**Unit 2 Part 1: Eternal Identity: Transcript:**

**Gender and Eternal Identity:**

During this presentation we will learn about the following eternal truths regarding our gender and eternal identity:

1. We are created in God's image - male and female
2. We are spirit children of our Heavenly parents - sons and daughters
3. Because of this parentage, each of us has a divine nature and eternal destiny
4. Our genders - male and female - are eternal and have critical purposes in fulfilling the Father's great plan of happiness
5. Our enemy is seeking to destroy God's plan by attacking these truths about our gender and eternal identity and destiny

**In God’s Image:**

In the earliest scriptures given to mankind, it was revealed that in the creation:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness … So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them ... (Genesis 1:26-27)

"All human beings-male and female-are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual pre-mortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose."

(President Hinckley, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World", Ensign, November 1995)

**A Child of God:**

“I Am a Child of God”:

I am a child of God,

And he has sent me here,

Has given me an earthly home

With parents kind and dear.

Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,

Help me find the way.

Teach me all that I must do

To live with him someday.

(Children's Songbook, p. 2)

“I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High” (Psalm 82:6).

“We are the offspring of God” (Acts 17:29).

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16).

“We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” (Hebrews 12:9).

**Eternal Family Relationship:**

Speaking through the pre-mortal Jehovah, God reminded Abraham about their eternal family relationship when he delivered Abraham from being ritually sacrificed, saying, “Therefore I have come down to visit them, and to destroy him who hath lifted up his hand against thee, Abraham, my son…” (Abr. 1:17). Also, God spoke similarly to Moses when He revealed: “I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name.... And, behold, thou art my son” (Moses 1:3-4).

**Moses My Son:**

Elder Rasband of the Seventy describes the adversary's attack on Moses' understanding of his sonship to God as recorded in Moses chapter 1:

"…After witnessing the power and glory of God, Moses was confronted by Satan, who “came tempting him, saying: Moses, son of man, worship me” (Moses 1:12). Note that Satan attempted to persuade Moses that he was not, as he had been assured, a son of God but rather a “son of man”-that is, a mere mortal. It is obvious why Satan wants us to doubt that we are spiritually begotten children of God. Dissuading us that we have divine potential erodes the nobility to which we ought to aspire and invites us to embrace the sins of this world. In doing so we surrender to the adversary and forfeit our rightful divine inheritance.

Moses provides us with a wonderful example of how to resist the blandishments of Satan. Moses said, “I will not cease to call upon God” (Moses 1:18), teaching us the importance of prayer. Then Moses commanded Satan to depart from him, speaking “in the name of the Only Begotten” and thus declaring his loyalty to Jesus Christ and his dependence on the Savior's Atonement (Moses 1:20-21). By displaying such determination, Moses was strengthened and succeeded in driving Satan from him."

(Elder Ronald A. Rasband, “Moses, My Son,” *Ensign*, January 2010)

In this revelation God repeatedly refers to Moses as “my son” and teaches him that he was created in the similitude of the Savior (Moses 1:6). Commenting on the importance of this truth, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

“Consider the power of the idea taught in our beloved song ‘I Am a Child of God' … Here is the answer to one of life's great questions, ‘Who am I?' I am a child of God with a spirit lineage to heavenly parents. That parentage defines our eternal potential. That powerful idea is a potent antidepressant. It can strengthen each of us to make righteous choices and to seek the best that is within us. Establish in the mind of a … person the powerful idea that he or she is a child of God and you have given self-respect and motivation to move against the problems of life.”(Dallin H. Oaks, “Powerful Ideas,” *Ensign*, November 1995, p. 25)

**Our Father:**

“If you concede that we are His children, you must allow that God is our Father. That, too, is repeated over and over again in the scriptures. There are so many references that I could not even begin to read them to you. But I make this point: Christ did not speak only of the Father, or my Father; He spoke of your Father, and our Father. He even put them together in one sentence, saying, ‘Your Father, and your God, and my God.' (D&C 88:75) God is addressed universally in the Christian world as Father. Were we not commanded to pray ‘Our Father which art in heaven'? (Matthew 6:9.)”(President Boyd K. Packer, “The Pattern of Our Parentage,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984)

