

# The Joy of Living the Great Plan of Happiness

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The scriptures record, “And I, God, created man ... ; male and female created I them.”<sup>1</sup> This was done spiritually in your premortal existence when you lived in the presence of your Father in Heaven. Your gender existed before you came to earth. You elected to have this earth experience as part of His plan for you. The prophets call it “the plan of mercy,”<sup>2</sup> the “eternal plan of deliverance,”<sup>3</sup> “the plan of salvation,”<sup>4</sup> and, yes, “the great plan of happiness.”<sup>5</sup> You were taught this plan before you came to earth and there rejoiced in the privilege of participating in it.

Obedience to the plan is a requisite for full happiness in this life and a continuation of eternal joy beyond the veil. Essential to His plan of happiness is agency—the right of personal choice. Also fundamental is the holy privilege of procreation to be exercised within the commitment of legal marriage. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. The family is ordained of God.<sup>6</sup> As husband and wife, you have the responsibility to bear children and to nurture and train them spiritually, emotionally, and physically.<sup>7</sup>

Satan also has a plan. It is a cunning, evil, subtle plan of destruction.<sup>8</sup> It is his objective to take captive the children of Father in Heaven and with every possible means frustrate the great plan of happiness.

Our Heavenly Father endowed His sons and daughters with unique traits especially fitted for their individual responsibilities as they fulfill His plan. To follow His plan requires that you do those things He expects of you as a son or daughter, husband or wife. Those roles are different but entirely compatible. In the Lord’s plan, it takes two—a man and a woman—to form a whole. Indeed, a husband and wife are not two identical halves, but a wondrous, divinely determined combination of complementary capacities and characteristics.

Marriage allows these different characteristics to come together in oneness—in unity—to bless a husband and wife, their children and grandchildren. For the greatest happiness and productivity in life, both

husband and wife are needed. Their efforts interlock and are complementary. Each has individual traits that best fit the role the Lord has defined for happiness as a man or woman. When used as the Lord intends, those capacities allow a married couple to think, act, and rejoice as one—to face challenges together and overcome them as one, to grow in love and understanding, and through temple ordinances to be bound together as one whole, eternally. That is the plan.

You can learn how to be more effective parents by studying the lives of Adam and Eve. Adam was Michael who helped create the earth—a glorious, superb individual. Eve was his equal—a full, powerfully contributing partner. After they had partaken of the fruit, the Lord spoke with them. Their comments reveal some different characteristics of a man and woman. To Adam He said, “Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?”<sup>9</sup> Now, Adam’s response was characteristic of a man who wants to be perceived as being as close to right as possible. Adam responded, “The woman thou gavest me, and commandest that she should remain with me, she gave me of the fruit of the tree and I did eat.”<sup>10</sup> And the Lord said unto Eve, “What is this thing which thou hast done?”<sup>11</sup> Eve’s response was characteristic of a woman. Her answer was very simple and straightforward: “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”<sup>12</sup>

Later, “Adam blessed God ... and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of *my* transgression *my* eyes are opened, and in this life *I* shall have joy, and again in the flesh *I* shall see God.”<sup>13</sup> Adam was thinking about his responsibilities. He was trying to align his performance with the desires of the Lord. Eve said, “Were it not for *our* transgression *we* never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of *our* redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto *all* the obedient.”<sup>14</sup> Eve’s response was characteristic of a woman. She embraced all, wanted to make sure that everyone was considered. One response was not more correct than the other. The two perspectives resulted from the traits inherent in men and women. The Lord intends that we use those differences to fulfill His plan for happiness, personal growth, and development. By counseling together they arrived at a broader, more correct understanding of truth.

They worked together.<sup>15</sup> They obeyed the commandment to have children.<sup>16</sup> They knew the plan of happiness and followed it, even though at times it resulted in hardship and difficulty for them.

They were commanded, “Thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore.”<sup>17</sup> And they did. Further, they taught their children the plan of happiness.<sup>18</sup> They worked together to overcome challenges,<sup>19</sup> and they “ceased not to call upon God.”<sup>20</sup>

Because Adam and Eve were obedient, the Holy Ghost led them. As husband and wife, you can receive direction in your lives by qualifying for the gift of the Holy Ghost through obedience to the teachings of the Savior.

Beware of the subtle ways Satan employs to take you from the plan of God<sup>21</sup> and true happiness. One of Satan's most effective approaches is to demean the role of wife and mother in the home. This is an attack at the very heart of God's plan to foster love between husband and wife and to nurture children in an atmosphere of understanding, peace, appreciation, and support. Much of the violence that is rampant in the world today is the harvest of weakened homes. Government and social plans will not effectively correct that, nor can the best efforts of schools and churches fully compensate for the absence of the tender care of a compassionate mother and wife in the home.

This morning President Hinckley spoke of the importance of a mother in the home. Study his message. As a mother guided by the Lord, you weave a fabric of character in your children from threads of truth through careful instruction and worthy example. You imbue the traits of honesty, faith in God, duty, respect for others, kindness, self-confidence, and the desire to contribute, to learn, and to give in your trusting children's minds and hearts. No day-care center can do that. It is your sacred right and privilege.

