



The Eternal Family Class Preparation Material

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LESSON 1 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Studying the Doctrine of the Eternal Family

Welcome to The Eternal Family course! The truths you will learn throughout this course, combined with acting on the promptings you feel, can help you and your family draw closer to God and receive all of the blessings He desires for you. You will also be better able to help others do the same.

As you study the following preparation material for lesson 1, consider the blessings and joy Heavenly Father wants all of His children to experience and how that relates to families.

Note: The preparation material will provide a foundation for your class experience. Studying each lesson's preparation material before class will help you have a deeper, more meaningful learning experience when you attend class.

SECTION 1

What difference can trusting Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ's perfect love and wisdom make in my personal and family life?

We are surrounded by varying opinions and information about the topic of family. Sometimes the

socially accepted perspective on family is in direct opposition to Heavenly Father's plan. The more we know and understand Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and Their character, the more we can trust Their teachings and counsel, including in family matters. As we do so, we can learn to see things as They see them—from an eternal perspective.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read 2 Nephi 26:24; Mosiah 4:9; and Isaiah 55:8–9, and look for truths about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ that can help you trust Them. Consider marking what you find.

Think about how the descriptions of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in these scripture passages can influence how you choose to view sensitive issues and questions regarding the family. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



As your Father, His purpose is your eternal happiness, your continuing development, your increasing capacity. His desire is to share with you all that He has. (“Obtaining Help from the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 86)



Study in Preparation for Class

In a prophetic effort to “warn and forewarn” against the deceptions of the world, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles released a proclamation on the family in 1995 (see Gordon B. Hinckley, “Stand Strong against

the Wiles of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 100). Read “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (ChurchofJesusChrist.org), and consider what it teaches about the blessings and happiness Heavenly Father desires for you and your family. You might mark evidences of His love and desires for your happiness.



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Think about some current social issues or questions that are addressed by truths declared in the family proclamation. What value is there in trusting the wisdom and eternal perspective of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ over the wisdom and perspective of the world on these topics?

SECTION 2

How can we establish a safe environment to discuss sensitive issues?

Think about your family situation, dynamics, and challenges. How is your family different from other families you know? Some of our strongest feelings are associated with our families. When we discuss

the doctrine of the family, we must remember that others' family situations and experiences may be different than our own. Remembering this can help us be more loving, sensitive, and respectful in the way we discuss the doctrine on the family. By doing this, we are better prepared for the Holy Ghost to teach us more deeply about families and our Heavenly Father's purposes.



Study in Preparation for Class

Jesus Christ is our perfect example of having charity for individuals in all circumstances. Read Moroni 7:45–48. Think about times in your life when the Savior has shown you charity, and consider the difference it has made for you.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are striving to become more like Him in all we say and do. It takes practice to listen to others and to learn and share truth in loving, sensitive, and respectful ways. When we approach sensitive conversations on topics related to the family with charity, we are being like the Savior. If we are willing, the Holy Ghost can help us know our part in establishing and maintaining a loving, respectful, and inclusive classroom environment for learning truth.

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



My plea today is for the hundreds of thousands of children, youth, and young adults who do not come from these, for lack of a better term, "picture-perfect" families. I speak not only of the youth who have experienced the death, divorce, or diminishing faith of their parents but also of the tens of thousands of young men and young women from all around the world who embrace the gospel without a mother or father to come into the Church with them.

These young Latter-day Saints enter the Church with great faith. They hope to create the family ideal in their own lives at a future day. In time, they become an important part of our missionary force, our righteous young adults, and those who kneel at an altar to begin their own families.

We will continue to teach the Lord's pattern for families, but now with millions of members and the diversity we have . . . , we need to be even more thoughtful and sensitive. . . .

. . . Let us think about them, welcome them, embrace them, and do everything we can to strengthen their love for the Savior. ("Whoso Receiveth Them, Receiveth Me," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 49–50, 52)



Record Your Thoughts

Reflect on your own experiences and the difference you can make by approaching discussions of sensitive topics about the family with charity. Record what you can do to help others feel loved and respected while discussing such topics from a perspective of eternal truth.

Want More? (Optional)

How can I keep an eternal perspective when I have questions and concerns?

For an illustration of reframing questions and concerns from an eternal perspective, watch the video "Examining Questions with an Eternal Perspective" (2:56).

How can I engage in conversations about sensitive social and religious issues with charity?

For an illustration of the difference that love and respect can make in discussing thoughts and feelings about the family, watch the video "Everyday Example: When Beliefs Are Questioned" (12:48).

What can I learn from the Savior's example of love, sensitivity, and compassion for others?

In the following accounts, we can find manifestations of the Savior's love, sensitivity, and compassion for individuals who experienced challenges in their personal and family situations:

His interaction with the woman taken in adultery (see John 8:3–11)

His healing of a leper (see Mark 1:40–42)

His gift to the widow of Nain (see Luke 7:11–15)

His conversation with the woman at the well (see John 4:6–19)

His visit to the people in the Americas (see 3 Nephi 17:6–10)



LESSON 2 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

The Role of Prophets in Proclaiming the Doctrine of the Eternal Family

We are blessed to live in a day when the Lord has again called living prophets to guide and protect us. How have the Lord's prophets helped you understand the doctrine of the eternal family? As you study this lesson, consider how you can gain a greater testimony of living prophets and more fully rely on their words in your life.

SECTION 1

How is God's love shown in the counsel of prophets?

When the Lord called Ezekiel to be a prophet, He compared Ezekiel's new role to that of a watchman.古iently, watchmen stood on walls or in towers to help protect cities, vineyards, or fields (see "Watchmen on the Tower," *Ensign*, Apr. 2016, 28). Their elevated view enabled them to see things others could not and to provide timely warnings of approaching dangers.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Ezekiel 3:17–19, and think about how the Lord's prophets are like watchmen on the tower.



Prophets help us see things from God's eternal perspective. He blesses them as seers with a divine endowment of spiritual sight. They are able to "know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come" (Mosiah 8:17; see also verses 15–16). The Lord has set them in place to protect us from spiritual and physical danger.

President Russell M. Nelson taught the following about the motivation and responsibility of the Lord's watchmen:



Each of the Lord's apostles is in a position to observe and feel the love that Heavenly Father has for His children, particularly for those who are struggling. . . .

Sometimes we as leaders of the Church are criticized for holding firm to the laws of God, defending the Savior's doctrine, and resisting the social pressures of our day. But our commission as ordained apostles is "to go into all the world to preach [His] gospel unto every creature" [Doctrine and Covenants 18:28]. That means we are commanded to teach truth.

In doing so, sometimes we are accused of being uncaring as we teach the Father's requirements for exaltation in the celestial kingdom. But wouldn't it be far more uncaring for us not to tell the truth—not to teach what God has revealed?

It is precisely because we do care deeply about all of God's children that we proclaim His truth. We may not always tell people what they want to hear. Prophets are rarely popular. But we will always teach the truth! ("The Love and Laws of God" [Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 17, 2019], 3, speeches.byu.edu)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How have you felt God's love through the warnings, correction, and counsel of living prophets?

SECTION 2

How is the family proclamation evidence of the Lord's prophets acting as watchmen today?

On September 23, 1995, at a general Relief Society meeting, President Gordon B. Hinckley presented "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." Before doing so, he explained why the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles felt the need to issue this proclamation:



With so much of sophistry that is passed off as truth, with so much of deception concerning standards and values, with so much of allurement and enticement to take on the slow stain of the world, we have felt to warn and forewarn. In furtherance of this we of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles now issue a proclamation to the Church and to the world as a declaration and reaffirmation of standards, doctrines, and practices relative to the family which the prophets, seers, and revelators of this church have repeatedly stated throughout its history. ("Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 100)



The following excerpt from President Nelson's biography describes what the Lord enabled His Apostles to see that led to the creation of the family proclamation:

One day in 1994, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spent a day in their council room in the Salt Lake Temple discussing issues surrounding the family. They considered everything from the increasingly ubiquitous nature of pornography to potential anti-family legislation of various kinds. This was not a new discussion, but that day the entire agenda revolved around this one vital topic.

The Twelve reviewed both doctrine and policies, considering those things that could not be changed—doctrine—and those things that possibly could be—policies. They discussed issues they saw coming, including an intensified societal push for gay marriage and transgender rights. “But that was not the end of what we saw,” Elder Nelson explained. “We could see the efforts of various communities to do away with all standards and limitations on sexual activity. We saw the confusion of genders. We could see it all coming.”

This extended discussion, along with others over a period of time, led to the conclusion that the Twelve should prepare a document, perhaps even a proclamation, outlining the Church’s stand on the family to present to the First Presidency for consideration. (Sheri Dew, *Insights from a Prophet’s Life: Russell M. Nelson* [2019], 208)

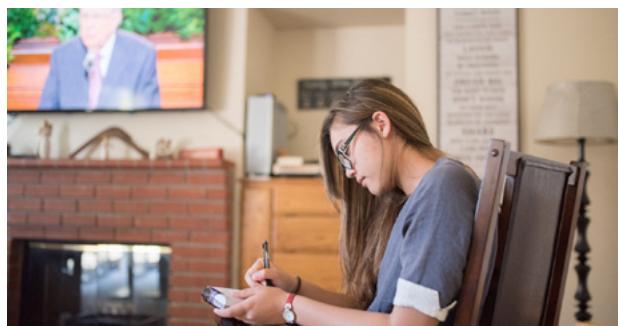


Ponder in Preparation for Class

What stood out to you from the statement by President Hinckley and the account about President Nelson? How does the issuing of the family proclamation illustrate prophets’ roles as watchmen on the tower?

SECTION 3

How can I receive and respond faithfully to the words of the Lord’s prophets?



In His hometown of Nazareth, the Savior was rejected when He proclaimed that He was the promised Messiah. In response to the many doubts, the Savior stated, “No prophet is accepted in his own country” (Luke 4:24).

Likewise, in our day some people choose to not accept the Lord’s prophets. At times, you may even find it difficult to understand or follow modern prophets’ counsel and teachings.

On the day The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation from the Lord containing a commandment and promises to members of His Church.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Doctrine and Covenants 21:4–6 (note that these verses refer to the Prophet Joseph Smith and, by extension, can be applied to the current President of the Lord’s Church). Look for how Church members are to receive the words of the prophet and the blessings the Lord promises as we do so. (*Note:* One meaning of the word *shake* in verse 6 is to dislodge or release something from a support or a container [see *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, “shake”]. Thus, one interpretation of this verse is that when the Lord causes “the heavens to shake for [our] good,” He releases revelations and blessings, pouring them out upon those who follow His living prophets.)



