Legislation in the state of Utah makes it mandatory for any teenager who wishes to purchase a hunting license to first pass successfully a survival course. With two of my sons I attended much of this training, given under the direction of the Utah State Fish and Game Department. It is an excellent course, and it was instituted because hunting can not only be futile, but dangerous, and even fatal.

Sensing that hunting for an eternal mate may also be futile, or dangerous, or spiritually fatal, I thought that a survival course of sorts would be in order for this pursuit as well. If this hunting is to be happy, the participants ought to know something of how to identify the quarry; a little, at least, about the choice of weapons; something of what to do when lost; and maybe just a little training in first aid. So I venture, with some real hesitation, to talk about love—not the platonic kind, not the "for mankind" variety, not the parental or familiar kind, but the young man-young woman, romantic, moonlight, engagement-ring kind.

However much other kinds of love may satisfy—the platonic, charitable, compassionate kinds of love—and however much one must enjoy a measure of love from his family, from his fellow men—a little love from many—to be really happy, and to find true joy, it is crucial that we have the complete, unshared, fully-expressed love of one.

The subject matter is so commonplace as to be everywhere in evidence. It is so prevalent that we must seek to find any music or art or literature that does not deal directly with it, and we must search diligently to find an example of them that does not deal at least indirectly with it. The subject of romantic love occupies more time on television, radio, the bookshelf, magazine rack, stage, more by a thousand times over, than any other subject we could name. It does not grow old. It is both popular and classic.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote in her Sonnets From the Portuguese these lines, which express the hope of all who love, that love may be eternal:

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth of everyday's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for right;  
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.

One surely must have known love to write like this, or, I add, to understand it. I think I understand it.

It has always been my feeling that the doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are not vague, nor mysterious, nor elusive. Rather, the gospel is what we do in our everyday lives, or, perhaps I ought to say, the gospel is what we ought to do.

Marriage occupies a significant place in the doctrines of the Church. In Genesis we read:  
"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh." (Genesis 2:24.)

And from the Doctrine and Covenants:  
"And again, verily I say unto you, that whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man." (D&C 49:15.)

Marriage is eternal; family life is sacred; the falling in love of a young man and a young woman is the prelude to love, and staying in love is the vitality, the very breath and life of marriage.

Everyone hopes to experience romantic love. Rightly, it 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. Truly, it is "not good that man should be alone."

A boy ought to love a girl. He ought to desire with all desire a life's companion. He ought to love fully and completely and righteously. He ought to be preoccupied with finding a sweetheart and, having found her, to love her—permanently. This power, this yearning to love and to be loved, is something so magnetic, so powerful, and so compelling, and so important that it is not to be
Young people sometimes get the mistaken notion that the religious attitude and spirituality interfere with the experience of love. They assume that the requirements of the Church are interferences and aggravations which thwart the full expression of love. Oh, youth if you could know, the requirements of the Church are the highway to love, with guardrails securely in place, with guide signs plainly marked, with help along the way. How foolish is the youth who feels that the Church is a fence around love to keep him out. How unfortunate to resent counsel and restraints. 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 a rapture and a joy fulfilled.

There seems to be the silly notion around, also, that if you are good you are going to miss out on a lot. The preliminary exploration, which sometimes is occasioned as men and women begin to mature, becomes so appealing that one easily may be possessed by it. It becomes consuming and grows, if you will, into a passion, a power meant to create, but used to destroy. You who are young adults are at an age when there is a compelling urgency for you to be complete. You want to find the fulfillment in life that you know you cannot find alone. The powers awakened earlier in your life have been growing. You have been responding to them, probably very clumsily, but they now form themselves into a restlessness that cannot be ignored. You are old enough now to fall in love—not the puppy love of 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, now power more compelling, more exquisite. Or, if misused, no suffering is more excruciating than that connected with love.

