The Marriage Decision

By President Spencer W. Kimball

Ensign, Feb. 1975, 2-6

As we approach you at this time and find you growing up in power and strength, we find ourselves wishing for you not quantities of gold, nor acres of land, nor houses of unsurpassed beauty, nor jewels that sparkle, nor plaudits of vulgar men, nor treasures of earth, but what a great father, David, wished for his son; and, more important, what a wise son wished for himself as he came to the day of his greatest opportunity. The father, King David, had prayed:

"And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things. …" (1 Chr. 29:19.)

May we talk of marriage and your life in total? Marriage is a vital part of life.

The Lord has said:

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Gen. 2:24.) And then he carried forward, saying further:

"… Multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. …" (Gen. 1:28.) Accordingly, the program for every normal man and every normal woman is laid out for them. And it is expected by the Lord that every normal man and woman will find a companion and have a marriage in which they and their children will live in joy and happiness.

Recently I met a young returned missionary who is 35 years old. He had been home from his mission for 14 years and yet he was little concerned about his bachelorhood, and laughed about it.

I shall feel sorry for this young man when the day comes that he faces the Great Judge at the throne and when the Lord asks this boy: "Where is your wife?" All of his excuses which he gave to his fellows on earth will seem very light and senseless when he answers the Judge. "I was very busy," or "I felt I should get my education first," or "I did not find the right girl"--such answers will be hollow and of little avail. He knew he was commanded to find a wife and marry her and make her happy. He knew it was his duty to become the father of children and provide a rich, full life for them as they grew up. He knew all this, yet postponed his responsibility. So we say to all youth regardless of what country is your home, and regardless of the customs in your country, your Heavenly Father expects you to marry for eternity and rear a good, strong family.

The Lord planned that men and women would find each other and have a happy family relationship, be true to each other, and remain clean and worthy.

The Lord could have organized his world without this propagation program; he could have filled the earth with physical human bodies in some other way than that which he designed, perhaps some incubator process, but it seems that merely filling the earth with human beings was not the great objective of our Lord, and therefore a father and a mother were designed to be given to every child that was born, and they should love and teach that child and prepare him to become like his Father in heaven, in righteousness and purity.

It was never intended by the Lord that a large portion of one's life should be spent in the unmarried state. At a reasonable time in life it was intended that each young man should find that young woman who is best for
him, and she should find the young man who would be her best companion. Long-delayed marriages are certainly not approved of the Lord.

Even though many young people do not at this time have temples in their own communities, there are generally temples within a reasonable distance. In my youth the Saints went from 500 miles to 800 miles for their marriages.

It is our earnest hope that when you have done your proper courting, that you would plan your honeymoon so that you could go to one of these nearest temples to be sealed for all eternity so that your children will be permanently yours and that you will be permanently their parents and so that it will be an eternal marriage.

It would be our hope that your parents would train you from your infancy to do odd chores, to earn some money, and to put it away for your missions and your marriages.

We hope that young people will be willing to sacrifice the pomp and show and pageantry of the civil weddings so that they and generally their parents with them can go to the holy temple for their marriages. Often the cost of a reception or a holiday or expensive gifts would more than pay for a temple wedding. When Sister Kimball and I were married, we had no ring nor costly reception. Eight years later I bought her a small diamond. She was content to wait until then.

Now is the time for you to plan good strong marriages and organize your programs and set your standards and solidify your determination to prepare for that married period of your lives which will be beautiful and rewarding.

Accordingly, my beloved young people, you should be serious-minded. Life is not wholly for fun and frolic. It is a most serious business. You will do well to grow up as children, associating with both girls and boys for those first years. When you get in the teen-age years, your social associations should still be general acquaintance with both boys and girls. Any dating or pairing off in social contacts should be postponed until at least the age of 16 or older, and even then there should be much judgment used in selections and in the seriousness.

Young people should still limit the close contacts for several years, since the boy will be going on his mission when he is 19 years old. There should be limited contacts and certainly no approach to the intimate relationships involving sex. There must never be any sex of any kind prior to marriage.

Every boy should have been saving money for his mission and be free from any and all entanglements so he will be worthy. When he is returned from his mission at 21, he should feel free to begin to get acquainted and to date. When he has found the right young woman, there should be a proper temple marriage. One can have all the blessings if he is in control and takes the experiences in proper turn: first some limited social get-acquainted contacts, then his mission, then his courting, then his temple marriage and his schooling and his family, then his life's work. In any other sequence he could run into difficulty.

After marriage young wives should be occupied in bearing and rearing children. I know of no scriptures or authorities which authorize young wives to delay their families or to go to work to put their husbands through college. Young married couples can make their way and reach their educational heights, if they are determined.

