Teachings Concerning

The Purpose of Mortality

We Do Not Know All The Purposes of Mortality

Before reviewing what the Brethren have taught about the purposes of mortality, it should be known the Lord has not revealed all the purposes of the mortal probation. Consider the following:

D&C 101:32-33

Yea, verily I say unto you, in that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things--Things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof--

Four Main Purposes of Mortality

Ezra Taft Benson (President)

Life has a fourfold purpose. First of all, we come to this mortal life to receive a physical, mortal body. Without a physical body man is limited in his progress and only with a spirit and a body united together permanently can man receive a fulness of joy; so we are living today part of eternity. We accepted that plan in the spirit world before we came here, and we rejoiced at the opportunity of coming here.

Second, we can here to gain experience--experience with a physical, mortal world.

The third purpose of life is to give us an opportunity to prove ourselves (Abraham 3:25). To prove that even in the presence of evil and sin we can live a good life. To prove that in spite of temptation that we have the strength and the character to adhere to the principles of the gospel.

And fourth, this life is intended to provide an opportunity to help our Father in Heaven with His great plan, and we do that through honorable parenthood. We cooperate with our Heavenly Father in helping to prepare tabernacles to house spirits of His children. So the matter of marriage, the home, and the family is a vital part of the plan of our Heavenly Father, and by keeping this fourfold purpose of life in mind constantly and carrying out these purposes to have a fulness of joy in mortal life, and we prepare ourselves for exaltation in the celestial kingdom where we will receive a fulness of joy. So the whole purpose of the Church is to help and assist us in carrying out these purposes in life. (The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, pp. 27-28)

To Receive a Body

Man needed experience in the midst of mortal conditions, in order to acquire the education that would fit him for spheres beyond. First, however, he needed a body, for purposes of increase and progression, both in time and in eternity. The spirit without the body is incomplete; it cannot propagate, it cannot go on to glory. . . . It is a reasonable inference that spirits advance as far as they can before they are given earthly bodies. Having received these bodies, they are in a position, by means of the Gospel and the powers of the Priesthood, to make further progress toward perfection. (Cowley and Whitney on Doctrine, p. 283)

John Taylor (President)

We next enquire, What is the object and design of man’s existence on the earth; and what is his relationship thereto? for all this magnificent world, with its creation, life, beauty, symmetry, order, and grandeur, could not be without design; and as God existed before man, there must have been some object in man’s creation, and in his appearance on the earth. As I have before stated, man existed before he came here, in a spiritual substance, but had not a body; when I speak of a body, I mean an earthly one, for I consider the spirit is substance, but more elastic, subtle, and refined than the fleshy body; that in the union of the spirit and flesh, there is more perfection than in the spirit alone. The body is not perfect without the spirit, nor the spirit without the body; it takes the two to make a perfect man, for the spirit requires a tabernacle, to give it power to develop itself, and to exalt it in the scale of intelligence, both in time and eternity. One of the
The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them. 2 Cor. 4:4. But not content with the ravages he has made, the spoliation, misery, and distress; not having a tabernacle of his own, he has frequently sought to occupy that of man, in order that he might yet possess greater power, and more fully accomplish the devastation. We read, that in our Saviour’s days, there were persons possessed with devils, who were tormented by them; and Jesus and his disciples cast them out. Mary Magdalene was dispossessed of seven. A legion had entered one man, and when commanded to leave, rather than have no bodies, they desired permission to enter those of swine, which they did, and the swine were destroyed. Man’s body to him, then, is of great importance, and if he only knew and appreciated his privileges, he might live above the temptation of Satan, the influence of corruption, subdue his lusts, overcome the world, and triumph, and enjoy the blessings of God in time and in eternity. (The Government of God, Ch.5)

Joseph Fielding Smith (President)

- It appears that only a few of the human family realize that they were placed on this earth to be tried and proved, to see whether or not they will be obedient to divine commandments. All who prove themselves through their obedience are promised eternal life, which is exaltation in the celestial kingdom. All who are unclean are to be cast out of that kingdom. (Doctrines of Salvation, 3:278).