Think about what it means to receive the Lord’s words through prophets “in all patience and faith” (verse 5). Consider also the blessings promised for doing so. The scriptures contain numerous accounts of people choosing to exercise patience and faith in the words of prophets. Select one or more of the following scripture passages to study:

- 1 Nephi 2:11–16 (Nephi leaving Jerusalem as directed by the prophet Lehi)

- 1 Kings 17:8–24 (The widow of Zarephath responding to a request by the prophet Elijah during a famine)
- 2 Kings 5:9–14 (Naaman, the Syrian, seeking to be healed of leprosy by the prophet Elisha)



Record Your Thoughts

Thinking about what you just read, record your responses to these questions in a notebook or note-taking app:

1. What can you learn from the person’s effort to receive a prophet’s words with patience and faith?
2. Why might it have been difficult to receive and heed the words of the Lord’s prophet in these circumstances?
3. What do you learn about the Lord through what He asked of the person you read about?

While serving as a counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, Sister Carol F. McConkie noted:



According to the world’s standards, following the prophet may be unpopular, politically incorrect, or socially unacceptable. But following the prophet is always right. (“Live according to the Words of the Prophets,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 78)

We can have confidence in following the Lord’s prophets.

Want More? (Optional)

What does it mean to sustain the prophets?



In his talk "Sustaining the Prophets" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 74–77), President Nelson explained how each individual can sustain the prophets in word and deed.

What is the difference between Church doctrine and Church policy?

In the video "What Is the Difference between Doctrine and Policy?" (6:08), Elder Ulisses Soares of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder Craig C. Christensen of the Seventy explain the difference between Church doctrine and Church policy.

What have the Lord's prophets taught about the importance of the family proclamation and its teachings in our day?

The article "Today's Family: Proclamation Still a Clarion Call" (ChurchofJesusChrist.org) reiterates the importance of the family proclamation and includes several statements by members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles upholding the teachings contained in the proclamation as prophetic counsel for our day.

Where can I learn more about ancient watchmen and their similarities to living prophets?

Read the article "Watchmen on the Tower" (*Ensign*, Apr. 2016, 28–29) to gain additional insights about the importance of watchmen anciently and how their role is similar to that of prophets.

You could also watch the video "Watchman on the Tower" (4:17) for an illustration of the role of a watchman and a prophet (see Ezekiel 33:1–7).



LESSON 3 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Our Divine Nature and Destiny

Some of the most important questions we have in life relate to our origin and destiny—who we truly are and what our potential is. As you study this lesson, consider how you treat yourself and how you treat others. How might this change if you always remembered your divine nature and destiny?

SECTION 1

Who am I?

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 40). The scriptures offer a powerful testimony of who God is and what our relationship is with Him.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Acts 17:29, Hebrews 12:9, and 1 John 3:2, looking for who God is and what we can learn about our relationship with Him.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then of the First Presidency, taught this about our relationship with God:



We are created by the Almighty God. He is our Heavenly Father. We are literally His spirit children. We are made of supernal material most precious and highly refined, and thus we carry within ourselves the substance of divinity.

Here on earth, however, our thoughts and actions become encumbered with that which is corrupt, unholy, and impure. The dust and filth of the world stain our souls, making it difficult to recognize and remember our birthright and purpose.

But all this cannot change who we truly are. The fundamental divinity of our nature remains. (“He Will Place You on His Shoulders

and Carry You Home," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 104)

Watch the video "Your True Identity" (0:29), and think about who you are and where you came from.

Prophets and apostles have affirmed that "all human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Consider how the following teachings can add to your understanding of your heavenly parents:

All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity. . . .

Man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal [physical] body. ("Gospel Classics: The Origin of Man," *Ensign*, Feb. 2002, 29, 30)

President Harold B. Lee stated, "We forget that we have a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother who are even more concerned, probably, than our earthly father and mother, and that influences from beyond are constantly working to try to help us when we do all we can" [Harold B. Lee, "The Influence and Responsibility of Women," *Relief Society Magazine*, Feb. 1964, 85]. (Gospel Topics, "Mother in Heaven," topics [.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org))

President M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also taught, "First and foremost, you are and always will be a spirit child of God" ("Children of Heavenly Father" [Brigham Young University devotional, Mar. 3, 2020], 2, speeches [.byu.edu](http://byu.edu)). President Uchtdorf taught that the truth that we are God's literal spirit children "should change the way we look at ourselves, our brothers

and sisters, and life itself" ("Four Titles," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 58).



Record Your Thoughts

In a notebook or note-taking app, answer one or more of the following questions:

- How can understanding our divine nature affect how we treat ourselves and others? When have you had an experience where you have been able to look past someone's offensive behavior or attitude and see their divine nature?
- What are some examples from the Savior's life that show He understood others' divine nature? In what ways might you better emulate Him in the way you treat others?

Be prepared to share some of your thoughts in class.

SECTION 2

What difference can it make to know I am a child of God?

Consider the following statement by Sister Michelle D. Craig, a counselor in the Young Women General Presidency:



The more you understand your true identity and purpose, soul deep, the more it will influence everything in your life. ("Eyes to See," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 16)

An experience Moses had after talking with God face to face and learning of his divine nature illustrates the power this knowledge can have for us.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Moses 1:3–6, 12–16, looking for how Moses was empowered by embracing his divine nature.



Moses overcomes Satan's temptations



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Think carefully about how understanding your divine parentage and nature has helped you resist the lies and temptations of the adversary.

SECTION 3

What is my divine destiny?



Consider how much you have learned and grown in the past 10 years. As a son or daughter of heavenly parents, you have an incredible capacity for growth. In fact, you have a divine destiny. (See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org.)



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Romans 8:16–17, looking for what the Apostle Paul taught about our divine destiny.

A joint-heir is someone who receives an equal inheritance with other heirs. As the firstborn and only perfect Son of Heavenly Father, it is the right of Jesus Christ to inherit all that the Father has. Those who are obedient and receive the full blessings of the Savior’s Atonement will also inherit all that the Father has (see Romans 8:14–18; Galatians 3:26–29; Doctrine and Covenants 93:21–22). This means all of us have the potential to become like our Heavenly Father.

President Russell M. Nelson helped clarify what our divine destiny means:



We are to prepare for our own divine destiny—glory, immortality, and eternal lives. These supernal blessings can all be ours, through our faithfulness. (“The Creation,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 86)

In upcoming lessons, you will learn more about how Jesus Christ makes it possible for us to reach our divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. As President Uchtdorf taught, this is done one step at a time:



We have all seen a toddler learn to walk. He takes a small step and totters. He falls. Do we scold such an attempt? Of course not. What father would punish a toddler for stumbling? We encourage, we applaud, and we praise because with every small step, the child is becoming more like his parents.

... Compared to the perfection of God, we mortals are scarcely more than awkward, faltering toddlers. But our loving Heavenly Father wants us to become more like Him, and ... that should be our eternal goal too. God understands that we get there not in an instant but by taking one step at a time. (“Four Titles,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 58)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How does President Uchtdorf’s statement change how you see your faltering, toddler-like steps? In what ways can you invite the Lord to help you continue to move forward?

Want More? (Optional)

Where can I learn more about the power of embracing my divine identity and about how to live up to my divine destiny?



Learn about the power of knowing our divine identity from the experience of a convert to the Church from India. President Joy D. Jones, former Primary General President, shared this experience in her talk “Value beyond Measure” (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 13).



In his talk “Am I a Child of God?” (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 12–14), Elder Brian K. Taylor of the Seventy shared the story of his friend Jen and how she overcame debilitating sorrow and guilt by allowing the Savior to help her accept and believe in her divine nature.

In the video “Our True Identity” (3:38), President Uchtdorf illustrates the power of knowing our divine nature and destiny.

What have Church leaders taught about our Mother in Heaven?

Teachings from Church leaders about our Heavenly Mother can be found in the Gospel Topics essay “Mother in Heaven” (topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

What else do we believe about the nature of God the Father and our potential to become more like Him?



Learn from the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith about the nature of our Heavenly Father by reading “God the Eternal Father” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 37–44).

The Gospel Topics essay “Becoming like God” (topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) expounds on

our belief about our potential to become like our Heavenly Father.

Watch the video "Earthly Father, Heavenly Father" (3:59), and think about the feelings our Heavenly Father might have for each of His children.



LESSON 4 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

The Family Is Central to Heavenly Father's Plan

Modern prophets and apostles have proclaimed that “the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Have you ever considered how the family relates to other core pillars of Heavenly Father’s plan, such as the Creation, the Fall of Adam and Eve, and the Atonement of Jesus Christ? As you study, consider the meaning the following teachings can have for your choices and hopes for your own family.

SECTION 1

How did the Creation of the earth and the Fall of Adam and Eve help bring about Heavenly Father’s eternal purposes for the family?

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



The doctrine of the family begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them. (“The Eternal Family,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 64)

When God spoke to Moses on the mountain, He explained that His work and His glory is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses

1:39). Eternal life is to live with God as He lives, which means living forever as part of an eternal family. This is the greatest gift He can bestow on us (see *Doctrine and Covenants* 14:7).



The Creation of the earth and the Fall of Adam and Eve were important parts of the Father’s plan to

bring about these eternal purposes. In early Church history, the Lord declared the importance of marriage and children in God's plan for the earth. And in the Book of Mormon, Lehi explained to his son the wisdom in Adam and Eve's Fall.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–17 and 2 Nephi 2:22–23, looking for how the Creation and the Fall contributed to the formation and growth of eternal families.

President Russell M. Nelson and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



Grand as it is, planet Earth is part of something even grander—that great plan of God. Simply summarized, the earth was created that families might be. ("The Creation," *Ensign*, May 2000, 85)



The Fall was an essential part of Heavenly Father's divine plan. Without it no mortal children would have been born to Adam and Eve, and there would have been no human family to experience opposition and growth, moral agency, and the joy of resurrection, redemption, and eternal life. ("The Atonement of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, Mar. 2008, 35)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How can understanding these grand purposes of the Creation and the Fall influence your efforts in building your own eternal family?

SECTION 2

How does the Atonement of Jesus Christ make eternal families possible?

The Fall of Adam and Eve introduced to our world the conditions of sin and death. Both separate us from God and the possibility of eternal life with our families.

In the Book of Mormon, Lehi describes Jacob's young life as filled with affliction and sorrow because of his brothers (see 2 Nephi 2:1). Lehi also died when Jacob was relatively young. Despite these family challenges, Jacob found hope in his knowledge of a future sacrifice to be made by Jesus Christ to help all of us and our families escape death and hell.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read 2 Nephi 9:6–8, 10, 18, and consider marking the prophet Jacob's words and feelings about how the Atonement of Jesus Christ overcomes sin and death.