Since a part at least of your life concerns itself with getting an education for economic independence, there is an analogy that we might draw. In the family unit children are provided for. All they need, or at least all that is available materially, is bestowed upon them gratis, without any contract for its return. Parents hardly keep an account of the money spent on their children and then expect, as they grow to maturity, that they should return an equal amount. Food, clothing, shelter, all that is necessary, are provided by the parents.

But they are under the obligation to teach their youngsters in the early years how to be responsible for the necessities of life—how to use them wisely. Young people begin to earn money for themselves and gradually become responsible for their own needs. Finally, when they are of college age, they provide for themselves.

When children become economically independent, parents ordinarily do not expect a return of, or even a return on, the material things they have invested in them. One of the responsibilities of parenthood is to prepare against the day when they are unable to provide for their children. They must insure that their son or their daughter will know how to provide when the parents no longer live.

The love we are speaking of is necessary to life. Love, too, is bestowed upon us gratis by our parents. We are loved and cared for without any actual demand for reciprocation. But the day comes, as in economics, when that source is no longer available. A young person must develop the ability to provide for himself this vital necessity of living. Not only will that source of love be gone, but a new kind of love becomes necessary. In our youth we learn how to relate to other people, earning little amounts of love and affection and friendship by bestowing them on others. When we have reached college age, it is assumed that we are prepared to find love for ourselves in order that our lives may be normal and full and rewarding.

You are on your own, and you ought to seriously ponder your qualifications.

There are some signs evident when these powers begin to awaken. It is said that they do not awaken, they do not begin to murmur when a boy notices a girl, but when a boy notices that a girl notices that he notices her. Something is said in the lyrics of a song about falling in love with love. This is very commonplace. “Falling in love with love is falling for make believe. Falling in love with love is playing the fool.” Then I think the lyrics also say something about a juvenile fancy. Almost everyone goes through that courtship, and it is a courtship that ought to be broken up as soon as possible—this falling in love with love. There are some very intense dangers involved therein.

There is a phenomenon involved in courtship that is as strange as anything in human behavior. When a boy and a girl start to relate to one another, if the boy feels a heavy attraction for a girl and pursues her too strongly, surely he will be repulsed. And if a girl is too forward with a boy to whom she is attracted, he will reject her immediately. About all she has to do is telephone him twice and that ends that. While it is absolutely necessary that this deep attraction take place, if one or the other of the partners makes an expression of it too soon, the relationship is destroyed. In the early stages of courtship,
Groucho Marx, who received an invitation to join a prominent San Francisco club. He sent the invitation back with a notation, “Any club that would have people like me in it isn't fit to join.”

This strange phenomenon of human behavior I think maybe has a purpose, and I have wondered if the Lord did not structure it that way, to prevent us from getting together prematurely or too easily, too early. Fortunately there comes a time when they both feel the attraction in about the same intensity and love has blossomed.

Righteous love comes so naturally and so beautifully that it is apparent that there is a special providence about it. “They were meant for each other,” we say. While I am sure some young couples have some special guidance in getting together, I do not believe in predestined love. If you desire the inspiration of the Lord in this crucial decision, you must live the standards of the Church, and you must pray constantly for the wisdom to recognize those qualities upon which a successful union may be based. You must do the choosing, rather than to seek for some one-and-only so-called soul mate, chosen for you by someone else and waiting for you. You are to do the choosing. You must be wise beyond your years and humbly prayerful unless you choose amiss.

Romance must blossom in a garden, as it were, with music and dancing and all of the deception that makes a girl more ornamental than useful, and all of the acting that makes a man a gentleman. But you, young man, will do well to consider if she is useful. It is not whether she is pretty or witty, or whether she dances well; it is not vital that she wear her clothes in fashion-model style. Some of these things may add a little to the interest, but they are essentially unessential. The question is, do you want her as the mother of your children? How wise is the man who does not expect perfection, but looks for potential. How wise the youth who looks for a mother for his children, not for an ornament to be admired by his friends, but a girl who wants to be a woman—domesticated, feminine, motherly woman. How wise is the girl who looks for a man who will honor his priesthood, and who will not only be willing to take her to the temple, but indeed insists upon it.