- This life is a Probationary state, in which we are receiving experiences and training as a part of our education to fit us for eternal life. It has been appointed to us that through these experiences we might prove ourselves and be "raised in immortality unto eternal life," if we are obedient, and to receive just rewards for all our deeds. (The Way to Perfection, p.292-293)

- The importance of these mortal tabernacles is apparent from the knowledge we have of eternal life. Spirits cannot be made perfect without a body of flesh and bones. This body and its spirit are brought to immortality and blessings of salvation through the resurrection. After the resurrection there can be no separation again; body and spirit become inseparably connected that man may receive a fullness of joy. In no other way, other than through birth into this life and the resurrection, can spirits become like our Eternal Father. (Conference Report, Oct. 1965, p. 28)

J. Reuben Clark, Jr. (First Presidency)

Now, this matter of body which, I take it, will come to those who keep their first estate; and those who do not keep their first estate, but who do not belong to the rebellious group, they all get bodies too. We have our bodies. We are not all born in the same circumstances, with the same advantages, and all the rest of it. But evidently the possession of a body was a great consideration, and I refer you, in that connection, to the incident of the Gadarene demons.

You will remember that when the Savior approached them, they said, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?" This was one case where the demons, themselves, bore testimony that Jesus was the Christ. "What have we to do with thee?"

And then they asked that the Savior, (when he cast them out of the man -- they said they were "legion") that the Savior would permit them to go into the nearby herd of swine. I have always thought that there was a beautiful expression there. They asked him not to send them out into the "deep." You will recall that they went into the swine, and the swine ran down into the sea and were drowned. (Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39.)

I have always thought that indicated very, very clearly how valuable an earthly body is, --that they were willing in order to have possession, apparently even for the moment, of a body, to go into the body of a swine. (Conference Report, October 1956, p.82-86)

To Gain Experience Through the Knowledge of Good and Evil

James E. Talmage (Quorum of the Twelve)

- A knowledge of good and evil is essential to the advancement that God has made possible for His children to achieve; and this knowledge can be best gained by actual experience, with the contrasts of good and its opposite plainly discernible. Therefore has man been placed upon earth subject to the influence of good and wicked powers, with a knowledge of the conditions surrounding him, and the heaven-born right to choose for himself. (Articles of Faith, p.53-54)

- A knowledge of good and evil is essential to progress, and the school of experience in mortality has been provided for the acquirement of such knowledge. (The Vitality of Mormonism [1919], p.46)

Howard W. Hunter (President)

There is purpose in man’s sojourn in mortality. He is placed here for a definite reason, in accordance with God’s great plan. We read in Genesis the story of the creation: “And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil...” (Gen. 3:22 [Genesis 3:22].)

To learn the difference between good and evil is one of the great purposes for man to have mortal life, yet he is given his freedom of choice with the promise of eternal blessings if he obeys the laws of God. (Conference Report, Oct. 1969, p.112)
George Q. Cannon (First Presidency)
They [Adam and Eve] had a knowledge of good and evil just as the Gods have. They became as Gods; for that is one of the features, one of the peculiar attributes of those who attain unto that glory—they understand the difference between good and evil. In our pre-existent state, in our spiritual existence, I do not know how extensive our knowledge of good and evil was. That is not fully revealed. But this I do know, that when we come to earth and become clothed with mortality we do arrive at a knowledge of good and evil, and that knowledge prepares us for that future existence which we will have in the eternal worlds; it will enable us to enter upon a career of endless duration, that we may continue onward and upward throughout all the ages of eternity. It is for this purpose that we are here. God has given unto us this probation for the express purpose of obtaining a knowledge of good and evil—of understanding evil and being able to overcome the evil—and by overcoming it receive the exaltation and glory that He has in store for us. (Journal of Discourses, 26:190-191)

Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Charles W. Penrose, First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
God, doubtless, could avert war, prevent crime, destroy poverty, chase away darkness, overcome error, and make all things bright, beautiful and joyful. But this would involve the destruction of a vital and fundamental attribute in man -- the right of agency. It is for the benefit of His sons and daughters that they become acquainted with evil as well as good, with darkness as well as light, with error as well as truth, and with the results of the infraction of eternal laws. Therefore He has permitted the evils which have been brought about by the acts of His creatures, but will control their ultimate results for His own glory and the progress and exaltation of His sons and daughters, when they have learned obedience by the things they suffer. The contrasts experienced in this world of mingled sorrow and joy are educational in their nature, and will be the means of raising humanity to a full appreciation of all that is right and true and good. The foreknowledge of God does not imply His action in bringing about that which He foresees, nor make Him responsible in any degree for that which man does or refuses to do. The comprehension of this principle makes clear many questions that puzzle the uninformed as to the works and power of Deity. (Messages of the First Presidency, 4:325-326)