President Julie B. Beck, former General Relief Society President, and President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency taught about how the

Atonement of Jesus Christ allows families to be eternal:



The Atonement [of Jesus Christ] allows for the family to be sealed together eternally. It allows for families to have eternal growth and perfection. The plan of happiness, also called the plan of salvation, was a plan created for families. ("Teaching the Doctrine of the Family," *Ensign*, Mar. 2011, 12)



Our loving Heavenly Father knows our hearts. His purpose is to give us happiness (see 2 Nephi 2:25). And so He gave the gift of His Son to make possible the joy of family bonds that continue forever. Because the Savior broke the bands of death, we will be resurrected. Because He atoned for our sins, we can, by our faith and repentance, become worthy of the celestial kingdom, where families are bound together in love forever. ("The Hope of Eternal Family Love," *Ensign*, Aug. 2016, 4)



Record Your Thoughts

If you had the opportunity to express your feelings to the Savior about His role in allowing you to have an eternal family, what might you say to Him? Why?

SECTION 3

How central is the family in your plan?

Explaining the centrality of the family in eternity, Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



The entire theology of our restored gospel centers on families and on the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. . . .

We also believe that strong traditional families are . . . the basic units of eternity and of the kingdom and government of God.

We believe that the organization and government of heaven will be built around families and extended families. ("Why Marriage and Family Matter—Everywhere in the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 41)



Because of the importance of the family in Heavenly Father's plan, we can expect Satan to oppose our efforts to create and strengthen our families. Our understanding of Heavenly Father's plan can help us see through Satan's deceptions. Elder Hales taught:



Eternal perspective informs our daily decisions and actions. It steadies our minds and souls. When persuasive but eternally flawed opinions swirl about us, we are steadfast and immovable. . . .

Marriage and family are under attack because Satan knows that they are essential to obtaining eternal life—as essential as the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Having failed to destroy any of those pillars of the plan, Satan seeks to destroy our understanding and practice of marriage and family. ("The Plan of Salvation: A Sacred Treasure of Knowledge to Guide Us," *Ensign*, Oct. 2015, 28, 29)



Record Your Thoughts

How can you make your family more central in your life? How can you invite the Lord's power into your efforts to create or strengthen your own eternal family?

Want More? (Optional)

How does the Atonement of Jesus Christ enable me to have an eternal family?



Elder Kim B. Clark of the Seventy shared how Jesus Christ, by virtue of His Atonement, made it possible for a young couple to become an eternal family in his article "The Redeeming and Strengthening Power of the Savior's Atonement" (*Ensign*, Apr. 2016, 50–55).

Is prioritizing family really possible in our day? Can it really bring me happiness?

Watch the video "Home and Family" (5:55) to learn from families around the world who are striving to keep family a central part of their personal lives.

Where can I learn more about the importance of family in God's plan?



President Nelson taught about the centrality of the family in God's plan and in his own life in the article "Faith and Families" (*Ensign*, Mar. 2007, 36–41).



President Beck emphasized the central place of the doctrine of the family in Heavenly Father's plan and discussed threats to the family in "Teaching the Doctrine of the Family" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Mar. 2011, 12–17).



In his talk "Why Marriage, Why Family" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 50–53), Elder D. Todd Christofferson taught about the critical role marriage and family have played throughout human history and why these institutions must be protected in our day.



LESSON 5 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Our Mortal Experience and the Gift of a Physical Body

Have you ever marveled at the miracle of your physical body and all that it can do? On the other hand, have there been times when you have felt frustrated by challenges you experience because of your body? As you study, consider how our physical bodies are connected to the purpose of our mortal experience in God's plan of happiness.

SECTION 1

How is my physical body essential to my eternal progression?

Our physical bodies were created in the image of God (see Genesis 1:26–27). President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency explained, “The purpose of mortal life and the postmortem growth that can follow it is for the offspring of God to become like He is” (“The Great Plan,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 94).

So, what do we need to experience in mortal life to become like God? Two important elements are mentioned in the following statement from the family proclamation: “In the premortal realm, [we] . . . accepted [God’s] plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain

earthly experience to progress toward perfection” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



Watch the video “God’s Greatest Creation” (2:51), and consider the miracle that your physical body is and some of its sacred purposes.

In a revelation about the pre-earth life, Abraham was shown the Council in Heaven (see *Abraham* 3:22–28). At that time he learned an important truth about our mortal life.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read *Abraham* 3:24–26, and look for what Abraham learned about one of the purposes for us coming to earth and receiving a physical body. (It may help to know that our “first estate” refers to our premortal life, and our “second estate” refers to the time between our mortal birth and the Final Judgment.)

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about how having a physical body is part of us being proved, or tested, in mortality:



If, then in the course of our mortal experience, we chose to “do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God [should] command [us]” [*Abraham* 3:25], we would have kept our “second estate” [*Abraham* 3:26]. This means that by our choices we would demonstrate to God (and to ourselves) our commitment and capacity to live His celestial law while outside His presence and in a physical body with all its powers, appetites, and passions. Could we bridle the flesh so that it became the instrument rather than the master of the spirit? Could we be trusted both in time and eternity with godly powers, including power to create life? Would we individually overcome evil? Those who did would “have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever” [*Abraham* 3:26]—a very significant aspect of that glory being a resurrected, immortal, and glorified physical body. No wonder we “shouted for

joy” at these magnificent possibilities and promises [*Job* 38:7]. (“Why Marriage, Why Family,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 51)

Because of Jesus Christ, we can one day receive an immortal, perfect body like our Father in Heaven has (see *Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22). This is the only type of body in which we can “receive a fulness of joy” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 93:33–34; 138:17). The Prophet Joseph Smith also taught that true happiness involves having a physical body:



We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 211)

As noted earlier in the statement shared from the family proclamation, gaining earthly experience is also important in progressing toward perfection and becoming like God. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how our physical bodies amplify our mortal experience:



Our physical bodies make possible a breadth, a depth, and an intensity of experience that simply could not be obtained in our pre-mortal existence. Thus, our relationships with other people, our capacity to recognize and act in accordance with truth, and our ability to obey the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ are amplified through our physical bodies. In the school of mortality, we experience tenderness, love, kindness, happiness, sorrow, disappointment, pain, and even the challenges of physical limitations in ways that prepare us for eternity. Simply stated, there are lessons we must learn and experiences we must have, as the scriptures describe, “according to the flesh” (1 Nephi 19:6; Alma 7:12–13). (“We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 41)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How would you explain why our physical bodies are important in Heavenly Father's plan of happiness?



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Alma 41:11 and 1 Corinthians 2:14, and consider marking words or phrases that describe succumbing to the natural man in us.

SECTION 2

Why is it difficult to master some of my physical desires and appetites?



Our Heavenly Father has placed certain appetites in our bodies to perpetuate life and help fulfill His plan. Part of our mortal testing "is to determine if the appetites of [our] body can become mastered by the spirit that dwells within it" (Russell M. Nelson, "Your Body: A Magnificent Gift to Cherish," *New Era*, Aug. 2019, 5).

Each of us is influenced by the natural man. (Note that *natural man* is a term that refers to both men and women.) This is the mortal part of us that allows our physical appetites and worldly desires to go unchecked and to overcome our desires and efforts to become like God (see Guide to the Scriptures, "Natural Man," scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Elder Bednar added to our understanding of the natural man when he taught:



To some degree, the natural man . . . is alive and well in each of us (see Mosiah 3:19). The natural man or woman is unrepentant, is carnal and sensual (see Mosiah 16:5; Alma 42:10; Moses 5:13), is indulgent and excessive, and is prideful and selfish. . . .

As sons and daughters of God, we have inherited divine capacities from Him. But we presently live in a fallen world. The very elements out of which our bodies were created are by nature fallen and ever subject to the pull of sin, corruption, and death. Consequently, the Fall of Adam and its spiritual and temporal consequences affect us most directly through our physical bodies. ("We Believe in Being Chaste," 42–43)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Select one of the characteristics of the natural man described in Alma 41:11 or 1 Corinthians 2:14 or in Elder Bednar's statement. How can that characteristic affect a dating or family relationship?

SECTION 3

How can Jesus Christ help me overcome the natural man?



During King Benjamin's sermon to his people, he shared what an angel taught him about the ministry and Atonement of Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 3:5–19).



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Mosiah 3:19, and look for how we can overcome the natural man. (Note that in this context, to *yield* means to submit to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and *saint* refers to someone who

is becoming sanctified or holy—someone who is devoted to God.)

Read the following statements by Elder Bednar and Bishop Gérald Caussé of the Presiding Bishopric, and consider how Jesus Christ can help you overcome the natural man and become more like Him:



Every appetite, desire, propensity, and impulse of the natural man may be overcome by and through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We are here on the earth to develop godlike qualities and to bridle all of the passions of the flesh. ("We Believe in Being Chaste," 43)



Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ not only washes away our sins, but He also provides *enabling* power through which His disciples may "[put] off the natural man" [Mosiah 3:19], progress "line upon line" [2 Nephi 28:30], and increase in holiness so that one day they might become perfect beings in the image of Christ [see Moroni 10:32–33], qualified to live again with God and inherit all the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. ("A Living Witness of the Living Christ," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 40)



Record Your Thoughts

Think about a family relationship you would like to improve. What characteristics of the natural man are hindering that relationship? How can you access the blessings of the Savior's Atonement and yield to the Holy Spirit to put off those characteristics and become more like the Savior?

Want More? (Optional)

Where can I learn more about the purpose of the mortal body?



In her talk "The Sanctity of the Body" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 13–15), President Susan W. Tanner, former Young Women General President, taught about the importance and blessing of the physical body.

How can I learn to better "[yield] to the enticings of the Holy Spirit"? (Mosiah 3:19).



In his talk "What Lack I Yet?" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 33–35), Elder Larry R. Lawrence of the Seventy described how the Holy Spirit can give us tailored guidance to help us put off the natural man and become more like Jesus Christ.



LESSON 6 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Marriage between a Man and a Woman Is Ordained of God

The family proclamation begins with the solemn declaration that “marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Have you ever considered why prophets, apostles, and other Church leaders continually teach this truth? As you study this lesson, consider how exercising faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ can help you in your approach toward marriage.

SECTION 1

How does knowing Heavenly Father’s perspective on marriage help me understand His plan for me?

In recent years, views on marriage have changed in many societies. What are some opinions you have heard recently?

Not long after the Church was organized, Lemuel Copley wanted missionaries to preach the gospel to members of his former religious group, the Shakers. The Shakers rejected marriage, instead believing in a life of total celibacy. The Prophet Joseph Smith

asked the Lord about this and other beliefs and received a revelation.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–16, looking for what the Lord declared about marriage.

