Teachings Concerning
Marriage and Child-Bearing
By President Ezra Taft Benson

From
“Salvation—A Family Affair,”
Ensign, July 1992, pp. 2-4

My message is to return to the God-ordained fundamentals that will ensure love, stability, and happiness in our homes. May I offer three fundamentals to happy, enduring family relationships.

First: A husband and wife must attain righteous unity and oneness in their goals, desires, and actions. Marriage itself must be regarded as a sacred covenant before God. A married couple have an obligation not only to each other, but to God. He has promised blessings to those who honor that covenant.

Fidelity to one’s marriage vows is absolutely essential for love, trust, and peace. Adultery is unequivocally condemned by the Lord. Husbands and wives who love each other will find that love and loyalty are reciprocated. This love will provide a nurturing atmosphere for the emotional growth of children. Family life should be a time of happiness and joy that children can look back on with fond memories and associations.

Restraint and self-control must be ruling principles in the marriage relationship. Couples must learn to bridle their tongues as well as their passions.

Prayer in the home and prayer with each other will strengthen your union. Gradually thoughts, aspirations, and ideas will merge into a oneness until you are seeking the same purposes and goals.

Rely on the Lord, the teachings of the prophets, and the scriptures for guidance and help, particularly [page 4] when there may be disagreements and problems.

Spiritual growth comes by solving problems together—not by running from them. Today’s inordinate emphasis on individualism brings egotism and separation. Two individuals becoming “one flesh” is still the Lord’s standard. (See Gen. 2:24.)

The secret of a happy marriage is to serve God and each other. The goal of marriage is unity and oneness, as well as self-development. Paradoxically, the more we serve one another, the greater is our spiritual and emotional growth.

Second: Nurture your children with love and the admonitions of the Lord.

Rearing happy, peaceful children is no easy challenge in today’s world, but it can be done, and it is being done.

Responsible parenthood is the key.

Above all else, children need to know and feel they are loved, wanted, and appreciated. They need to be assured of that often. Obviously, this is a role parents should fill, and most often the mother can do it best.

Children need to know who they are in the eternal sense of their identity. They need to know that they have an eternal Heavenly Father on whom they can rely, to whom they can pray, and from whom they can receive guidance. They need to know from whence they came so that their lives will have meaning and purpose.

Children must be taught to pray, to rely on the Lord for guidance, and to express appreciation for the blessings that are theirs. I recall kneeling at the bedsides of our young children, helping them with their prayers.

Children must be taught right from wrong. They can and must learn the commandments of God. They must be taught that it is wrong to steal, lie, cheat, or covet what others have.

Children must be taught to work at home. They should learn there that honest labor develops dignity and self-respect. They should learn the pleasure of work, of doing a job well.

The leisure time of children must be constructively directed to wholesome, positive pursuits. Too much television viewing can be destructive.

Families must spend more time together in work and recreation. Family home evenings should be scheduled once a week as a time for discussions of gospel principles, recreation, work projects, skits, songs around the piano, games, special refreshments, and family prayers. Like iron links in a chain, this practice will bind a family together, in love, pride, tradition, strength, and loyalty.

Family study of the scriptures should be the practice in our homes each Sabbath day.

Daily devotional are also a commendable practice, where scripture reading, singing of hymns, and [page 5]
family prayer are a part of our daily routine.

**Third:** Parents must prepare their children for the ordinances of the gospel.

The most important teachings in the home are spiritual. Parents are commanded to prepare their sons and daughters for the ordinances of the gospel: baptism, confirmation, priesthood ordinations, and temple marriage. They are to teach them to respect and honor the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Most importantly, parents are to instill within their children a desire for eternal life and to earnestly seek that goal above all else.

Eternal life may be obtained only by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

When parents themselves have complied with the ordinances of salvation, when they have set the example of a temple marriage, not only is their own marriage more likely to succeed, but their children are far more likely to follow their example.

Parents who provide such a home will have, as the Lord has said, “a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, … a house of order, a house of God.” (D&C 88:119.) Regardless of how modest or humble that home may be, it will have love, happiness, peace, and joy. Children will grow up in righteousness and truth and will desire to serve the Lord.

Thank God for the joys of family life. I have often said there can be no genuine happiness separate and apart from a good home. The sweetest influences and associations of life are there.