Jeffery R. Holland (Quorum of the Twelve)
A related principle Lehi introduced as another backdrop to the eternal drama of the Fall and the Atonement is that of opposition, of contending enticements, a concept closely linked with choice and agency. If choice is to exist and agency is to have any meaning, alternatives must be presented. As Lehi phrased it, "It must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things." (2 Nephi 2:11) His reasoning and his vocabulary are clear and to the point. Righteousness has no meaning without the possibility of wickedness. Holiness would hold no delight unless we realized the pain of misery. Good could have no moral meaning if nothing could be considered bad. Even life--the nature and eternal possibilities of which are the subject of the plan of salvation and Lehi's discourse about it--would have no meaning if we knew nothing of the nature and limitations of death.

In short, without opposites and alternatives, "there would have been no purpose in the ... creation [o human life]." (2 Nephi 2:12) All experiences in time and eternity would have been common, lifeless, indistinguishable-- "a compound in one."
(2 Nephi 2:11) At the end of this sequence would be the worst realization of all. There could be no happiness because there would be no sorrow; there could be no righteousness because there was no sin. But fortunately, there are happiness, righteousness, eternal life, and God, even as Lehi stresses that those blessings come only at the risk of confronting misery, wickedness, death, and the devil.

So Adam and Eve willingly made a choice, choosing the path toward growth and godhood inherent in the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil over the potentially meaningless (at least at that point in their development) tree of life. With the enticement of Lucifer, “that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall,” as Abinadi phrase it, they consciously chose to step out of the garden of Eden--a magnificent, terrestrial-like, paradisiacal world--into a fallen, celestial one, a world filled with very unparadisiacal thistles and thorns, sorrow and sin, disease and death.

In doing so, Adam and Eve answered forever the plaintive question that is so often heard: "If there is a God, why is there so much suffering in the world?" The answer to that is we know live in a fallen world filled with opposites, a world in which God is the most powerful but decidedly not the only spiritual influence. As part of the doctrine of opposition, Satan is also at work in the world, and we knew before we came here that he would bring grief and anguish with him. Nevertheless, we (through Adam and Eve) made the conscious choice to live in and endure this mortal sphere of opposition in all things, for only through such an experience was godly progress possible. Adam and Eve—and we—knowing and lovingly absorbed God of the responsibility for the “thorns and thistles” of a fallen world that was personally chosen by us, not capriciously imposed by Him. We wanted the chance to become like our heavenly parents, to face suffering and overcome it, to endure sorrow and still live rejoicingly, to confront good and evil and be strong enough to choose the good. In this telestial, mortal world filled with competing voices, enticements, and experiences, we get a lifetime of opportunity to refine and strengthen these virtues. (Christ and the New Covenant, pp. 202-204).

Brigham Young (President)
• The reason of our being made subject to sin and misery, pain, woe, and death, is, that we may become acquainted with the opposites of happiness and pleasure. The absence of light brings darkness, and darkness an appreciation of light; pain an appreciation of ease and comfort; and ignorance, folly, and sin, in comparison with wisdom, knowledge, righteousness, and truth, make the latter the more desirable to mankind. Facts are made apparent to the human mind by their opposites. We find ourselves surrounded in this mortality by an almost endless combination of opposites, through which we must pass to gain experience and information to fit us for an eternal progression. Those who are enlightened by the spirit of truth, have no difficulty in seeing the propriety and the benefit to us of this state of things. Like heavenly beings, we are endowed with the power of free volition; for God has given to mankind their agency, making them amenable to him for their sins, and entitling them to blessings and rewards for the good they do, and according to their faith in him. It is the wish of our Heavenly Father to bring all his children back into his presence. The spirits of all the human family dwell with him before they took tabernacles of flesh and became subject to the fall and to sin. He is their spiritual Father, and has sent them here to be clothed with flesh, and to be subject, with their tabernacles, to the ills that afflict fallen humanity. When they have proved themselves faithful in all things, and worthy before Him, they can then have the privilege of returning again to his presence, with their bodies, to dwell in the abodes of the blessed. If man could have been made perfect, in his double capacity of body and spirit, without passing through the ordeals of mortality, there would have been no necessity of our coming into this state of trial and suffering. Could the Lord have glorified his children in spirit, without a body like his own, he no doubt
would have done so. (*Journal of Discourses, 11:42-43*)

