁸ The complementing differences are the very key to the plan of happiness.

Some roles are best suited to the masculine nature and others to the feminine nature. Both the scriptures and the patterns of nature place man as the protector, the provider.²⁹

Those responsibilities of the priesthood, which have to do with the administration of the Church, of necessity function outside the home. By divine decree, they have been entrusted to men. It has been that way since the beginning, for the Lord revealed that “the order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son. ... This order was instituted in the days of Adam.”³⁰

A man who holds the priesthood does not have an advantage over a woman in qualifying for exaltation. The woman, by her very nature, is also co-creator with God and the primary nurturer of the children. Virtues and attributes upon which perfection and exaltation depend come naturally to a woman and are refined through marriage and motherhood.

The priesthood is conferred only upon worthy men in order to conform to our Father’s plan of happiness. With the laws of nature and the revealed word of God working in harmony, it simply works best that way.

The priesthood carries with it awesome responsibility. “No power or influence *can* or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge.”³¹

Should a man “exercise control or dominion or compulsion ... in any degree of unrighteousness,”³² he violates “the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.”³³ Then “the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved.”³⁴ Unless he repents he will lose his blessings.

While the different roles of man and woman are set forth in exalted celestial declarations, they are best demonstrated in the most practical, ordinary, down-to-earth experiences of family life.

Recently I heard a speaker in sacrament meeting complain that he could not understand why his grandchildren always spoke of going to *Grandma’s* house, never to Grandpa’s house. I solved that great mystery for him: Grandpas don’t bake pies!

Natural and spiritual laws which govern life were instituted from before the foundation of the world.³⁵ They are eternal, as are the consequences for either obeying or disobeying them. They are not based on social or political considerations. They cannot be changed. No pressure, no protest, no legislation can alter them.

Years ago I supervised the Indian seminaries. On a visit to a school at Albuquerque, the principal told me of an incident that happened in a first grade class.

During a lesson, a kitten wandered into the room and distracted the youngsters. It was brought to the front of the room so all could see it.

One youngster asked: “Is it a boy kitty or a girl kitty?”

The teacher, unprepared for that discussion, said, “It doesn’t matter; it’s just a kitten.”

But the children persisted, and one little boy said, “I know how we can tell if it is a boy kitty or a girl kitty.”

The teacher, cornered, said, “All right, you tell us how we can tell if it is a boy kitty or a girl kitty.”

The boy answered, “We can vote on it!”

Some things cannot be changed. Doctrine cannot be changed.

“Principles which have been revealed,” President Wilford Woodruff said, “for the salvation and exaltation of the children of men ... are principles you cannot annihilate. *They are principles that no combination of men [or women] can destroy.* They are principles that can never die. ... They are beyond the reach of man to handle or to destroy. ... It is not in the power of the whole world put together to destroy those principles. ... Not one jot or tittle of these principles will ever be destroyed.”³⁶

During World War II, men were called away to fight. In the emergency, wives and mothers worldwide were drawn into the workforce as never before. The most

devastating effect of the war was on the family. It lingers to this generation.

In the October 1942 general conference, the First Presidency delivered a message to “the Saints in every land and clime,” in which they said, “By virtue of the authority in us vested as the First Presidency of the Church, we warn our people.”

And they said: “Amongst His earliest commands to Adam and Eve, the Lord said: ‘Multiply and replenish the earth.’ He has repeated that command in our day. He has again revealed in this, the last dispensation, the principle of the eternity of the marriage covenant. ...

“The Lord has told us that it is the duty of every husband and wife to obey the command given to Adam to multiply and replenish the earth, so that the legions of choice spirits waiting for their tabernacles of flesh may come here and move forward under God’s great design to become perfect souls, for without these fleshly tabernacles they cannot progress to their God-planned destiny. Thus, every husband and wife should become a father and mother in Israel to children born under the holy, eternal covenant.

“By bringing these choice spirits to earth, each father and each mother assume towards the tabernacled spirit and towards the Lord Himself by having taken advantage of the opportunity He offered, an obligation of the most sacred kind, because the fate of that spirit in the eternities to come, the blessings or punishments which shall await it in the hereafter, depend, in great part, upon the care, the teachings, the training which the parents shall give to that spirit.

