Course Summary Paper

It is often said that the most important decision you will make will be who you marry. While it is true that it is the biggest decision you will make, your eternal destiny actually rests within every decision you make after choosing your spouse. When married in the temple, the words of the ceremony don’t actually say that you and your spouse are sealed together for time and all eternity. That blessing is dependent upon your actions. You must build your eternal marriage through living the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ in order for it to be successful.¹

The family and the institution of marriage are under attack by Satan and his followers. The world tells us that marriage is an out-dated idea, and that any alternative lifestyle is just as effective in raising children as that of the traditional family. Divorce is a plague that destroys many already established families. It can be difficult to see hope for your future family when so many others surrounding you are failing. But as we learn in 1 Nephi 3:7, the Lord will prepare a way for us, and it is up to us whether or not we will follow that path and succeed (as did Nephi), or turn away from that path and fail (as did his brothers Laman and Lemuel.)

Follow the Brethren

In first Nephi we read the account of Lehi’s dream. There is a tree of life whose fruit is the sweetest above all. To get to the tree there is a path that is covered with mists of darkness. God has placed an iron rod along the path to help us so that we don’t lose our way. In contrast, Satan has set up the great and spacious building. It is not hard to see through the mists of darkness because it is high in the air, and serves as a distraction from the tree of life. The building in general represents the pride of the world. In the context of eternal marriages and families, the tree of life represents eternal life and exaltation. We can only make our way there if we hold on to the iron rod. This can be difficult because even as we hold on to the iron rod, we cannot see the tree at the end of the path. We can however see the great and spacious building, and it is full of those mocking us. It is no coincidence that the world mocks the idea of traditional marriage between a man and a woman, for that is essential to our path to the tree of life.

So what does the rod of iron represent? We are told that it is the word of God. This refers not only to the canonized scriptures, but it also refers to the words God gives to his Prophets today. This time in the world is like no other. Satan is becoming more and more creative with his ways of penetrating our homes and families, and we need instructions for our time on how to combat him. If we are to build an eternal marriage and successfully return to live with Heavenly Father, we must follow the Brethren. I have often heard of people complaining that the Brethren have nothing new to say, and that they just repeat themselves over and over. Let me assure you that if the Brethren repeat themselves, it is because the Lord is giving us a warning². We should pay attention and do a self evaluation on ourselves of the subject rather than think to ourselves “Oh, I’ve heard this before,” and then mentally check out until the next speaker stands up.

¹ “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”, First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Ensign, November 1995, pg. 102
Gauchay Merrill  
Building an Eternal Marriage  
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We should heed the counsel of the Brethren on any and all subjects that they choose to speak on. All of the members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are prophets, seers, and revelators. The President of the Church however is given the title of The Prophet, and he is the highest authority on earth. He is never under-qualified to speak on a subject. When he gives counsel to do something, there should be no debate as to whether or not we will follow. We must be careful to listen. He will usually not use commanding language when teaching us, but rather inviting language. A good rule of thumb would be that whenever the prophet says “I invite you” to do something – do it! If he says he was impressed to speak about something, know that is revelation from God to him, and that we should all pay very close attention. If your marriage is to survive the storms of life, you need the direction of the Prophets. They can see what is coming and will warn you. If you are paying attention, you will be able to act and protect your marriage and your family from Satan’s attacks. If you are disregarding their counsel, your marriage and family will never become eternal.

Always keep an eternal perspective on your marriage

Because we are mortal beings, it is often hard to understand why certain counsels are so vital in building an eternal marriage. We must remember that here on earth our vision is limited. We see and understand the here and now, but God sees all of eternity. Because He loves us, He gives us warnings well in advance, because He sees what is coming at us in the future. He also sees us with the lens of eternity, and that potentially we will be with Him and like Him one day. When we think about eternity and how grand the entire plan is, suddenly the toothpaste on the bathroom mirror doesn’t seem to mean that much. The fact that dinner is later doesn’t make us so irritated, and the little disagreements that we have don’t matter anymore.