- If the Scriptures are true, it proves that sin is in the world, and the question arises, Is it necessary that sin should be here? What will the Latter-day Saints say? Is it necessary that we should know good from evil? I can answer this to suit myself by saying it is absolutely necessary, for the simple reason that if we had never realized darkness we could never have comprehended the light; if we never tasted anything bitter, but were to eat sweets, the honey and the honeycomb, from the time we come into this world until the time we go out of it, what knowledge could we have of the bitter? This leads me to the decision that every fact that exists in this world is demonstrated by its opposite. If this is the fact—and all true philosophy proves it—it leads me to the conclusion that the transgression of our first parents was absolutely necessary, that we might be brought in contact with sin and have the opportunity of knowing good and evil. It may be deemed strange and singular by the Christian world that we should believe such a thing; but the Scriptures inform us, in Genesis iii., 22, that the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil.” (*Journal of Discourses, 14:70-71*)

**Orson Pratt** (Quorum of the Twelve)

We will bring up an example. For instance, suppose you had never tasted anything that was sweet; never had the sensation of sweetness—could you have any correct idea of the term sweetness? No. On the other hand, how could you understand bitter if you never had tasted bitterness? Could you define the term to those who had experienced this sensation, or knew it? No. I will bring another example. Take a man who had been perfectly blind from his infancy, and never saw the least gleam of light—could you describe colors to him? No. Would he know anything about red, blue, violet, or yellow? No; you could not describe it to him by any way you might undertake. But by some process let his eyes be opened, and let him gaze upon the sun beams that reflect upon a watery cloud, producing the rainbow, where he would see a variety of colors, he could then appreciate them for himself; but tell him about colors when he is blind, he would not know them from a piece of earthenware. So with Adam previously to partaking of this fruit; good could not be described to him, because he never had experienced the opposite. As to undertaking to explain to him what evil was, you might as well have undertaken to explain, to a being that never had, for one moment, had his eyes closed to the light, what darkness is. The tree of knowledge of good and evil was placed there that man might gain certain information he never could have gained otherwise; by partaking of the forbidden fruit he experienced misery, then he knew that he was once happy, previously he could not comprehend what happiness meant, what good was; but now he knows it by contrast, now he is filled with sorrow and wretchedness, now he sees the difference between his former and present condition, and if by any means he could be restored to his first position, he would be prepared to realize it, like the man that never had seen the light. Let the man to whom all the beauties of light have been displayed, and who has never been in darkness, be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, deprived of his natural sight; what a change this would be to him; he never knew anything about darkness before, he never understood the principle at all; it never entered the catalogue of his ideas, until darkness came upon him, and his eye-sight was destroyed: now he can comprehend that the medium he once existed in was light. Now, says he, if I could only regain my sight, I could appreciate it, for I understand the contrast; restore me back again to my sight, and let me enjoy the light I once had; let me gaze upon the works of creation, let me look on the beauties thereof again, and I will be satisfied, and my joy will be full. It was so with Adam; let the way be prepared for his redemption, and the redemption of his posterity, and all creation that groans in pain to be delivered—let them be restored back again to what they lost through the fall, and they will be prepared to appreciate it. (*Journal of Discourses, 1:285-286*)

**Joseph Fielding Smith** (President)

We had an existence before we came to this world. We lived in the spirit, and were in the presence of our Father in heaven, who is the Father of the spirits of all men; and there we walked by sight, for we were in his presence.