As used in verse 15, *ordain* means to order, establish, or appoint by virtue of superior authority (see *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, “ordain”; consider making a note of this definition in your scriptures). Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the

Twelve Apostles emphasized the importance of marriage between a man and a woman when he taught:



A family built on the marriage of a man and woman supplies the best setting for God's plan to thrive—the setting for the birth of children, who come in purity and innocence from God, and the environment for the learning and preparation they will need for a successful mortal life and eternal life in the world to come. . . .

. . . It is [God] who in the beginning created Adam and Eve in His image, male and female, and joined them as husband and wife. . . . Each individual carries the divine image, but it is in the matrimonial union of male and female as one that we attain perhaps the most complete meaning of our having been made in the image of God—male and female. Neither we nor any other mortal can alter this divine order of matrimony. It is not a human invention. Such marriage is indeed "from above, from God" [see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (1953), 42–43] and is as much a part of the plan of happiness as the Fall and the Atonement. ("Why Marriage, Why Family," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 52)

Marriage according to God's law is the most sacred relationship that can exist between a man and a woman. President Howard W. Hunter explained:



Man is not complete without woman. Neither can fill the measure of their creation without the other [see 1 Corinthians 11:1; Moses 3:18]. Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God [see Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–17]. Only through the new and everlasting covenant of marriage can they realize the fulness of eternal blessings [see Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4; Doctrine and Covenants 132:15–19]. ("Being a Righteous Husband and Father," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 49)

Those who enter into and keep the new and everlasting covenant of marriage can obtain the highest degree of glory in the celestial kingdom (see Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4). This is where we "realize the fulness of eternal blessings," also known as exaltation or eternal life. (You will learn more about the new and everlasting covenant of marriage in lesson 10.)



Recall what you have learned in previous lessons about the nature of eternal life. Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



The Father's plan provides us the way to inherit eternal life, the life our heavenly parents lead. In the plan, "neither is the man without the woman, [nor] the woman without the man, in the Lord" [1 Corinthians 11:11]. The very essence of eternal life includes the eternal marriage of man and woman, which is an essential part of becoming like our heavenly parents. ("The Plan of Salvation: A Sacred Treasure of Knowledge to Guide Us," *Ensign*, Oct. 2015, 29)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How would you explain why marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and essential to His eternal plan?

SECTION 2

What if I don't get married in this life or my marriage ends?

Due to various circumstances, some people never marry in this life despite their righteous desires. For some who do marry, their marriage ends in divorce. President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency addressed these circumstances when he taught:



Some who are listening to this message are probably saying, "But what about me?" We know that many worthy and wonderful Latter-day Saints currently lack the ideal opportunities and essential requirements for their progress. Singleness, childlessness, death, and divorce frustrate ideals and postpone the fulfillment of promised blessings. . . . But these frustrations are only temporary. The Lord has promised that in the eternities no blessing will be denied his sons and daughters who keep the commandments, are true to their covenants, and desire what is right. ("The Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 75)

Though some eternal blessings may not be fully experienced in this life, happiness and fulfillment are not on hold for those who are not married. (This topic will be discussed further in a later lesson.) Everyone can experience lasting joy and meaningful growth and make needed contributions now as fully active participants in God's plan and kingdom.



Ponder in Preparation for Class

What would you share with those who feel like their opportunities for happiness and eternal life have been forfeited because they are not married?

SECTION 3

How can exercising faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ help me overcome fear and experience joy in marriage?

Think about questions or concerns you or those around you have about getting married. Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles addressed one reason some people delay their efforts to marry:



Some postpone marriage until education is complete and a job obtained. While widely accepted in the world, this reasoning does not demonstrate faith, does not comply with counsel of modern prophets, and is not compatible with sound doctrine. ("Choose Wisely," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 47)



The adversary often amplifies fears, mortal reasoning, or distractions that can keep people from pursuing marriage. Some people experience fear before or during marriage because they have witnessed challenges that come from divorce. (In upcoming lessons, you will learn principles that can help you strengthen your marriage and prevent divorce.)

What can help you approach marriage with confidence?



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Proverbs 3:5–6; 2 Timothy 1:7; and Doctrine and Covenants 6:36. Consider how these teachings can apply to how you approach marriage.

President Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President, taught:



Sometimes we are afraid to trust because we don't understand God's absolute love and desire to help us. But when we study Heavenly Father's plan and Jesus Christ's mission, we understand that Their only objective is our eternal happiness and progress [see Moses 1:39]. ("That Your Joy Might Be Full," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 86)

As individuals marry and as both spouses continue to exercise faith, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will continue to guide and bless them. Elder Hugh W. Pinnock taught while serving as a member of the Seventy, "God was vitally involved with [Adam and Eve's] marriage, and he is just as concerned and should be just as involved in every marriage today" ("Making a Marriage Work," *Ensign*, Sept. 1981, 37). Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ want to help you succeed in building an eternal marriage.



Record Your Thoughts

President Bonnie H. Cordon, Young Women General President, noted, "We must each ask: How do I keep centered and *lean not* unto my own understanding? How do I recognize and follow the Savior's voice when the voices of the world are so compelling? How do I cultivate trust in the Savior?" ("Trust in the Lord and Lean Not,"

Ensign or *Liahona*, May 2017, 6). Record your thoughts about President Cordon's questions as they relate to marriage. Also consider if there is anything holding you back from pursuing (or more actively pursuing) an eternal marriage.

Want More? (Optional)

How can marriage help my spouse and me become who God intends for us to become?

In the video "Renaissance of Marriage: To Become as One" (2:35), President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency explained how being married to Sister Eyring has helped him "become every good thing [he] ever wanted to be."



Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about how marriage according to God's law can help us overcome selfishness and realize our potential in "The Divine Pattern of Eternal Marriage" (*Ensign*, Sept. 2020, 34–41).

How can I overcome any fears I have about marriage or resist unnecessarily putting it off?



In his talk "Be Not Afraid, Only Believe" (evening with a General Authority, Feb. 6, 2015, ChurchofJesusChrist.org), Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles noted some of the fears young adults have about marriage and reasons for delaying it. He also shared how he and his wife Patricia moved forward in faith in marrying each other.

In what circumstances might divorce be justified?



At the time of the Savior's mortal ministry, there were some Jewish leaders who argued that divorce was justified for even trivial reasons. The Savior addressed their mindset and taught about the sacred nature of marriage (see Matthew 19:3–9). In his talk "Divorce" (Ensign or Liahona, May 2007, 70–73), President Dallin H. Oaks addressed circumstances in which divorce may be justified. He also provided counsel regarding how to avoid divorce.



LESSON 7 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

The Eternal Nature and Purpose of Gender

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that our gender, used in this and following lessons to mean our biological sex at birth (unless otherwise noted), “in large measure defines who we are, why we are here upon the earth, and what we are to do and become” (“Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan,” *Ensign*, June 2006, 83). As you study the material for this lesson, consider how Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation can help you better understand the importance of your eternal identity and purpose as a son or daughter of heavenly parents.

Note: Gender is a sensitive issue for many people. These materials are intended to help you understand Heavenly Father’s doctrine concerning gender and explore how it applies to varying circumstances in our world today. Seek the help of the Spirit to understand the messages God intends for you as you study.

SECTION 1

How can my understanding of gender be strengthened as I better understand Heavenly Father’s plan?

The family proclamation states: “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 premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

The term *gender* can have different meanings for different people. As explained in the Church handbook, “The intended meaning of *gender* in the family proclamation is *biological sex at birth*” (General

Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 38.6.23).

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said of *our creation*:



This [creation of male and female] was done spiritually in your premortal existence when you lived in the presence of your Father in Heaven. Your gender existed before you came to earth. ("The Joy of Living the Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 73)

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency further taught that the "binary creation [of male and female] is essential to the plan of salvation" (in "General Conference Leadership Meetings Begin," Oct. 2, 2019, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



Understanding our heavenly parentage can help us better understand God's plan for us and help us better see the significance of our gender in that plan.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Genesis 1:26–27, and think about what it means to be created in the image of our heavenly parents.

Consider why gender is essential in Heavenly Father's plan. Here are some truths you might reflect on:

The eternal marriage of a man and a woman is essential to becoming like our heavenly parents. The nature of eternal life, or exaltation, is the continuation of families for eternity. This potential can only be reached "through the creative powers inherent in the combination of male and female joined in an eternal marriage (see Doctrine and Covenants 132:19)" (Dallin H. Oaks, in "General Conference Leadership Meetings Begin").

"By divine design, both a man and a woman are needed to bring children into mortality and to provide the best setting for the rearing and nurturing of children" (David A. Bednar, "Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan," *Ensign*, June 2006, 83; see also Genesis 1:28).

Heavenly Father endows men and women with distinct capacities to help them fulfill these and other divine responsibilities in His plan. Men and women need each other to progress and reach their full eternal potential. As Elder Bednar taught:



The natures of male and female spirits complete and perfect each other, and therefore men and women are intended to progress together toward exaltation. . . .

For divine purposes, male and female spirits are different, distinctive, and complementary.

. . . The unique combination of spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional capacities of both males and females were needed to implement the plan of happiness. Alone, neither the man nor the woman could fulfill the purposes of his or her creation. . . .

. . . Just as the unique characteristics of both males and females contribute to the completeness of a marriage relationship, so those same characteristics are vital to the rearing, nurturing, and teaching of children. ("Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan," 83–84)

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Sister Ruth L. Renlund have also taught:



Male and female spirits were created to complement each other. That is why gender is not fluid in the eternities—because it provides the basis for the ultimate gift Heavenly Father can give, His kind of life. ("The Divine Purposes of Sexual Intimacy," *Ensign*, Aug. 2020, 16)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Consider the role of gender from an eternal perspective. How can the plan of salvation help you understand that "gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose"? ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World").

SECTION 2

How can I better understand questions regarding gender?



You may have noticed that in our day there are many different ideas about gender and identity.

Some people separate the term *gender* from *biological sex*. They may speak of their *gender identity*, which can refer to a person's inner sense of their gender even if it is something different from their biological sex. (Note that this is different from sexual orientation, which involves physical, emotional, and sexual attraction to others. Sexual orientation will be discussed in the next lesson.)

A person's understanding of being male or female can be influenced by culture, social norms, and upbringing. For these and other reasons, rigid gender stereotypes can sometimes cause confusion for some people and may even be harmful. For example, some people may worry that their interests and abilities do not match some cultural and social expectations for their biological sex. That does not necessarily mean that there is incongruence between their biological sex and their gender identity. It is important to remember that a number of elements make up our complete individual identity, including our divine identity, biological sex, gifts, aptitudes, desires, and choices.