If we keep an eternal perspective, we also find that the temporal matters of this life aren’t as important as we once thought. It is easy to get so caught up in earning money and seeking self fulfillment that we neglect or even forget about the things of eternity. An example of this is the increasing number of women who are turning to careers and other activities outside the home because these are "more exciting...than housework, changing diapers, and children calling for mother."

We must remember that we are eternal beings; careers, money, hobbies, and even time itself will cease to exist once we pass from this life to the immortal one. We must be careful not to distort our perspective by viewing things only as they are right now. Even if it isn’t the most monetarily rewarding, make your spouse and your children your first priorities. Spend your time building your relationships with your family members, because that is what will last past this life. Don’t trade your eternal rewards for temporal ones, just as Esau traded his birthright which consisted of eternal blessings for a plate of food which lasts as long as it takes to be eaten.

In keeping the eternal perspective in the forefront of our minds, we must remember that all eternal blessings come on the Lord’s timing. We cannot and should not expect immediate rewards.

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3 “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet”, President Ezra Taft Benson, Ensign, June 1981
4 D&C 130:7
5 “Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson” Ezra Taft Benson, pg 548
6 “But for a Small Moment”, Elder Neal A Maxwell, pg 453-54
7 Genesis 25
even if the blessing desired is a righteous one. Once again, we must remember that He sees all, and His timing is perfect. What might be convenient for us right now may not be what is best for us in eternity.

Sometimes we desire blessings deeply, and we pray and fast for them to come to us. We believe that if we have faith enough, that God will grant us this desire. However, true faith in the Lord means also trusting in His timing. I will share a deeply personal experience to illustrate this.

My husband and I have been married for almost a year. A few days ago a family member asked, “So when are you planning on starting your family?” My husband replied, “8 months ago, it just hasn’t quite worked out the way we thought”. We had prayed about when we should have children. Eight months ago we both felt impressed that it was the right time, and shortly thereafter we became pregnant. It was a very exciting time for us. We felt deeply connected with the little child that was going to come to us soon.

Eight weeks later I was in the hospital emergency room being told that I had miscarried the baby. We were in shock. Later that day we went in to see my doctor and he confirmed that there was no heartbeat. Even though he suggested a procedure be done the next morning to remove the failed pregnancy, my husband felt it was unwise. We told the doctor we wanted to wait a few more days before making any decisions. As we went home, we discussed what we should do. I wanted a miracle. I knew that if God could part the Red sea, make manna appear from Heaven, and cause His Son to be born to a virgin, that He could bring my baby back to life. When we got home, I prayed for a long time to Heavenly Father and I expressed to Him my faith and desire to have this baby. Later that day my husband gave me a priesthood blessing, in which I was told that if I had enough faith, God would grant me the desire of my heart. I took that to mean that if I had enough faith, God would bring my baby back to life. I again prayed, and expressed my faith to God that I knew He could perform this miracle for me. I felt a peaceful feeling come over me that all would be well and that I would have this child.

I was very disappointed when the next night my body expelled all the tissue from the pregnancy. I was confused and heartbroken. Why did God let this happen to me? All I could think about was that right then I was suffering and that it wasn’t fair. Wasn’t I promised that if I had faith, that I would receive the desire of my heart? My wise and understanding mother helped me to see that the words in that blessing were not incorrect. The true desire of my heart was to have children. The faith that I needed to show God was the faith in His timing, and He will bless me with children when He sees fit. It didn’t mean that I didn’t have enough faith, or that my fasting and prayers had gone unanswered. It just meant that right then was not in line with God’s timing for us to have children. Since then we have not been able to get pregnant. It is definitely a trial for us, but we both know that every good thing will come to us when God decides it is right. We know He won’t break His promises to us, and every day we express our both our desire for children and our faith in His timing our couple and personal prayers. We know that one day – be it in this life or the next – He will bless us with children.

Remember what you are trying to become in the end

When we focus on the eternal things rather than what we are experiencing right now, we will also remember that what we are right now is not what we want to be in the end. We are trying to become something much greater than fallen mortals. We have the potential to become Gods! We

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