It was necessary, in order that we might receive a fulness of blessings and opportunities and become like unto our Father, for us to pass through this mortal probation. Hence, this earth was prepared; and we were sent down here to receive bodies of flesh and bones and to be quickened by blood; and to partake of all the vicissitudes of life as we find them here on this earth, that we might, through obedience to the principles of the gospel, know good from evil.

It was necessary that we have the privilege of suffering temptation and experiencing pain and tribulation as well as pleasure; and, if faithful, pass on to our exaltation and become the sons and daughters of God, having gained
To Prove Ourselves

George Q. Cannon (First Presidency)

- We have got to be watchful, for I tell you God has sent us here to test us and to prove us. We were true in keeping our first estate. The people that are here today stood loyally by God and by Jesus, and they did not flinch. If you had flinched then, you would not be here with the Priesthood upon you. The evidence that you were loyal, that you were true and that you did not waver is to be found in the fact that you have received the Gospel and the everlasting Priesthood.

Now you are in your second estate, and you are going to be tested again. Will you be true and loyal to God with the curtain drawn between you and Him, shut out from His presence, and in the midst of darkness and temptation, with Satan and his invisible hosts all around you, bringing all manner of evil influences to bear upon you? The men and the women that will be loyal under these circumstances God will exalt, because it will be the highest test to which they can be subjected. (Gospel Truth, 1:7)

- It is necessary, in His wisdom and according to the laws of exaltation, that we should descend from our heavenly abode and come here and take upon us mortal tabernacles and forget all that we knew. The reason of this is that we should be tempted, that we should be tried, that we should be purified, that the dross of our nature should be cleansed by obedience to the laws of God and that by obedience to His laws these tabernacles which we have received and which belong to this fallen world may be redeemed and be fitted and prepared to dwell in a higher and purer abode—in an element that is far beyond anything that we know anything of at the present time. These tabernacles of ours, which are so full of humanity and its weaknesses, God has given unto us, and He has told us how we can redeem them—by obeying the laws He has taught. (Gospel Truth, 1:12)

Brigham Young (President)

- We are placed on this earth to prove whether we are worthy to go into the celestial world, the terrestrial, or the celestial or to hell, or to any other kingdom, or place, and we have enough of life given to us to do this. (Discourses of Brigham Young, p.87)

- This is a world in which we are to prove ourselves. The lifetime of man is a day of trial, wherein we may prove to God, in our darkness, in our weakness, and where the enemy reigns, that we are our Father's friends, and that we receive light from Him and are worthy to be leaders of our children -- to become lords of lords, and kings of kings -- to have perfect dominion over that portion of our families that will be crowned in the celestial kingdom with glory, immortality, and eternal lives. (Discourses of Brigham Young, p.87)

- Since we are permitted by our Father and our God to do good, let us never suffer ourselves to be tempted, to be drawn aside, to be overcome, or thwarted in the pure and holy purpose that the pure spirit of intelligence (the spirit that is in us) reveals to the understanding. Not but that it is necessary in the very nature of things, in the economy of heaven, that we should be tried and tempted in all things, in order to prove ourselves and prepare ourselves to enjoy that eternal life that is prepared for the just. The time will be when people will not be tempted as they now are—when there will be no Tempter upon the earth. The knowledge and intelligence that will be diffused among the people will enable them to live a time and a season without the Tempter. But we live in a day when the power and rule of that evil principle is more excessive upon the earth that it ever has been. As the Prophet said, “For every one, from the least even unto the greatest, is given to covetousness; from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely.” Mankind, in the present day, are further from the intelligence, the light, the glory, and the power of the Invisible than ever they were before, from the days of Adam until now. There never was a day of such heathen darkness and unbelief as now prevails. We have had the privilege of receiving those holy principles calculated to give us power to secure to ourselves eternal life and happiness, if we follow out those principles. It is a constant warfare. As the apostle expresses it, “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” The spirit that is put into man is pure and holy; but through the power of evil with the flesh, it is more or less contaminated, influenced, seduced, and brought into bondage by the evil that exists upon the earth. Let the spirit overcome and come off conqueror. (Journal of Discourses, 7:268)

Spencer W. Kimball (President)

Now, this mortal life is the time to prepare to meet God, which is our first responsibility. Having already obtained our bodies, which become the permanent tabernacle for our spirits through the eternities, now we are to train our bodies, our minds, and our spirits. Preeminent, then, is our using this life to perfect ourselves, to subjugate the flesh, subject the body to the spirit, to overcome all weaknesses, to govern self so that one may give leadership to others, and to perform all necessary ordinances. Secondly comes the preparation for the subduing of the earth and the elements. In Genesis we read: “And God said, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion.” (Genesis 1:28.) (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p.31)

Ezra Taft Benson (President)

The great test of life is obedience to God. “We will prove them herewith,” said the Lord, “to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:25).