Even when we understand eternal truths about gender, complex realities in our lives can result in challenging questions or circumstances. Consider the following points:

- For reasons not fully understood, some individuals at some point in their lives, "experience feelings of incongruence between their biological sex and their gender identity. As a result, they may identify as transgender. The Church does not take a position on the causes of people identifying themselves as transgender" (*General Handbook*, 38.6.23).
- Some people may feel uncomfortable or frustrated with the cultural and social expectations that are associated with their biological sex.
- As noted in the *General Handbook*, "In extremely rare circumstances, a baby is born with genitals that are not clearly male or female" (38.7.7). This is often referred to as intersex. This circumstance,

and how it is treated by parents or medical advisors, may or may not impact the individual's gender identity.

As one Church publication on the topic of transgender notes, individuals who identify as transgender "face complex challenges." They "are just as deserving of Christlike love as any of God's children and should be treated with sensitivity, kindness, and compassion" ("Transgender: Do I Belong as a Member of the Church?," ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Instead of allowing a lack of understanding or unrighteous judgment to dictate how we interact with others, we can "try to see others through Christlike eyes" ("Transgender: What Can I Do to Show Christlike Love?," ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How can I be more thoughtful and sensitive when discussing gender with others and when considering the complex realities of others I may know or come in contact with?

SECTION 3

What if I have questions about my gender identity?

If you have questions about your gender or experience feelings of gender incongruence, know that

you are loved by your Heavenly Father and your Savior. They are always there for you. Consider how Jesus Christ and His gospel can help and strengthen you. The Transgender resources published by the Church share these important truths and reminders:

The Savior has a perfect understanding of our unique circumstances. As mortals, our understanding is limited. We can declare with Nephi that we "know that [God] loveth his children; nevertheless, [we] do not know the meaning of all things" (1 Nephi 11:17). ("Transgender: Does the Savior Really Understand What I'm Going Through?," ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

Not everyone around you will be perfect in expressing love, compassion, or sensitivity. In the world today, it is easy to find offense and to cause offense. Significant challenges can make us vulnerable to unintended offenses due to misplaced words or misguided comments. As members of the Church, we are all learning and growing. ("Transgender: Do I Belong as a Member of the Church?," ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

Sister Michelle D. Craig, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, has also taught:



Latter-day Saints come in many shapes and sizes, but "all are alike unto God" [2 Nephi 26:33]. . . . No matter who you are or what you're dealing with, you are invited to the Lord's table. ("Spiritual Capacity," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 21)

Be reassured that all blessings of the gospel are available to any who choose to obey God's commandments. You "can make and keep promises to God" and "walk in His light and participate in His Church" whether or not you experience feelings of gender incongruence ("Transgender: How Can I Contribute to the Lord's Kingdom?," ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

The Church handbook notes that "transgender individuals who do not pursue medical, surgical, or social transition to the opposite gender and are worthy may receive Church callings, temple

recommends, and temple ordinances" (*General Handbook*, 38.6.23). (Note: "A social transition includes changing dress or grooming, or changing a name or pronouns, to present oneself as other than his or her biological sex at birth" [*General Handbook*, 38.6.23].) If you would like to understand more, talk with your bishop or branch president.

Although not against Church policy or doctrine, publicly labeling yourself as transgender could limit your ability to reach your eternal goals. President Oaks cautioned:



Be careful how you characterize yourself. . . . The only *single* quality that should characterize us is that we are a son or daughter of God. That fact transcends all other characteristics. ("How to Define Yourself," *New Era*, June 2013, 48)

Each of us is a child of God with a potential destiny of eternal life. Every other label . . . is temporary or trivial in eternal terms. Don't choose to label yourselves or think of yourselves in terms that put a limit on a goal for which you might strive. ("Where Will This Lead?," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 62)

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also gave the following assurance:



Everyone has gifts; everyone has talents; everyone can contribute to the unfolding of the divine plan in each generation. . . . So many of you are doing your very best. And when you who bear the heaviest burdens of mortality stand up in defense of God's plan to exalt His children, we are all ready to march. With confidence we testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ has anticipated and, in the end, will compensate all deprivation and loss for those who turn to Him. No one is predestined to receive less than all that the Father has for His children. ("Why Marriage, Why Family," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 52)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How can the teachings in this lesson and faith in Jesus Christ help you or someone you know address questions about gender?

Want More? (Optional)

How can I fulfill my divine potential in Heavenly Father's plan?



Consider reading the talk "Men and Women and Priesthood Power" by President M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Sept. 2014, 28–33). As you read, think about your role in the Church and your divine potential as a daughter or son of God.

What is the Church's position on transitioning one's gender?

Read the section "Transgender Individuals" from the *General Handbook* (section 38.6.23) to learn more about the Church's position on transitioning one's gender.

How can I learn more about gender incongruence and how to support someone who experiences these feelings?

On [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org) and the Gospel Library app, you can find helpful resources for understanding gender incongruence (see "Transgender: Understanding Yourself") and for understanding how to support someone who experiences these feelings (see "Transgender: Supporting Others").



LESSON 8 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Seeking to Understand Same-Sex Attraction and Loving Our LGBT Brothers and Sisters

We are all beloved children of heavenly parents. We are also individuals with unique talents, abilities, and experiences. Some of God's children experience same-sex attraction or identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, which is often abbreviated LGBT. (The topic of transgender was discussed in lesson 7.) How have you responded to others who experience same-sex attraction or identify as LGBT? If you experience same-sex attraction, what has your experience been like with family, friends, and members of the Church? As you study this material, consider what you can do to be more like the Savior and treat all of Heavenly Father's children with love, inclusion, and respect.

SECTION 1

How can the Savior help me show love and respect for those who experience same-sex attraction?

President Thomas S. Monson taught that “love is the very essence of the gospel, and Jesus Christ is our Exemplar” (“Love—the Essence of the Gospel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 91). Near the conclusion of His mortal ministry, the Savior emphasized the importance of truly loving all by giving His disciples “a new commandment.”



Study in Preparation for Class

Read John 13:34–35, and ponder how this commandment can guide you as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Like other members of the Church, those who experience same-sex attraction have friends and families, hopes and dreams, and strengths and weaknesses, and they are striving to navigate the challenges

of life as best they can. Unfortunately, some who experience same-sex attraction or identify as LGBT feel they do not have a place in the Lord's Church. Instead of feeling loved and supported, many feel rejected, isolated, confused, and afraid.



While serving as a counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, Sister Carol F. McConkie taught:



We just cannot be or even call ourselves a disciple of Christ if we are not helping others along that [covenant] path. The gospel of Jesus Christ does not marginalize people. People marginalize people. . . .

If we're going to build the kingdom of God on the earth, we need everyone to come, to come and do their part. ("Lifting Others" [2:49], ChurchofJesusChrist.org)



Think for a minute about the Savior's life. When did He show love for those who struggled to feel accepted? Consider how putting the following suggestions into practice could help you better follow

the Savior's example of love when discussing and when interacting with individuals who experience same-sex attraction:

1. Speak and act with genuine care, concern, and compassion. Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "As a church, nobody should be more loving and compassionate. . . . Let us be at the forefront in terms of expressing love, compassion, and outreach." ("Let Us Be at the Forefront" [0:59], ChurchofJesusChrist.org; watch the video to learn more.)

2. Build understanding by listening without judgment. President Jean B. Bingham of the Relief Society General Presidency shared, "One of the best ways to form a good relationship is not to come in with assumptions or preconceived notions, keeping an open mind and open heart." (To learn more, watch "Focus on the One" [2:32], ChurchofJesusChrist.org.)

3. Recognize that same-sex attraction and feelings are real. Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled: "One thing that's always important is to recognize the feelings of a person, that they are real. That they are authentic. That we don't deny that someone feels a certain way." (To learn more, watch "Feelings Are Real and Authentic" [0:47], ChurchofJesusChrist.org.)

4. Focus on eternal identity. President Russell M. Nelson said: "Not all labels are of equal value. But if any label replaces your most important identifiers, the results can be spiritually suffocating. . . . No identifier should *displace, replace, or take priority over* these three enduring designations: 'child of God,' 'child of the covenant,' and 'disciple of Jesus Christ'" ("Choices for Eternity" [worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022], ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

5. Honor the commandments and covenants of God.

Loving others as the Savior loves us does not mean that we agree with, endorse, or promote behaviors that are contrary to the commandments of God. Jesus Christ taught, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Elder D. Todd Christofferson explained that the first commandment, to love God, is first for a reason: “Putting the first commandment first does not diminish or limit our ability to keep the second commandment [to love our neighbor]. To the contrary, it amplifies and strengthens it. . . . Our love of God elevates our ability to love others more fully and perfectly because we in essence partner with God in the care of His children” (“The First Commandment First” [Brigham Young University devotional, Mar. 22, 2022], 2, speeches.byu.edu).

We show love for God and others when we clearly communicate His doctrine and commandments in sensitive ways. As stated in the Same-Sex Attraction resources published by the Church:

There is no change in the Church’s position of what is morally right. But what is changing—and what needs to change—is helping Church members respond sensitively and thoughtfully when they encounter same-sex attraction in their own families, among other Church members, or elsewhere. (In Same-Sex Attraction: Church Leaders, “Communicate Doctrine with Love,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Dallin H. Oaks, “What Needs to Change” [video], ChurchofJesusChrist.org)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Take a few minutes to reflect on your attitude and actions toward those who experience same-sex attraction or identify as LGBT. Would you say that your thoughts, words, and deeds have

been consistent with the Lord’s commandment to “love one another; as I have loved you?” (John 13:34). If you experience same-sex attraction, consider how you can show love to those who lack understanding of and compassion for your experience.

SECTION 2

What are some things I should know about same-sex attraction?

Such terms as *gay* (sometimes used generally to refer to someone attracted to others of their own sex, and otherwise used specifically to refer to a man attracted to men), *lesbian* (a woman attracted to women), or *bisexual* (a man or woman attracted to both sexes) may be used to indicate a feeling, an identity, or a lifestyle. Remember that regardless of the term or terms a person uses to identify his or her sexual feelings or orientation, our most important identity is as a “beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



The development of our sexuality is complex and is influenced by many factors. Feelings of same-sex attraction can vary in intensity, can fluctuate over time, and are not the same for everyone. The Church has no official position on what causes same-sex attraction. (See “Same-Sex Attraction: Individuals,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org.)