**Pattern of Our Parentage:**

Part of the reason that we should be comfortable to pray to our Heavenly Father is that we are not so entirely different from each other. While it is true that He has progressed to become the glorious and perfected being that He is, we are yet His children and His love for us is manifest in His work on our behalf to become what children of God are naturally able to become if they will follow His eternal plan of salvation. Elder Packer relates an experience that helps illustrate how natural our relationship with our Heavenly Father should be as we work to become what He is teaching us we can.

Christ taught us to be “perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48), to take on His attributes, to follow the pattern of our parentage. A little girl taught me a profound lesson on this subject. Surely you are not above learning from little children. Much of what I know that really matters I have learned from being a father.

Some years ago I returned home to find our little children were waiting in the driveway. They had discovered some newly hatched chicks under the manger in the barn. When they reached for them, a protective hen rebuffed them. So they came for reinforcements. I soon gathered a handful of little chicks for them to see and touch. As our little girl held one of them, I said in a teasing way, “That will make a nice watchdog when it grows up, won't it?” She looked at me quizzically, as if I didn't know much. So I changed my approach: “It won't be a watchdog, will it?” She shook her head, “No, Daddy.” Then I added, “It will be a nice riding horse.” She wrinkled up her nose and gave me that “Oh, Dad!” look. For even a four-year-old knows that a chick will not be a dog, nor a horse, nor even a turkey. It will be a chicken. It will follow the pattern of its parentage. She knew that without having had a course in genetics, without a lesson or a lecture.

No lesson is more manifest in nature than that all living things do as the Lord commanded in the Creation. They reproduce “after their own kind.” (See Moses 2:12, 24.) They follow the pattern of their parentage. Everyone knows that; every four-year-old knows that! A bird will not become an animal nor a fish. A mammal will not beget reptiles, nor “do men gather … figs of thistles.” (Matthew 7:16.)

In the countless billions of opportunities in the reproduction of living things, one kind does not beget another. If a species ever does cross, the offspring cannot reproduce. The pattern for all life is the pattern of the parentage. (President Boyd K. Packer, “The Pattern of Our Parentage,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984)

**Heavenly Parents:**

From The Family - A Proclamation to the World:

"Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents."

**Our Universal Father & Mother:**

Reason and logic suggest that if we have a Father in Heaven, and we are truly children of His, then we must have had a Mother there. Modern prophets and apostles have confirmed that we do have a Heavenly Mother as the following doctrinal statements illustrate.

The First Presidency have taught that, "All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity."(The First Presidency: Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, Anthon H. Lund, “The Origin of Man,” *Ensign*, February 2002, pg. 26, originally from Improvement Era, November 1909, pg. 75-81)

Elder Melvin J. Ballard taught that, "God does not stand alone. No matter what heights God has attained or may attain, he does not stand alone; for side by side with him, in all her glory, a glory like unto his, stands a companion, the Mother of his children. For as we have a Father in heaven, so also we have a Mother there, a glorified, exalted, ennobled Mother." (Elder Melvin J. Ballard, *Sermons and Missionary Service*, 205.)

President Joseph Fielding Smith also taught, "It may be true that the Bible does not speak of a mother in heaven, nor does the Doctrine and Covenants when speaking of the revelations of the Lord to the Church. Permit me to call attention to the fact that mothers and wives are seldom mentioned in the Bible, although they are on certain occasions." (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions,* vol. 3: 142)

Joseph Fielding Smith also said, "The fact that there is no reference to a mother in heaven either in the Bible, Book of Mormon or Doctrine and Covenants, is not sufficient proof that no such thing as a mother did exist there. If we had a Father, which we did, for all of these records speak of him, then does not good common sense tell us that we must have had a mother there also?"(Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, vol. 3: 142)