The great task of life is to learn the will of the Lord and then do it. (Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 3; or Ensign, May 1988, p. 4)

Richard G. Scott (Quorum of the Twelve)

Mortal life is a proving ground. God said, “We will make an earth whereon these may dwell; “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.” (see Abr. 3:24–26 [Abraham 3:24–26].)
Our proving grounds vary. Some of us are born with physical limitations; others are lonely or do not enjoy good health. Some are challenged by economic conditions, the lack of good parental example, or a myriad of other things that test our mettle. While much of the pain and sorrow we endure is the result of our own stubborn acts of disobedience, many of the things that appear to be obstacles in our path are used by a loving Creator for our own personal growth.

Life never was intended to be easy. Rather, it is a period of proving and growth. It is interwoven with difficulties, challenges, and burdens. We are immersed in a sea of persistent, worldly pressures that could destroy our happiness. Yet these very forces, if squarely faced, provide opportunity for tremendous personal growth and development. The conquering of adversity produces strength of character, forges self-confidence, engenders self-respect, and assures success in righteous endeavor.

One who exercises free agency by faith grows from challenges, is purified by sorrow, and lives at peace. In contrast, one who frantically seeks to satisfy appetite and worldly desire is driven in a downward spiral to tragic depths. Temptation is the motivating influence in his exercise of free agency. (Conference Report, Oct. 1981, p. 13; or Ensign, Nov. 1981, p. 11)

To Have and Raise Children

Russell M. Nelson (Quorum of the Twelve)

The earth was created and this Church was restored so that families could be formed, sealed, and exalted eternally. (“Celestial Marriage,” Ensign, Nov 2008, p. 93)

First Presidency Message (Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., David O. McKay)

In the October, 1942 General Conference, J. Reuben Clark, Jr. read a message from the First Presidency to the general Church membership. Under the title of PARENTHOOD, the following was 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. He has restored to earth the authority for entering into that covenant, and has declared that it is the only due and proper way of joining husband and wife, and the only means by which the sacred family relationship may be carried beyond the grave and through eternity. He has declared that this eternal relationship may be created only by the ordinances which are administered in the holy temples of the Lord, and therefore that His people should marry only in His temple in accordance with such ordinances.

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.

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.” (Abraham 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.)

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 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.” (Prop. 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. To you mothers in Israel we say God bless and protect you, and give you the strength and courage, the faith and knowledge, the holy love and consecration to duty, that shall enable you to fill to the fullest measure the sacred calling which is yours. To you mothers and mothers-to-be we say: Be chaste, keep pure, live righteously, that your posterity to the last generation may call you blessed. (Conference Report, October 1942, p.12-13)

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles

We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of his children. . .

The First Commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We
The whole purpose of the creation of the earth was to provide a dwelling place where the spirit children of God might come and be clothed in mortal bodies and, by keeping their second estate, prepare themselves for salvation and exaltation. The whole purpose of the mission of Jesus Christ was to make possible the immortality and eternal life of man. The whole purpose of mothers and fathers should be to live worthy of this blessing and to assist God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ in their work. No greater honor could be given to [men and] women than to assist in this divine plan, and I wish to say without equivocation that a woman will find greater satisfaction and joy and make a greater contribution to mankind by being a wise and worthy mother raising good children than she could make in any other vocation. ("No Greater Honor: The Woman's Role," Ensign, January 1974, p.7)

Ezra Taft Benson (President)
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. (Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.540)