Out of deep love for His children, Heavenly Father has given us the law of chastity and commanded that sexual relations take place “only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”). This law protects the sacred purposes of sexuality in God’s plan and applies to all of God’s children. Heavenly Father has ordained sexual relations to take place between a man and a woman within the marriage covenant “for the creation of children and for the expression of love” (Gospel Topics, “Chastity,” topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

In response to social pressure to alter teachings regarding the law of chastity, Elder D. Todd Christofferson stated:



The law of chastity has applied since the very beginning. . . . Our doctrine—not just belief, but doctrine—that sexual relations are only appropriate and lawful in the Lord’s eyes between man and woman legally and lawfully married is unchanged and will never change. (In Sarah Jane Weaver, “Church’s Doctrine on Chastity Will Never Change, Says Elder Christofferson,” *Church News*, Feb. 5, 2015, ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

It is important to distinguish between feelings and behaviors. Experiencing same-sex attraction or being gay, lesbian, or bisexual does not make a person sinful, bad, or broken; however, acting on these feelings by breaking the law of chastity is a violation of Heavenly Father’s commandments.



Speaking about the Church’s position on same-sex attraction, President M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believes that “the experience of same-sex attraction is a complex reality for many people. The attraction itself is not a sin, but acting on it is. Even though individuals do not choose to have such attractions, they do choose how to respond to them” [see Same-Sex Attraction: Individuals, “Is Feeling Same-Sex Attraction a Sin?” section, ChurchofJesusChrist.org]. (“The Lord Needs You Now!,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2015, 29)

The Lord’s mercy is available to any who have broken the law of chastity. If they choose to come to Him and repent, He will forgive them.

If Church members who experience same-sex attraction or identify as LGBT keep their covenants, they can fully participate in the Church, hold callings, and worship in the temple (see D. Todd Christofferson, “LGBT People Who Live God’s Laws Can Fully Participate in the Church” [0:48], ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Doctrine and Covenants 97:8).

If you experience same-sex attraction, consider how the resource referenced in the “Want More?” section can bless your life. Also, if you feel comfortable, consider sharing your experience with a trusted family member, friend, or Church leader. Be cautious about labeling yourself publicly in ways that can detract from your eternal goals.



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How can you be blessed by having a better understanding of what Church leaders are teaching about same-sex attraction?

SECTION 3

How do I make sense of all the competing opinions about same-sex attraction?

Today there are many different perspectives about marriage, family, same-sex attraction, and LGBT topics. As we learn about these topics, it is important to seek to better understand Heavenly Father's eternal perspective.

President Bingham taught the following:



The viewpoint that makes all things clear is an eternal perspective: the perfect, all-encompassing perspective of our Heavenly Father. . . .

From His vantage point, God sees us and everything around us "as they really are, and . . . as they really will be" [Jacob 4:13]. His viewpoint is long term rather than being limited to the here and now, allowing Him to see our divine potential rather than just our present or past condition. And He looks at all His creations through the lens of love. ("How to Be Happy Now—and Forever" [Brigham Young University devotional, Dec. 10, 2019], 2, speeches.byu.edu)

As you read the following truths and supporting statements by prophets and apostles, consider how they can help you to further develop an eternal perspective on same-sex attraction.

1. Heavenly Father loves all of His children (see 1 Nephi 11:17; 1 John 4:9–10, 16).

President Monson taught:



Heavenly Father loves you—each of you. That love never changes. . . . It is there for you when you are sad or happy, discouraged or hopeful. God's love is there for you whether or not you feel you deserve love. ("We Never

Walk Alone," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 123–24)

2. The Savior has a perfect understanding of our experiences and knows how to help and strengthen each of us (see Alma 7:11–12).

President Oaks said:



Our Savior experienced and suffered the fulness of all mortal challenges. . . . He therefore knows our struggles, our heartaches, our temptations, and our suffering, for He willingly experienced them all as an essential part of His Atonement. And because of this, His Atonement empowers Him to succor us—to give us the strength to bear it all. ("Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 61–62)

3. We all have a place in the Savior's Church and in Heavenly Father's eternal plan of happiness (see Psalm 84:11–12; 1 Corinthians 12:12–26; Mosiah 2:41).

President Ballard explained:



I want anyone who is a member of the Church who is gay or lesbian to know I believe you have a place in the kingdom and I recognize that sometimes it may be difficult for you to see where you fit in the Lord's Church, but you do. ("Questions and Answers" [Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 14, 2017], 3, speeches.byu.edu)

Some who experience same-sex attraction have also wondered how they fit into Heavenly Father's plan of happiness after this life. Prophets have reassured us that our loving Heavenly Father will bless all those who turn to and remain faithful to Him. Elder Ulisses Soares has counseled:



The same principles apply to those of you who are experiencing same-gender attraction and feel discouraged and helpless. And

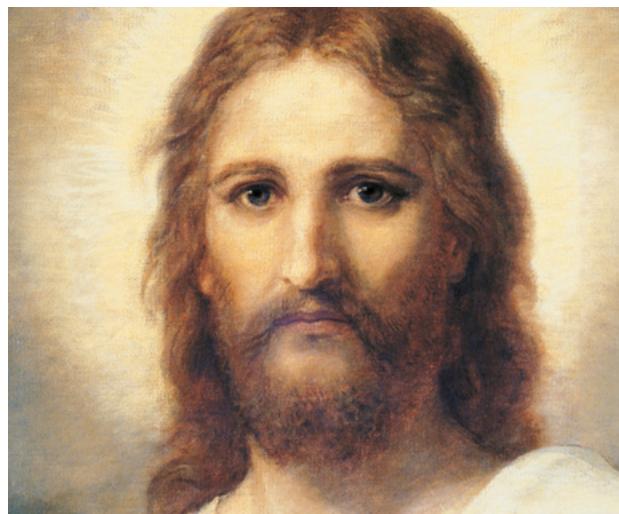
maybe for this reason some of you are feeling that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not for you anymore. If that is the case, I want to assure you that there is always hope in God the Father and in His plan of happiness, in Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice, and in living Their loving commandments. In His perfect wisdom, power, justice, and mercy, the Lord may seal us His, that we may be brought to His presence and have everlasting salvation, if we are steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments [see Alma 1:25] and are always abounding in good works [see Mosiah 5:15]. ("Take Up Our Cross," *Ensign*, Nov. 2019, 114)

4. As we focus on Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and keep our covenants with Them, we can be sustained by hope (see 2 Nephi 31:20).

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then of the First Presidency, testified:



We hope in Jesus the Christ, in the goodness of God, in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, in the knowledge that prayers are heard and answered. . . . This type of hope . . . refreshes us with courage during difficult challenges and gives strength to those who feel threatened by enclosing walls of fear, doubt, and despair. ("The Infinite Power of Hope," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 23)



Discuss in Preparation for Class

With a family member or trusted friend, discuss what you learned and felt as you read this material. Come to class ready to share any insights you gain from your discussion.

Want More? (Optional)

Where can I learn more about the Church's teachings on same-sex attraction?

The Church resource "Same-Sex Attraction" (available at ChurchofJesusChrist.org/topics/gay) includes answers to frequently asked questions, statements by Church leaders, videos, stories of Church members who experience same-sex attraction or identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and counsel for their family and friends. Additional Church resources can be found in Gospel Topics, "Same-Sex Attraction" (topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



LESSON 9 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Uniting Families for Eternity

President Russell M. Nelson promised, “Your worship in the temple and your service there for your ancestors will bless you with increased personal revelation and peace and will fortify your commitment to stay on the covenant path” (“As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2018, 7). As you study this lesson, consider what you can do to more fully realize these blessings for yourself and how you can help unite God’s eternal family by performing temple ordinances on behalf of your deceased ancestors.

SECTION 1

In what ways do priesthood ordinances and covenants strengthen me?

The truth that “the family is central to [Heavenly Father’s] plan” has several profound implications (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org). President Joseph F. Smith taught about one of these implications:



There has got to be a welding together and a joining together of parents and children and children and parents until the whole chain of God’s family shall be welded together into one chain, and they shall all become

the family of God and His Christ. (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [2011], 411)

Latter-day prophets have declared how this “welding together” of individual families—and ultimately the family of God—can take place: “Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”).

These sacred priesthood ordinances and covenants are more than simply tasks to complete. Through these ordinances and covenants, God desires to empower us to become more like Him (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–22) and worthy of eternal life with Him and with our families.



The Panama City Panama Temple

Regarding the power of temple ordinances and covenants, President Nelson taught:



The end for which each of us strives is to be endowed with power in a house of the Lord, sealed as families, faithful to covenants made in a temple that qualify us for the greatest gift of God—that of eternal life. The ordinances of the temple and the covenants you make there are key to strengthening your life, your marriage and family, and your ability to resist the attacks of the adversary. (“As We Go Forward Together,” 7)

He later shared:

Those who are endowed in the house of the Lord receive a gift of God’s priesthood power by virtue of their covenant, along with a gift of knowledge to know how to draw upon that power. . . .

. . . Every time you worthily serve and worship in the temple, you leave armed with God’s power and with His angels having “charge over” you [Doctrine and Covenants 109:22]. (“Spiritual Treasures,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 77, 78)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

In what ways have priesthood ordinances and covenants empowered or strengthened you and your family?

SECTION 2

What effect can doing family history and performing temple ordinances on behalf of my deceased ancestors have on my life?

The Lord promised to send the prophet Elijah in the last days to restore the authority needed for families to be united eternally.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Malachi 4:5–6, and notice the effect Elijah’s coming would have on the world.

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that the word *turn* as used in verse 6 “should be translated *bind*, or *seal*” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 472). Malachi’s prophecy recorded in these verses was fulfilled in part in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836. On that day, the prophet Elijah came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and conferred upon them the sealing keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood (see Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16). By virtue of this authority, ordinances performed on the earth can endure through death and “become valid in the celestial

kingdom of God” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Fielding Smith* [2013], 219).



Consider ways you have been blessed by the restoration of the sealing keys. By these keys, husbands and wives, as well as parents and children, can be united eternally. These keys also miraculously open the doors to do temple service for our deceased ancestors.

The Lord taught Joseph Smith and other early Church members about the importance of performing ordinances for their deceased ancestors in the temple.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Doctrine and Covenants 128:15, and look for how our salvation is intertwined with our ancestors' salvation.

By discovering our deceased ancestors and performing temple ordinances on their behalf, we are becoming more like the Savior. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught how we become like saviors for those family members:



Just as our Redeemer gave His life as a vicarious sacrifice for all men, and in so doing became our Savior, even so we, in a small measure, when we engage in proxy work in

the temple, become as saviors to those on the other side who have no means of advancing unless something is done in their behalf by those on earth. (“Closing Remarks,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 105)

Consider how you are giving of yourself when you participate in family history and temple service.