Of course, as a woman you can do exceptionally well in the workplace, but is that the best use of your divinely appointed talents and feminine traits? As a husband, don't encourage your wife to go to work to help in your divinely appointed responsibility of providing resources for the family, if you can possibly avoid it. As the prophets have counseled, to the extent possible with the help of the Lord, as parents, work together to keep Mother in the home.<sup>22</sup> Your presence there will strengthen the self-confidence of your children and decrease the chance of emotional challenges. Moreover, as you teach truth by word and example, those children will come to understand who they are and what they can obtain as divine children of Father in Heaven.

I know I have been speaking of the ideal, and you may be disturbed because your life may not now fit that mold. I promise you that through your obedience and continuing faith in Jesus Christ and your understanding of the whole plan of happiness, even if important parts of it aren't fulfilled in your life now, they will be yours in the Lord's due time. I also promise you that you can have significant growth and happiness now in your present circumstances. As a daughter or son of God, live whatever portion of the plan you can to the best of your ability.

Your desire to be a wife and mother may not have its total fulfillment here, but it will in His time as you live in faith and obedience to merit it.<sup>23</sup> Don't be lured away from the plan of our God<sup>24</sup> to the ways of the world, where motherhood is belittled, femininity is decried, and the divinely established role of wife and mother is mocked. Let the world go its way. You follow the plan of the Lord for the greatest measure of true, eternal achievement and the fullest happiness. The lack of promised blessings for which you qualify will be fully rectified in this life or in the next.<sup>25</sup>

I often interview strong priesthood leaders. When these men speak of their wives, it is with deep tenderness and obvious appreciation. Often, tears flow. Their comments include "She is more spiritual, purer, and more committed than I," "She motivates me to be a better person," "She is the strength of my life," and "I couldn't do it without her." As a woman, please don't judge how worthwhile, needed, and loved you are by our inept ability to express our true feelings. Your divinely conferred trait of giving of self without counting the cost leads you to underestimate your own worth.

I humbly thank our Father in Heaven for His daughters, you who were willing to come to earth to live under such uncertain circumstances. Most men could not handle the uncertainties you are asked to live with. Social customs require that you wait to be asked for marriage. You are expected to go with your husband wherever his employment or call takes him. Your environment and neighborhood are determined by his ability to provide, meager or not. You place your life in the Lord's hands each time you bear a child. He makes no such sacrifice. The blessing of nurturing children and caring for a husband often is intermingled with many routine tasks. But you do all of these things willingly because you are a woman. Generally you have no idea of how truly wonderful and capable you are, how very much appreciated and loved, or how desperately needed, for most men don't tell you as completely and as often as needed.

How can you receive the greatest happiness and blessings from this earth experience?

- Learn the doctrinal foundation of the great plan of happiness by studying the scriptures, pondering their content, and praying to understand them. Carefully study and use the proclamation of the First Presidency and the Twelve on the family.<sup>26</sup> It was inspired of the Lord.
- Listen to the voice of current and past prophets. Their declarations are inspired. You may verify that counsel in your own mind and heart by praying about it as it applies to your special circumstances. Ask the Lord to confirm your choices and accept accountability for them.

- Obey the inner feelings that come as promptings from the Holy Ghost. Those feelings are engendered by your righteous thoughts and acts and your determination to seek the will of the Lord and to live it.
- When needed, seek counsel and guidance from parents and your priesthood leaders.

A choice mother wrote: “How did the pioneer women ... respond to the challenges of their day? They *listened* to their prophet’s voice and *followed* him because they *knew* he spoke the will of the Lord. They met the challenges and reaped great blessings because of their faith and obedience. Their first priorities were not security, nice homes, or an easy life. ... No sacrifice was too great for them to make for their precious husbands and children.”<sup>27</sup>

I obviously don’t know what it feels like to be a woman, but I do know what it is to love one with all of my heart and soul. I constantly express to the Lord overflowing gratitude for the unending blessings that flow to our children and so abundantly to me from the life of one of His precious daughters. I want the happiness we have found together to be yours. The more closely you personally adhere to His plan for you on earth, the greater will be your happiness, fulfillment, and progress; the more qualified you will be to receive the rewards He has promised for obedience. I so testify, for the Savior lives and He loves you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. Moses 2:27. See also Moses 2:28; Moses 3:5; James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 4:303; James E. Talmage, *Millennial Star*, Aug. 1922, 539.
2. Alma 42:15.
3. 2 Ne. 11:5.
4. Moses 6:62.
5. Alma 42:8.
6. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. See “Proclamation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
8. See 2 Ne. 9:8–9; Alma 12:4–5; Hel. 2:8; 3 Ne. 1:16; D&C 10:12, 23.
9. Moses 4:17.
10. Moses 4:18.

11. Moses 4:19.
12. Moses 4:19.
13. Moses 5:10; emphasis added.
14. Moses 5:11; emphasis added.
15. See Moses 5:1.
16. See Moses 5:2.
17. Moses 5:8.
18. See Moses 5:12.
19. See Moses 5:13.
20. Moses 5:16.
21. 2 Ne. 9:13.
22. See Spencer W. Kimball, San Antonio fireside, 3 Dec. 1977, 32.
23. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 94; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 71.
24. 2 Ne. 9:13.
25. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:76.
26. See “Proclamation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
27. Jeanene W. Scott, BYU Women’s Conference, 6 Apr. 1989, 1.