Howard W. Hunter (President)
[Quotes Genesis 1:27-28] Thus God place his own image upon the earth and instituted marriage, not only to multiply, and was commanded of the other animal world, but for the more noble and lofty purposes by which man can obtain eternal life. Marriage, as so instituted by God, is the commencement of the family, the most serious business of lifetime . . .
To be a successful father or a successful mother is far greater than to rise to leadership or high places in business, government, or worldly affairs. Home may seem commonplace at times with its routine duties, yet its success should be the greatest of all our pursuits in life. (The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter, p. 156)

David O. McKay (President)
The principal reason for marriage is to rear a family. Failure to do so is one of the conditions that cause love to wither and eventually to die. (Gospel Ideals, p.466)
Seeking the pleasures of conjugality without a willingness to assume the responsibilities of rearing a family is one of the onslights that now batter at the structure of the American home. Intelligence and mutual consideration should be ever-present factors in determining the coming of children to the household. When the husband and wife are healthy and free from inherited weaknesses and diseases that might be transmitted with injury to their offspring, the use of contraceptives is to be condemned. The Lord has told us that: "... whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man. Wherefore, it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation." (D. & C. 49:15-16.)

By direct revelation, in this passage we have stated in a few words, the purpose of marriage. It is to bear children and rear a family, let us keep that in mind. Hundreds are now saying, and hundreds more will say—"How can I marry and support a bride in a manner with which she has been accustomed? How can I get an education and support a family? I cannot even find a place in which to live."

These are practical questions, and our boys and girls are facing them. I am willing to recognize these and other
difficulties and meet them, keeping in mind what the Lord has said that “marriage is ordained of God for man.” And I repeat that the very purpose of marriage is to rear a family and not for the mere gratification of man or woman. Keeping this thought uppermost in married life, we shall have fewer difficulties and more readily find content.

How are we going to overcome some of these present-day difficulties? Postponement of marriage is not the answer. I know that there are many parents whose sons and daughters are struggling for an education who say it would be better if young couples postponed marriage until after they gained an education. I am not so sure about it. Each case must be considered on its merits. The principal thing is to be sure the couple love each other. Marriage without love will bring misery. But if they are sure they are mated and have the same ideals, generally early marriages are best.

There was a time in the beginning of this country—it goes back before the beginning of this country—when every girl was given a dowry, and we still have the practice of a girl’s preparing a trousseau, which is a commendable practice. I think where parents can help they should help young couples, especially those who have five or six years ahead in getting a college degree. We still retain also the bridal shower, at which, in some countries, people give money.

I think the government is doing a good thing in giving our returned servicemen a few dollars to help them get a start after their having been discharged from the service. Recently I heard a most interesting report on this subject. The incident happened in Logan at the dedicatory service of a quonset house dedicated for worship on the campus of the Utah State Agricultural College. There were present a number of young married couples, young wives with babes in their arms. At the beginning of the dedicatory services, the presiding officer said, “We have many babes here today. If there be people present who do not like the crooning of babies, we will wait a few minutes now for these people to leave.” To encourage thus the rearing of families is most commendable. That house was built expressly for young folk rearing families, young G.I.’s who have started out to build their homes even while they are getting an education. (Gospel Ideals, pp. 466-468)

Spencer W. Kimball (President)

• John and Mary, tomorrow when I repeat the phrases which will bind you for eternity, I shall say the same impressive words which the Lord said to that handsome youth and his lovely bride in the Garden of Eden: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” (Genesis 1:28.) The Lord does not waste words. He meant what he said. You did not come on earth just to “eat, drink, and be merry.” You came knowing full well your responsibilities. You came to get for yourself a mortal body which could become perfected and immortalized, and you understood that you were to act in partnership with God in providing bodies for other spirits equally anxious to come to the earth for righteous purposes. And so you will not postpone parenthood. There will be rationalists who will name to you numerous reasons for postponement. Of course, it will be harder to get your college degrees or your financial starts with a family, but strength like yours will be undaunted in the face of difficult obstacles. Have your family as the Lord intended. Of course it is expensive, but you will find a way, and besides, it is often those children who grow up with responsibility and hardships who carry on the world and its work. And, John and Mary, do not limit your family as the world does. Don’t think you will love the later ones less or have fewer material things for them. Perhaps, like Jacob, you might love the eleventh one most. Young folk, have your family, love them, sacrifice for them, teach them righteousness, and you will be blessed and happy all the days of your eternal lives.