Finally, President Kimball confirms, "God made man in his own image and certainly he made woman in the image of his wife-partner….You [women] are daughters of God. You are precious. You are made in the image of our heavenly Mother."(Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, pg. 25)

**Matriarchal Partnership:**

Adam held the priesthood. Eve served in matriarchal partnership with the patriarchal priesthood. So today, each wife may join with her husband as a partner unified in purpose. Scriptures state clearly, “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:11). “They twain shall be one flesh” (Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:8; D&C 49:16). Marvelously, it takes a man and a woman to make a man or a woman. Without union of the sexes, neither can we exist, nor can we become perfect. Ordinary and imperfect people can build each other through their wholeness together. The complete contribution of one partner to the other is essential to exaltation. This is so “that the earth might answer the end of its creation” (D&C 49:16). (Elder Russell M. Nelson, "Lessons from Eve", *Ensign*, November, 1987)

**Parents Model for Children:**

Heavenly Mother and Heavenly Father serve in their patriarchal and matriarchal roles, and model for us as we progress eternally. Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother have progressed to perfection in their character and attributes. Their model for us is what is possible for children of God to become. The gospel they have given us points the way for us to progress as they have, both male and female.

**Divine Nature:**

From The Family - A Proclamation to the World:

"… and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny…"

**Divine Nature vs. Natural Man:**

While we have the veil during mortality so that we live by faith and not by sight, the Lord has not left us in the dark about the attributes of a divine nature, including helpful warnings and descriptions of its opposite: the natural man. Use the scriptures provided here to make a list of the properties of divine nature as opposed to the natural man.

2 Peter 1:4-7: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

D&C 121: 41-46: No power of influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile-Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, les he esteem thee to be his enemy; That he may know that thy faithfulness is strong than the cords of death. Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.

4 Nephi 1:2-3: And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free and partakers of the heavenly gift.

4 Nephi 1:13: And it came to pass that there was no contention among all the people in all the land; but there were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus.

4 Nephi 1:15-16: And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredomes, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.

Mosiah 3:19: For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child dot submit to his father.

Moses 5 13: And Satan came among them, saying: I am also a son of God; and he commanded them, saying: Believe it not; and they believed it not, and they loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish.

Moses 6:15: And the children of men were numerous upon all the face of the land. And in those days Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man’s hand was against his own brother, in administering death, because of secret works, seeking for power.

Romans 1:29-31: Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Whithout understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

2 Nephi 28 19-22: For the kingdom of the devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance, or the devil will grasp them with his everlasting chains, and they be stirred up to anger, and perish; For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good. And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well-and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell. And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none-and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance.

**Be Men:**

"Be men. I was inspired and edified by the wisdom of the talk Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy gave at the recent general priesthood meeting. He issued this challenge: “We who hold the priesthood of God . . . must arise from the dust of self-indulgence and be men!” (“Let Us Be Men,” Ensign, November 2006, p. 46). Elder Christofferson shared many personal experiences and scriptural teachings on a major problem we feel in the world around us and even among the young men of the Church. Here are some of his words:

'The prophet Lehi pled with his rebellious sons, saying, "Arise from the dust, my sons, and be men" (2 Nephi 1:21; emphasis added). By age, Laman and Lemuel were men, but in terms of character and spiritual maturity they were still as children. They murmured and complained if asked to do anything hard. They didn’t accept anyone’s authority to correct them. They didn’t value spiritual things. They easily resorted to violence, and they were good at playing the victim. We see some of the same attitudes today. Some act as if a man’s highest goal should be his own pleasure. . . . Dodging commitments is considered smart, but sacrificing for the good of others, naïve. For some, a life of work and achievement is optional. . . . We who hold the priesthood of God cannot afford to drift. We have work to do (see Moroni 9:6). We must arise from the dust of self-indulgence and be men! . . . (Ibid.).