---

**From**

*“To the Fathers in Israel,”*

*Ensign, Nov. 1987, p. 49*

In a home where there is an able-bodied husband, he is expected to be the breadwinner. Sometimes we hear of husbands who, because of economic conditions, have lost their jobs and expect the wives to go out of the home and work, even though the husband is still capable of providing for his family. In these cases, we urge the husband to do all in his power to allow his wife to remain in the home caring for the children while he continues to provide for his family the best he can, even though the job he is able to secure may not be ideal and family budgeting may have to be tighter.

Also, the need for education or material things does not justify the postponing of children in order to keep the wife working as the breadwinner of the family.

I remember the counsel of our beloved prophet Spencer W. Kimball to married students. He said: “I have told tens of thousands of young folks that when they marry they should not wait for children until they have finished their schooling and financial desires. … They should live together normally and let the children come. …

“I know of no scriptures,” President Kimball continued, “where an authorization is given to young wives to withhold their families and go to work to put their husbands through school. There are thousands of husbands who have worked their own way through school and have reared families at the same time” (“Marriage Is Honorable,” in *Speeches of the Year, 1973*, Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1974, p. 263).

Brethren of the priesthood, I continue to emphasize the importance of mothers staying home to nurture, care for, and train their children in the principles of righteousness.

As I travel throughout the Church, I feel that the great majority of Latter-day Saint mothers earnestly want to follow this counsel. But we know that sometimes the mother works outside of the home at the encouragement, or even insistence, of her husband. It is he who wants the items of convenience that the extra income can buy. Not only will the family suffer in such instances, brethren, but your own spiritual growth and progression will be hampered. I say to all of you, the Lord has charged men with the responsibility to provide for their families in such a way that the wife is allowed to fulfill her role as mother in the home.
Propagation Lawfully Fulfilled in Marriage

Man enters into a lawful marriage covenant and propagates his own posterity. To fulfill this purpose, God ordained marriage. The Lord declared that: “Marriage is ordained of God . . . that the earth might answer the end of its creation; And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made.” (D&C 49:15-17.)

A law of procreation was decreed by God to the lawfully married. “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28). This law permits others of our Heavenly Father’s children to be legitimately born into good families where these spirits can also grow to maturity and work out their salvation. The law of procreation has never been rescinded.

A Major Purpose of Marriage is the Propagation of Children

As parents, what is our attitude regarding the sacred obligations of parenthood? One of the major purposes of marriage is children. Nations which refuse to accept this God-given obligation sink into oblivion. Will our sons and daughters want children because of our attitude and example?

Sexual Union Primarily for Procreation

We can’t build a happy home, we can’t build a happy married life, on the foundation of immorality. It can’t be done. So I would beseech our young people to reserve for the marriage relationship those sweet and lovely and intimate associations. Not only that, but when those associations come, let them be primarily for the purpose of procreation, for the having of a family, because it is not pleasing in the sight of God to enjoy the pleasures of those associations and refuse to accept the responsibility of parenthood.

Do Not Postpone Child-Bearing

- Do not postpone the blessings of honorable parenthood following marriage. When God said it was our responsibility to multiply and replenish the earth, that marriage was primarily for that purpose, He didn’t insert any provisions.
- A modern trend is to rationalize the commandment to procreate, saying that the earth cannot support this great number of unrestricted births, or that it is not financially possible to support a great number of children today. The Lord said to the Prophet Joseph, referring to the productive capacity of the earth, “For the earth is full and there is enough and to spare” (D&C 104:17).
- The undue postponement of parenthood is bound to bring disappointment and is not pleasing in the sight of God. Yes, of course, one can always find excuses. The young husband is going through school. I know how difficult it is. I remember our first year of married life on seventy dollars a month for both of us. I thank the Lord for my noble companion and her fervent determination to put first things first.
- It thrills me to witness young couples where the husband is struggling through medical school or dental school or some other school and they have the courage and strength and the faith to know that in some way the God of Heaven will assist them if they do their duty and have their families.
- So, I would ask our young people to think seriously about these things, pray about them, fast about them. The Lord will give them the answers, because He wants them to have the blessings of a righteous posterity. Sometimes marriage may be postponed to the point where, for physical and other reasons, parenthood is denied. Oh, what a loss when the time comes! It is worth practically any sacrifice to have those sweet spirits come into the home and to have them come early, that the parents might enjoy them for a longer period, that they might enjoy their parents for a longer period, and that the children might enjoy their grandparents for a longer period.
- I know the special blessings of a large and happy family, for my dear parents had a quiver full of children (Psalm 127:5). Being the oldest of eleven children, I saw the principles of unselfishness, mutual cooperation, loyalty to each other, and a host of other virtues developed in a large and wonderful family with my noble mother as the queen of that home.