Many of the things about a youthful boy so appealing to a girl may fade soon after marriage. She would do well to look deeply at his qualities and ponder these lines from John Masefield:

I know the woman's portion when she loves.
It's hers to give, my darling, not to take.
It isn't lockets, dear, or pairs of gloves,
It isn't marriage bells, or wedding cakes.
It's up and cook, although the body ache,
And bear the child, and up and work again;
And count a sick man's grumble worth a pain.

The power of love between man and woman is not completely defined but like electricity it can be used and controlled and directed, even though we do not know exactly what it is. We know that love has the power to create. Think of that! Just think of that! Love has the power to create life. When a young husband and young wife live together in love, the product of the most exalted and most sacred expression of love is life itself. Children are born out of love.

Love is to be controlled. Much is said in our day about learning to control one’s passions. There are different kinds of control—the kind we use on infestations of grasshoppers or crickets, for instance. We eradicate or stop them completely—literally kill them. But there is another definition of control that more closely relates to these powers of love. It is the type of control used on electricity. When it is directed through proper channels for worthwhile purposes, when properly controlled or directed, we can accomplish not only good, but miraculous things.

Young people often misunderstand the efforts of their seniors to teach them control of their passions. They mistakenly assume that we mean to eradicate these impulses. This is not so. These powers are to be channeled and directed safely, for righteous purposes. Not only are they approved, but they are blessed of the Lord. I quote from Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 19:

And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—. . . it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things,
The greatest deception foisted upon the human race in our day is that overemphasis of physical gratification as it is related to romantic love. It is merely a repetition of the same delusion that has been impressed on every generation in ages past. When we learn that physical gratification is only incident to, and not the compelling force of love itself, we have made a supreme discovery. If only physical gratification should interest you, you need not be selective at all. This power is possessed by almost everyone. Alone, without attendant love, this relationship becomes nothing—indeed, less and worse than nothing.

The adversary would draw down and make cheap and common and vulgar the sacred, sublime experience of love in its total expression, and in nothing is his villainy more loathsome, so tragic, as the invitation to man to look upon love with eyes and hearts and minds which are filthy.

Expressions of love are not ugly unless they are used in an ugly way. The prostitution or misuse of these powers becomes all the more lamentable because the power itself and the righteous expression of it are pure and beautiful and sanctified.

Touch not the functions and powers of life within your body, and do not tamper with or explore these powers with any living soul. To seek some satisfaction by yourself is but to experience guilty, morbidity, and degradation. This exploration was never meant to be. I know there are those who say that things like this are to be excused. Some even say they are necessary. This is a lie. Such indulgence is neither necessary nor desirable.

It is part of our religion to be properly mated. It is important to be in love. It is part of our religion to enter into a courtship that is beautiful and righteous and leads to temple marriage. All that is important to the children of God and to the gospel of Jesus Christ is related thereto. All of the devices and tempting power, debauchery, and cunningness of Satan are directed theret.

The advisability of Latter-day Saint young men marrying Latter-day Saint young women is so obvious and the alternative so dangerous as to hardly be the object of any lengthy attention here. You all understand that, surely. You are young adults.

Now a word to those who want to love and to be loved who are slipping past the usual age for marriage. I am thinking of many of these lovely, worthy sisters who feel that life is passing them by. Unfortunately, you sometimes feel that way when you are nineteen. These suggestions: Do not give up. Hold to your standards. It may well come to you as a September song and be twice more precious for the waiting. Stay attractive—and I do not mean the cover-girl appeal—but attractive in disposition and in attitude and in service. Stay available. Do not be so content with what you do that you cease to care. To some it may not come, but surely there is a compensation that the Lord has in store for the righteous who have held to His standards, but who remain unmarried through no choice of their own.