Our young people should realize, as quoted from President J. Reuben Clark, Jr.:

"There is some belief, too much I fear, that sex desire is planted in us solely for the pleasures of full gratification; that the begetting of children is only an unfortunate incident. The direct opposite is the fact. Sex desire was planted in us in order to be sure that bodies would be begotten to house the spirits; the pleasures of gratification of the desire is an incident, not the primary purpose of the desire."
And then he says further:

"As to sex in marriage, the necessary treatise on that for Latter-day Saints can be written in two sentences: Remember the prime purpose of sex desire is to beget children. Sex gratification must be had at that hazard. You husbands: be kind and considerate of your wives. They are not your property; they are not mere conveniences; they are your partners for time and eternity." (Conference Report, General Priesthood Conference, October 1949, pp. 194-195.)

As we talk about marriage, we remember, as Luke says:

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." (Luke 13:24.)

Only through celestial marriage can one find the straight way, the narrow path. Eternal life cannot be had in any other way. The Lord was very specific and very definite in the matter of marriage. He said:

"For this is a day of warning, and not a day of many words. For I, the Lord, am not to be mocked in the last days." (D&C 63:58.)

The scriptures say that "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matt. 22:32.)

There are no dead except those who have chosen to be dead as to the law, dead as to the benefits, dead as to the blessings, dead as to the eternal nature of the gift.

In our own day there are many people who form their own conclusions and do their own [page 6] rationalizing and calculate and evaluate and develop their own opinions and "kick against the pricks," and close the door to their own opportunities.

Some time ago, in deep anguish, a mother came to see me. She was left alone. Her son and his wife met with an accident, leaving several small children. She came with many regrets and told me that the young victims of a plane crash had not been married in the temple. Both coming from good families, they had either ignored it or postponed it. They had lived the majority of their lifetime on the earth and still had not had this ordinance performed. This accident left them separated. The statement "till death do you part" left them single and their children orphans.

Of course, someone can have the work done in the temple for these young people after they have been dead a year, but will those young people accept the ordinances in death which were of such little consequence to them while they lived? And, more important than all else, do you think that God would be thusly mocked? He is the God of the living and not of the dead. He identified this ordinance as one to be done by the living themselves.

Have you ever realized that there is no magic in death, that ceasing to breathe does not make angels of careless people, does not make believers of disbelievers, does not bring faith where there was skepticism?

Have you ever studied carefully the parable of the ten virgins? Those who had prepared themselves for the blessings promised were ready, and those who were unprepared were cast out. Procrastination is a veritable thief.

In the early days of the restored Church the Lord said much that should have been warning to the readers of the scriptures, but since they did not understand, the voice of the Lord came again.

Remember the Lord said:
"... If a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity, if that covenant is not by me or by my word ... then it is not valid neither of force when they are out of the world, because they are not joined by me, saith the Lord, neither by my word; when they are out of the world it cannot be received there, because the angels and the gods are appointed there, by whom they cannot pass; they cannot, therefore, inherit my glory; for my house is a house of order, saith the Lord God." (D&C 132:18.)

The Lord makes clear that even the rewards to the angels are secondary to and inferior to the blessings of those "who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory." (D&C 132:16.)

The Lord promises much to you young people who take care of this marriage in a proper way. He says:

"... And they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads. ..." (D&C 132:19.)

Now this is not a matter of opinion; it matters little what you or I should think or argue. These are facts; the judges at the gates will know for certain the records, the spirit, and the true record. The Book of Life (See Rev. 20:12) will show the earthly activities of all of us.

I have repeated the provisions and the restrictions and the glories and the benefits, because we are all inclined to let them pass our notice like water down the river, but the Lord has repeated over and over as his message of the revelation came to Joseph Smith over and over, and as we read the scriptures over and over. He says:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory." (D&C 132:21.) Can anything be more forthright and unequivocal than that? There is no room for argument or quibbling.

There will be a new spirit in Zion when the young women will say to their boyfriends, "If you cannot get a temple recommend, then I am not about to tie my life to you, even for mortality." And the young returned missionary boys will say to their girlfriends, "I am sorry, but as much as I love you, I will not marry out of the holy temple."

Let me note the brighter side. Some weeks ago I divided a stake. In the process of searching for a new president of each stake, I interviewed 29 men and found that all 29 had been sealed for eternity. They had 121 children, the average 4.3 children per family (or 6.3 persons per family). There was not a single divorce in the whole group; there were no broken homes in these 29 families. Every child of the 121 had two parents; neither death nor divorce had broken these homes. All of these 29 men were fairly well employed, fairly well housed; 43 of all the children were teenagers, but there were no serious problems among them, no drugs nor drinking nor smoking. Everyone was faithfully moving toward his exaltation.

And so we wonder why, with all these blessings and promises, that people will fail to marry correctly and thus waste their lives in a frozen wilderness that may never thaw. Why will any young person ever give a single thought to a marriage out of the temple and jeopardize those glories that are available? Why would a person with a temple marriage think of divorce, of breaking up a family, or of immoralities and infidelities? Why, oh why?

My beloved brothers and sisters, remember that I have explained these matters to you. Never can you say I did not warn you. Our young people are wonderful, with rich, glorious promises. The Lord loves you, we love you, and we want you to do right and enjoy the blessings that come with righteous living.

We have confidence in you and promise you rich blessings and a happy life if you listen and study and pray and keep your life totally directed along the straight and narrow way outlined by our Lord, Jesus Christ.