“No parent can escape that obligation and that responsibility, and for the proper meeting thereof, the Lord will hold us to a strict accountability. No loftier duty than this can be assumed by mortals.”

Speaking of mothers, the First Presidency said: “Motherhood thus becomes a holy calling, a sacred dedication for carrying out the Lord’s plans, a consecration of devotion to the uprearing and fostering, the nurturing in body, mind, and spirit, of those who kept their first estate and who come to this earth for their second estate ‘to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.’ (Abr. 3:25) To lead them to keep their second estate is the work of motherhood, and ‘they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.’ (op. cit.) [Abr. 3:26]

“This divine service of motherhood can be rendered only by mothers. It may not be passed to others. Nurses cannot do it; public nurseries cannot do it; hired help cannot do it—only mother, aided as much as may be by the loving hands of father, brothers, and sisters, can give the full needed measure of watchful care.”

The First Presidency counseled that “the mother who entrusts her child to the care of others, that she may do non-motherly work, whether for gold, for fame, or for civic service, should remember that ‘a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.’ (Prov. 29:15) In our day the Lord has said that unless parents teach their children the doctrines of the Church ‘the sin be upon the heads of the parents.’ (D&C 68:25)

“Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels.”³⁷

That message and warning from the First Presidency is needed more, not less, today than when it was given. And no voice from any organization of the Church on any level of administration equals that of the First Presidency.³⁸

Any soul who by nature or circumstance is not afforded the blessing of marriage and parenthood, or who innocently must act alone in rearing children, working to support them, will not be denied in the eternities any blessing—provided they keep the commandments.³⁹ As President Lorenzo Snow promised: “That is sure and positive.”⁴⁰

I close with a parable.

Once a man received as his inheritance two keys. The first key, he was told, would open a vault which he must protect at all cost. The second key was to a safe within the vault which contained a priceless treasure. He was to open this safe and freely use the precious things which were stored therein. He was warned that many would seek to rob him of his inheritance. He was promised that if he used the treasure worthily, it would be replenished and never be diminished, not in all eternity. He would be tested. If he used it to benefit others, his own blessings and joy would increase.

The man went alone to the vault. His first key opened the door. He tried to unlock the treasure with the other key, but he could not, for there were two locks on the safe. His key alone would not open it. No matter how he tried, he could not open it. He was puzzled. He had been given the keys. He knew the treasure was rightfully his. He had obeyed instructions, but he could not open the safe.

In due time, there came a woman into the vault. She, too, held a key. It was noticeably different from the key he held. Her key fit the other lock. It humbled him to learn that he could not obtain his rightful inheritance without her.

They made a covenant that together they would open the treasure and, as instructed, he would watch over the vault and protect it; she would watch over the treasure. She was not concerned that, as guardian of the vault, he held two keys, for his full purpose was to see that she was safe as she watched over that which was most precious to them both. Together they opened the safe and partook of their inheritance. They rejoiced for, as promised, it replenished itself.

With great joy they found that they could pass the treasure on to their children; each could receive a full measure, undiminished to the last generation.

Perhaps some few of their posterity would not find a companion who possessed the complementary key, or one worthy and willing to keep the covenants relating to the treasure. Nevertheless, if they kept the commandments, they would not be denied even the smallest blessing.

Because some tempted them to misuse their treasure, they were careful to teach their children about keys and covenants.

There came, in due time, among their posterity some few who were deceived or jealous or selfish because one was given two keys and another only one. “Why,” the selfish ones reasoned, “cannot the treasure be mine alone to use as I desire?”

Some tried to reshape the key they had been given to resemble the other key. Perhaps, they thought, it would then fit both locks. And so it was that the safe was closed to them. Their reshaped keys were useless, and their inheritance was lost.

Those who received the treasure with gratitude and obeyed the laws concerning it knew joy without bounds through time and all eternity.

I bear witness of our Father’s plan for happiness, and bear testimony in the name of Him who wrought the Atonement, that it might be, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.