Elder Christofferson praised the quality of the young women of the Church, and then added: 'I ask myself, Do we have men to match these women? Are our young men developing into worthy companions that such women can look up to and respect?' (Ibid, p. 47)." (Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Be Wise, BYU-Idaho devotional, November 7, 2006)

**True Manhood Defined:**

In the Oct. 2006 General Conference, Elder Christofferson made a significant connection between being a true man and his relationships to women, particularly to his wife.

"In large measure, true manhood is defined in our relationship to women. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have given us the ideal to pursue in these words:

'The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. … By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families.' (The Family: A Proclamation to the World)." (Elder D. Todd Christofferson, “Let Us Be Men,” *Ensign*, November 2006)

**Be Women:**

Be women. While I am telling the men to be men, I also want to tell the women to be women.

Sisters, don’t fall for the worldly urging that women should emulate men in various masculine characteristics. That is not what the Lord created you to do. Please don’t misunderstand me. I am not saying that women should not be doctors or lawyers or any particular occupation that fits their circumstances. To use lawyering as an example, what I am saying is that women should not attempt to be manly lawyers. Nor should women emulate the worldly ways of womanhood. Your destiny is to be a wife and a mother in Zion, not a model and a streetwalker in Babylon. You should dress and act accordingly.

I quote Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, from the October General Conference one year ago.

“First of all, I want you to be proud you are a woman. I want you to feel the reality of what that means, to know who you truly are. You are literally a spirit daughter of heavenly parents with a divine nature and an eternal destiny. That surpassing truth should be fixed deep in your soul and be fundamental to every decision you make. . . .” (“To Young Women,” *Ensign*, November 2005, p. 28).

There is wisdom! Be true to your identity and role in the Great Plan of Happiness, given to us by a Heavenly Father who created us “male and female” (Gen. 1:27; Moses 2:27). Our inspired Family Proclamation declares that “Gender is an essential characteristic of individual pre-mortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”

Elder Holland made a special appeal about how young women should dress for Church services and Sabbath worship:

“[F]rom ancient times to modern we have always been invited to present our best selves inside and out when entering the house of the Lord and a dedicated LDS chapel is a ‘house of the Lord.’ Our clothing or footwear need never be expensive, indeed should not be expensive, but neither should it appear that we are on our way to the beach. When we come to worship the God and Father of us all and to partake of the sacrament symbolizing the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we should be as comely and respectful, as dignified and appropriate as we can be” (Ibid.). (Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Be Wise, BYU-Idaho devotional, November 7, 2006)

**True Womanhood Defined:**

"A woman not of our faith once wrote something to the effect that in her years of working with beautiful women she had seen several things they all had in common, and not one of them had anything to do with sizes and shapes. She said the loveliest women she had known had a glow of health, a warm personality, a love of learning, stability of character, and integrity. If we may add the sweet and gentle Spirit of the Lord carried by such a woman, then this describes the loveliness of women in any age or time, every element of which is emphasized in and attainable through the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ." (Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “To Young Women,” *Ensign*, November 2005)

"President Faust observed that femininity 'is the divine adornment of humanity. It finds expression in your … capacity to love, your spirituality, delicacy, radiance, sensitivity, creativity, charm, graciousness, gentleness, dignity, and quiet strength. It is manifest differently in each girl or woman, but each … possesses it. Femininity is part of your inner beauty.'” (Sister Margaret D. Nadauld, “The Joy of Womanhood,” *Ensign*, November 2000, pg. 14)

**Divine Destiny:**

What is our ultimate destiny? From Moses 1:39 we learn, "For behold, this is my work and my glory - to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man (Moses 1:39)." While it is true that qualifying for eternal life is conditional on our wise use of agency and full participation in the covenants and ordinances of the everlasting gospel, ponder on the grandeur of the promised blessings!

… Ye shall come forth … and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions … 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, which glory shall be a fullness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever. Then shall they be gods, because they have no end … Then shall they be gods, because they have all power … (D&C 132:19-20)