Young mothers and fathers, with all my heart I counsel you not to postpone having your children, being co-creators with our Father in Heaven. Do not use the reasoning of the world, such as, “We will wait until we can better afford having children, until we are more secure, until John has completed his education, until he has a better paying job, until we have a larger home, until we have obtained a few of the material conveniences,” and on and on. This is
the reasoning of the world and is not pleasing in the sight of God. Mothers who enjoy good health, have your children and have them early. And, husbands, always be considerate of your wives in the bearing of children.

Do not curtail the number of children for personal or selfish reasons. Material possessions, social convenience, and so-called professional advantages are nothing compared to a righteous posterity. In the eternal perspective, children -- not possessions, not position, not prestige -- are our greatest jewels.

Our Duty is to Prepare Bodies for Spirits

Brigham Young emphasized: “There are multitudes of pure and holy spirits waiting to take tabernacles, now what is our duty? -- to prepare tabernacles for them; to take a course that will not tend to drive those spirits into the families of the wicked, where they will be trained in wickedness, debauchery, and every species of crime. It is the duty of every righteous man and woman to prepare tabernacles for all the spirits they can.” (Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 197.)

Deepest Joys Come Because of Family

Yes, blessed is the husband and wife who have a family of children. The deepest joys and blessings in life are associated with family, parenthood, and sacrifice.

Some Not Able To Bear Children

We realize that some women, through no fault of their own, are not able to bear children. To these lovely sisters, every prophet of God has promised that they will be blessed with children in the eternities and that posterity will not be denied them. Through pure faith, pleading prayers, fasting, and special priesthood blessings, many of these same lovely sisters, with their noble companions at their sides, have had miracles take place in their lives and have been blessed with children. Others have prayerfully chosen to adopt children, and to these wonderful couples we salute you for the sacrifices and love you have given to those children you have chosen to be your own.

The Earth Able to Sustain Earth’s Population

- Some well-known persons advocate drastic steps by government action to limit population growth. They contend that the world must stabilize its population or many must starve. In short, the only course that can save mankind from disaster lurking just around the corner is the worldwide adoption by government of population restriction policies.

This, I firmly believe, is an unrealistic and dangerous oversimplification. It is inconceivable to me that the problem of food and people either will, or can, be solved in this way. For one thing, the right to marry and have a family, and to determine the size of one’s family in accordance with one’s conscience and legitimate desires is so fundamental that I just can’t visualize people permitting government to tamper with it. The whole thing smacks of government interference at its totalitarian worst. It is not the business of government to enter this area.

Moreover, the available facts do not support the notion that mankind must become increasingly sterile or starve. Those who are fond of projecting population trends into the future never seem willing to do the same for food production trends. They concentrate their gaze on the people side of the equation and blind themselves to the food side. It is true that there has been a population explosion of sorts in recent decades. But there has been an even greater agricultural technological explosion -- not only in the United States but also in the world in general. The population explosion is running substantially behind the agricultural explosion -- and the agricultural explosion is just beginning except where hampered by government interference.

Blessings Come With Large Families

We know that every spirit assigned to this earth will come, whether through us or someone else. There are couples in the Church who think they are getting along just fine with their limited families but who will someday suffer the pains of remorse when they meet the spirits that might have been part of their posterity. The first commandment given to man was to multiply and replenish the earth with children (Genesis 1:28). That commandment has never been altered, modified, or cancelled. The Lord did not say to multiply and replenish the earth if it is convenient, or if you are wealthy, or after you have gotten your schooling, or when there is peace on earth, or until you have four children. The Bible says, “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord and . . . Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them” (Psalm 127:3, 5). We believe God is glorified by having numerous children and a program of perfection for them. So also will God glorify that husband and wife who have a large posterity and who try to raise them up in righteousness.