Now to those who may have unwittingly, or in a moment of supreme temptation, made themselves unworthy or less worthy to love. Instructions are simple. See your bishop, He will tell you what to do. Now, do not delay. Get it settled now, because mischief grows. It is hard to keep locked up. But the bishop has the keys, and he can lock it up for good.

There is forgiveness—complete forgiveness. It is based on repentance—complete repentance.

To those who are married and not in love—and in our society this is not an infrequent circumstance—the remedy for your dilemma was prescribed in these words by President Stephen L Richards:

I made the statement, and I hope you will approve of it, that the remedy for domestic problems and irritations is not divorce, but repentance. I am thoroughly convinced in my heart that this is true, and I hope you will approve of that interpretation. I am sure that there is much that can be done to lessen this evil.

You can stumble out of love. I say “stumble” because the process of falling in love is so beautiful and so desirable that we ought to use a different designation for its opposite. If there is trouble, you stay married—both of you. You repent—both of you. You be worthy—both of you. You be prayerful—both of you. You be forgiving—both of you. Love can grow again from the same root stalk and bloom again with blossoms sweeter still.

It is my conviction that men are basically good. It is my conviction that young people are basically good. It is my feeling that young people want to do that which is right. I am firmly convinced that you want and desire to find a marriage partner in the righteous way, and that you want to have a successful marriage. Preliminary to that, you want and desire to have a courtship that is clean and worthy. All I am trying to say to you is that with all the “don'ts” that we heap upon you all of your growing-up years, there is a positive and a beautiful and desirable aspect to this subject that is so supernally sacred.

It is my conviction that if you do not achieve these things you want, you must be seduced from or drawn
from that path of righteousness. In other words, rather than being basically evil, men are basically good and must be persuaded to unrighteousness. (Although the opposite is taught by much of Christianity, the doctrine is false!) I say again that his philosophy that holds that men are basically evil is not true.

In conclusion, I picture you coming to the temple to be sealed for time and for all eternity. I yearn to talk to you about the sacred sealing ordinance, but this we do not do outside those sacred walls. The transcendent nature of all that is conferred upon us at the marriage altar is so marvelous it is worth all the waiting and all the resisting. I picture you, as I have seen you often. The young man, masculine, clear of vision, stalwart of frame, firm to accept the responsibilities as a husband and as a father. And, the bride, unassuming, beautifully feminine, an inspiration to her sweetheart, and dependent upon him.

But this is not the fulfillment of the story of love. In the book, or the play, on the stage, the curtain comes down here. But it is not so in real love. This is not the conclusion—only the beginning. I quote a few lines from a young man deeply in love with his bride:

You say that I'm ninety, there must be some mistake
For throughout my body there is no pain or ache.
It's true I respond less keenly to sound
And forget where I put things as I strew them around.
But it's no time at all since Tommy and I
Took Nettie Belle and Annie our fortunes to try
At the “U.” When seeking apartments where we could stay,
I met for the first time a maiden called Ray.
You say that I'm ninety, why she's still by my side,
As precious and sweet as when as my bride
In the springtime of life, with hearts all aglow
We faced life together come wail or come woe.
Family cares came heavy, but not a complaint.
Forty-four children now praise her as saint.
Companion, counselor, adviser alway
My wife for eternity, my own Emma Ray.
(President David O. McKay on Being Ninety)

This picture, then, I see, and were I an artist, had I the power, I would paint this picture over and over again—not with oil or canvas or brush—but with counsel and admonition and encouragement and blessing, with forgiveness and reassurance, with the truth.

I bear witness that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is divinely inspired and that the exalted concept of marriage and of courtship and of romantic love are ordained or God. I know as surely as it is my right to know that God lives, and I bear witness that Jesus is the Christ. Love is a promise, and there is a Holy Spirit of Promise.

I cannot frame this picture—I would not if I could—for it has no bounds. Love like this may have a beginning, but never through all eternity need it have an end. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.