The Lord promises us important blessings if we choose to participate in this sacred work. Watch the video “The Promised Blessings of Family History” (3:24), and listen for one or more blessings that you want to see fulfilled in your own life.



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Why do you think our ancestors' salvation is necessary for our own salvation and perfection? Which blessings associated with temple and family history service do you need the most right now?

SECTION 3

How can I unite my family and assist Heavenly Father in uniting His family through temple ordinances?



Our Heavenly Father is anxious to help you in uniting your family and all of His family through temple ordinances. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained one gift that Heavenly Father provides to support us in this sacred work:



Elder Russell M. Nelson has taught that the Spirit of Elijah is “a manifestation of the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family” (“A New Harvest Time,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 34). This distinctive influence of the Holy Ghost draws people to identify, document, and cherish their ancestors and family members—both past and present.

The Spirit of Elijah affects people inside and outside of the Church. (“The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 25)

Watch the video “Gathering God’s Family” (3:33), and think about what more you can do to participate in temple and family history service.



Act

FamilySearch.org and the FamilySearch Family Tree app are great places to engage in efforts to “identify, document, and cherish” your deceased ancestors (David A. Bednar, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” 25). (The FamilySearch Family Tree app can be found in the app store on your electronic device.) Spend some time getting familiar with or using one of these resources. You can build your family tree, add memories and photos of family members, identify gospel ordinances that deceased ancestors need to

receive, index records so others can identify their ancestors, and more. If needed, contact a temple and family history consultant in your ward or branch to help you.

Want More? (Optional)

How can I learn more about the ordinances of the temple?

Go to ChurchofJesusChrist.org/temples to learn more about the temple endowment, proxy baptism and confirmation, preparing to go to the temple, and more.

How can family history and temple service bless me and my family?



In their message “Open the Heavens through Temple and Family History Work” (*Ensign*, Oct. 2017, 35–39), President Nelson and Sister Wendy W.

Nelson discussed the importance of temple and family history service. They also taught about the blessings we will receive as we make sacrifices to do this sacred work.



In his talk “Family History and Temple Work: Sealing and Healing” (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 46–49), Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shared how families are helped on both sides of the veil through this essential work.



LESSON 10 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

The New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage

In lesson 6, we learned that marriage is ordained of God. President Russell M. Nelson has also taught that celestial marriage is “the highest and most enduring type of marriage that our Creator can offer to His children,” bringing “greater possibilities for happiness than does any other relationship” (“Celestial Marriage,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 92, 93). As you study this material, consider your own feelings about eternal marriage and what you can do to live worthy of it.

SECTION 1

Why should I strive to have an eternal marriage?

As you think about the marriages of people you know, you may wonder how marriage in the temple differs from civil marriage.

We believe that “the divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Eternal family relationships are made possible by Jesus Christ. President Nelson taught, “The Atonement of Jesus Christ . . . made resurrection a reality for all and made eternal life possible for those who repent of their sins and receive and keep essential ordinances

and covenants” (“Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 40). In the latter days, the Lord has restored the authority, ordinances, and covenants that enable eternal marriages to be established.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4, looking for what Joseph Smith taught about the eternal marriage covenant. (Note: The highest degree of the celestial kingdom is eternal life, or exaltation.)

As used in verse 2, the word *new* means that the covenant has been newly restored in our dispensation. The covenant is also everlasting because it is eternal and it has existed since “before the foundation of the world” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:5). It was part of the covenant that God made with Abraham and his wife Sarah long ago.

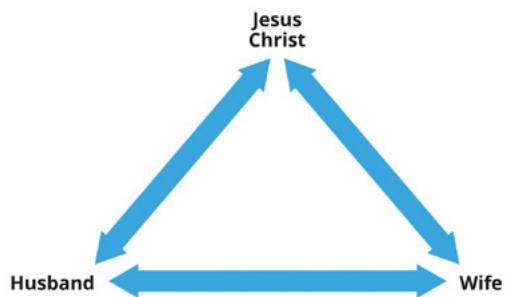
We learn from the Bible Dictionary that “Abraham first received the gospel by baptism (which is the covenant of salvation). Then he had conferred upon him the higher priesthood, and he entered into celestial marriage (which is the covenant of exaltation), gaining assurance thereby that he would have eternal increase [an innumerable posterity]” (Bible Dictionary, “Abraham, covenant of”).

The Lord promised Abraham, “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Genesis 22:17). Celestial marriage includes the blessing of “hav[ing] children in . . . celestial glory” (Joseph Smith, in History, 1838–1856 [Manuscript History of the Church], volume D-1, 1551 [josephsmithpapers.org]).

The Lord further promised Abraham that all of these blessings would be offered to his mortal posterity (see Doctrine and Covenants 132:29–31; Abraham 2:6–11). The portion of the Abrahamic covenant pertaining to eternal marriage and eternal increase is renewed with each individual who enters into “the new and everlasting covenant of marriage” (Doctrine and Covenants 131:2). In other words, through the marriage sealing ordinance, we are promised the same blessings as Abraham.



When a man and a woman are sealed in the temple, they make sacred covenants with God and with each other. These include covenants to remain faithful to each other and to God, to live in Christlike ways, to honor all gospel covenants they have made, and to multiply and replenish the earth.



Consider the meaning of this image as it relates to the covenant of eternal marriage. Regarding this covenant relationship, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



The Lord Jesus Christ is the focal point in a covenant marriage relationship. Please notice how the Savior is positioned at the apex of this triangle, with a woman at the base of one corner and a man at the base of the other corner. Now consider what happens in the relationship between the man and the woman as they individually and steadily “come unto Christ” and strive to be “perfected in Him” (Moroni 10:32). Because of and through the Redeemer, the man and the woman come closer together. (“Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan,” *Ensign*, June 2006, 86)





Discuss in Preparation for Class

If possible, discuss the following questions with someone who has been sealed to his or her spouse in the temple, such as a parent, grandparent, Church leader, or friend. If you are married, you might have this conversation with your spouse. Come to class ready to share something you learned.

- What was it like for you to be sealed in the temple?
- How has entering into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage blessed you and your spouse so far?
- How have your individual efforts to grow closer to God helped you and your spouse grow closer to each other?



You may have noticed in verse 19 that temple marriages must be “sealed . . . by the Holy Spirit of promise” to be eternal. We learn from the Guide to the Scriptures that “the Holy Ghost is the Holy Spirit of Promise (Acts 2:33). He confirms as acceptable to God the righteous acts, ordinances, and covenants of men. The Holy Spirit of Promise witnesses to the Father that the saving ordinances have been performed properly and that the covenants associated with them have been kept” (“Holy Spirit of Promise,” scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

When spouses “abide in [the] covenant” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:19) the Holy Ghost, in His role as the Holy Spirit of Promise, confirms to God that they have kept their covenants, and their marriage becomes eternal. To “abide in [the] covenant,” both spouses must faithfully honor the terms and conditions of their sealing covenants. Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about the importance of honoring these covenants:



As taught in this scripture [Doctrine and Covenants 132:19], an eternal bond doesn’t just happen as a result of sealing covenants we make in the temple. How we conduct ourselves in this life will determine what we will be in all the eternities to come. To receive the blessings of the sealing that our Heavenly Father has given to us, we have to keep the commandments and conduct ourselves in such a way that our families will want to live with us in the eternities. (“The Eternal Family,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 65)



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20, and consider marking what is required beyond a temple sealing ceremony to have an eternal marriage.

In striving to be the best people we can be and keep our covenants, we can look to the example of Jesus Christ. As Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



Our Savior, Jesus Christ, is our great Exemplar when it comes to making and keeping promises and covenants. He came to earth promising to do the will of the Father. He taught gospel principles in word and in deed. He atoned for our sins that we might live again. He has honored every one of His promises.

... Keeping promises is not a habit; it is a characteristic of being a disciple of Jesus Christ....

My question today is, do we stand by our promises and covenants, or are they sometimes half-hearted commitments, casually made and hence easily broken? ("Standing by Our Promises and Covenants," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 53, 54)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How can you be more like the Savior in keeping the sacred covenants and promises you have made with God? What more can you do to keep or prepare to keep your sealing covenants?

Want More? (Optional)

How are eternal family relationships affected by divorce, the cancellation of a sealing, or remarriage?

If you have questions about how eternal relationships might be affected by various family circumstances, read "Sealing Policies" (*General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 38.4, ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency addressed much of what we know and what we do not know about how being sealed to more than one person will be handled in the afterlife in the article "Elder Oaks Interview Transcript from PBS Documentary" (July 20, 2007, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Where can I learn more about temple marriage?



In his talk "Celestial Marriage" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 92–95), President Nelson discussed what temple marriage is, why it matters, and how we can make such marriages eternal.



While serving as a member of the Seventy, Elder Cree-L Kofford discussed the meaning and elements of the sealing ordinance in his article "Marriage in the Lord's Way, Part One" (*Ensign*, June 1998, 7–12).

To learn more about the sealing ordinance, watch the video "What Is a Temple Wedding Like?" (1:22).



LESSON 11 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Choosing an Eternal Companion

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled, “Please get ‘anxiously engaged’ [Doctrine and Covenants 58:27] in spiritual and social activities compatible with your goal of a temple marriage” (“Choose Wisely,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 47). As you study the material for this lesson, consider how faith in the Lord can help you as you seek, choose, and love your eternal companion.

Note: Dating means different things in different cultures. For the purposes of this lesson, dating refers to spending time with someone of the opposite sex while following the standards of the gospel and with the intent of developing a relationship that could eventually lead to marriage.

SECTION 1

How can exercising faith in the Lord help me develop a relationship that could lead to marriage?

Dating can be wonderful and challenging. It gives us opportunities to get to know others, have new experiences, and learn important lessons about ourselves and relationships. Given the importance of marriage, it should not be surprising that we might experience opposition as we date and prepare for marriage. Have you, or has someone you know,

experienced any of the following things that can delay or stop progression toward an eternal marriage?

- Fear of rejection
- Anxiety in social settings
- Lack of opportunity or prospects
- Emotional exhaustion because of failed relationships
- Economic uncertainty
- Singular focus on education or career
- Fear of commitment
- Loss of confidence in marriage

While serving in the Relief Society General Presidency, President Julie B. Beck observed that many young people are placing “less and less importance on forming an eternal family. Many don’t see forming families as *a faith-based work*” (“Teaching the Doctrine of the Family,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2011, 14; emphasis added).



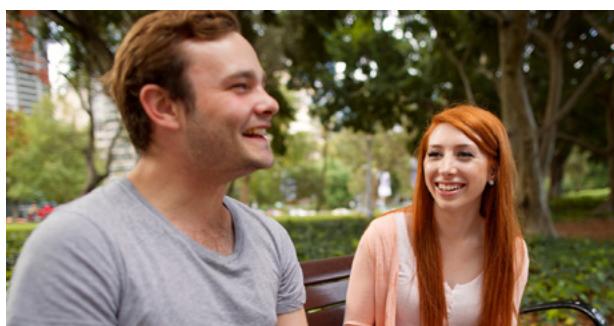
Study in Preparation for Class

Read Proverbs 3:5–6; 2 Nephi 22:2, and ponder how faith in the Lord can help you as you seek for and choose an eternal companion.

The Lord cares deeply about your experiences with finding and choosing an eternal companion. He will help you as you exercise faith in Him. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized how our faith in the Savior can influence dating and marriage:



Believe that your faith has everything to do with your romance, because it does. You separate dating from discipleship at your peril. Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, is the only lamp by which you can successfully see the path of love and happiness. (“How Do I Love Thee?,” *New Era*, Oct. 2003, 8)



Exercising faith in Jesus Christ involves taking righteous action. As the Lord taught one group of early Latter-day Saints who wanted to know His will for them, He expects us to use our agency to act in faith.



Study in Preparation for Class

Study Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–28, and think about how you can apply the Lord’s instruction to your efforts to find an eternal companion.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then of the First Presidency, talked about how we can move forward with faith and patience:



What about those who despair of ever finding an eternal companion? First, don’t give up. Go to activities, meet people, and do all you can. I know that dating can be rough. Rejection is one of the most painful things we can experience. . . .

. . . Find simple ways to be together. . . . The goal is to get to know one individual person and learn how to develop a meaningful relationship with the opposite sex. (“The Reflection in the Water” [Church Educational System fireside for young adults, Nov. 1, 2009], ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

God’s promises are not always fulfilled as quickly as or in the way we might hope; they come according to His timing and in His ways. . . . [But] the promises of the Lord, if perhaps not always swift, are always certain. (“Continue in Patience,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 58)

While serving as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, Elder Marlin K. Jensen taught about an important part of the relationship that men and women are to develop in dating:



Friendship is . . . a vital and wonderful part of courtship and marriage. A relationship between a man and a woman that begins with friendship and then ripens into romance and eventually marriage will usually become an enduring, eternal friendship. ("Friendship: A Gospel Principle," *Ensign*, May 1999, 64)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

What can you do or continue to do to exercise more faith in the Lord in your efforts to date and get married? If you are married, how did you exercise faith in the Lord in your efforts to find your eternal companion?

SECTION 2

What qualities should I be looking for and developing in preparation for marriage?

Have you ever made a list of qualities you hope for in a spouse? While dating, it is important that a man and a woman spend plenty of time together getting to know each other's qualities, personality, and values. Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled:



When you date, learn everything you can about each other. Get to know each other's families when possible. Are your goals compatible? Do you share the same feelings about the commandments, the Savior, the priesthood, the temple, parenting, callings in the Church, and serving others? Have you observed one another under stress, responding to success and failure, resisting anger, and dealing with setbacks? Does the person you

are dating tear others down or build them up? Is his or her attitude and language and conduct what you would like to live with every day? ("Meeting the Challenges of Today's World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 45–46)

Even more important than the qualities you hope for in your spouse are the qualities you are developing in yourself. Regarding this, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled:

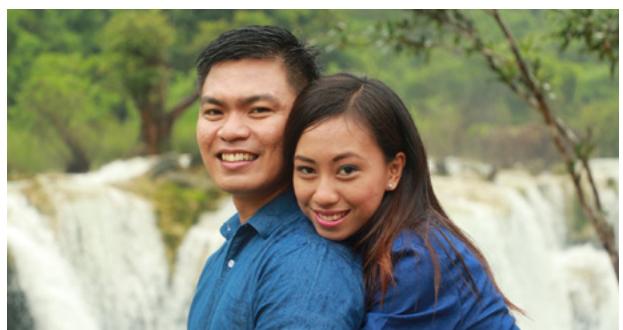


Some young people seem to have a shopping list of characteristics they want in a companion and measure their potential: "Do you have all the things that I require?" If you hope to have an eternal companion who has certain spiritual qualities, then you must strive to develop those spiritual qualities in yourself. Then someone who has those qualities will be attracted to you. (In "Understanding Heavenly Father's Plan," ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Doctrine and Covenants 88:40)

While serving in the Relief Society General Presidency, Sister Carole M. Stephens similarly taught:



Study the life of the Savior and try to be more like Him. If you can develop those Christlike attributes in your life and seek to be more like the Savior, then you will be better prepared to be a spouse. (Face to Face with Elder Holland, Sister Stephens, and Elder Hallstrom [worldwide young single adult broadcast, Mar. 8, 2016], facetoface.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)



While it is important for us to develop Christlike qualities and to look for them in a future spouse, we need to be careful that we do not develop unrealistic expectations of ourselves and others. As Elder Hales taught, “None of us marry *perfection*; we marry *potential*” (“Meeting the Challenges of Today’s World,” 46).



Ponder in Preparation for Class

What would you say are the most important Christlike qualities you would like to have in a spouse? What are you doing to develop those qualities in yourself?

The Lord wants individuals to invest their best efforts and thinking in deciding whom to marry and to seek confirming revelation about the decision. These and other principles of receiving revelation were taught to Oliver Cowdery early in the Restoration.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Doctrine and Covenants 6:22–23 and 9:7–9. As you read, look for principles of receiving revelation that could help someone decide whether to marry a particular person. (See also Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3; 11:12–14.)



SECTION 3

How can I decide whom to marry?

Choosing whom to marry should be a careful and inspired decision. President Thomas S. Monson shared a piece of advice he saw framed in his aunt and uncle’s home: “Choose your love; love your choice” (“Priesthood Power,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 68).

It may help to recognize that we are not searching for a one-and-only predestined love. President Spencer W. Kimball taught, “‘Soul mates’ are fiction and an illusion” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2002, 42). Elder Hales explained that when we are making important life decisions, including about marriage, “Heavenly Father expects us to use our agency, study the situation out in our minds according to gospel principles, and bring a decision to Him in prayer” (“The Holy Ghost,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 105).



Record Your Thoughts

Write a statement summarizing what you learned from these passages about receiving revelation from the Lord.

Want More? (Optional)

What other principles and indicators are there in successfully selecting a spouse?

In his article "Choosing Whom to Marry" (*Ensign*, Aug. 2018, 24–27), Scott R. Braithwaite, an associate professor of psychology at Brigham Young University, wrote about some important principles related to choosing an eternal companion.

Where can I find dating advice for my situation?

You can find several articles about dating and relationships in the young adult section of the June 2020 *Ensign* (pages 64–80). (Note: Several of these

articles are available in digital format only.) You can also watch the video "How Do I Love Thee?" (2:48), in which Elder Holland discusses how we can demonstrate Christlike love in our dating, marriage, and other relationships.

How can I recognize revelation regarding whom to marry?

Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder Michael John U. Teh of the Seventy shared their experiences with receiving revelation to marry their respective spouses in "Covenant Belonging" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 80–83) and "The Balancing Act of Endurance" (*Ensign*, June 2018, 44–47).



LESSON 12 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Nurturing the Marriage Relationship

Have you ever seen a couple with a strong, happy marriage and wondered what the key was to their success? President Gordon B. Hinckley observed, “A good marriage requires time. It requires effort. You have to work at it. You have to cultivate it” (“Life’s Obligations,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1999, 4). As you study the doctrine and principles in this lesson, consider what you can do to prepare yourself for a happy marriage or to better nurture the marriage you have.

SECTION 1

How can my spouse and I build a joyful, eternal marriage?

In a world where many marriages appear to struggle or end in divorce, some may wonder if marital happiness is really possible for them. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles offered the following message of hope:



Let me declare unequivocally, absolutely, and adamantly that not only is there such a thing as a happy marriage, but happy marriages are the rule, not the exception.

Sister Holland and I are living proof that you can not just be happy but that you can be ecstatically happy. . . .

You have to work at a marriage. Every good thing that I know of in this world you have to work at.

God will help you. Of all the things in this world that He will help you with, He will help you with your marriages and your families, because it matters to Him at least as much as it matters to you. (“You Asked—They Answered: Marriage and Family,” *New Era*, Aug. 2016, 3)



Read the following statement by Elder L. Whitney Clayton, who served as a member of the Seventy, about what contributes to a happy and eternal marriage. Consider marking principles you find.



I have observed that in the happiest marriages both the husband and wife consider their relationship to be a pearl beyond price, a treasure of infinite worth. . . . They know that no other relationship of any kind can bring as much joy, generate as much good, or produce as much personal refinement. . . .

. . . Successful eternal marriages are built on the foundation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and adherence to His teachings [see "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," ChurchofJesusChrist.org]. . . .

. . . Happy marriages rely on the gift of repentance. . . .

Humility is the essence of repentance. Humility is selfless, not selfish. . . . Humility means that both husbands and wives seek to bless, help, and lift each other, putting the other first in every decision. . . .

. . . The happiest marriages I have seen radiate obedience to one of the happiest commandments—that we "live together in love" [Doctrine and Covenants 42:45]. ("Marriage:

Watch and Learn," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 83, 84, 85)



Discuss in Preparation for Class

Think of a couple you know that has a happy marriage. Reach out to them and ask them to share principles that have been important to their success. As they talk, record what you learn and be prepared to share during class. If you can't contact someone, watch the video "Expressions of Love" (3:26) and listen for keys to a happy marriage.

SECTION 2

How can following the example of Jesus Christ help me nurture my marriage?

President Russell M. Nelson taught about the importance of nurturing marriage:



Marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other human relationship. Yet some married couples fall short of their full potential. They let their romance become rusty, take each other for granted, allow other interests or clouds of neglect to obscure the vision of what their marriage really could be. Marriages would be happier if nurtured more carefully. ("Nurturing Marriage," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 36)

Among the instruction that the Apostle Paul provided to Church members in Ephesus was counsel regarding marriage.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Ephesians 5:25, 28–31, and think about how following the example of Jesus Christ can help a husband and wife nurture their marriage.



Following the Savior's example can help a husband and wife fulfill their "solemn responsibility to love and care for each other" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://www.churchofjesuschrist.org)). Some efforts to nurture a marriage might be big, but some of the most effective and meaningful gestures are "small and simple" (Alma 37:6). As President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then of the First Presidency, taught, "Great marriages are built brick by brick, day after day, over a lifetime" ("In Praise of Those Who Save," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 78).

President Linda K. Burton, former Relief Society General President, provided some simple questions we can use to assess our efforts to nurture our marriages:



With a little adaptation, these questions can apply to most of us, whether we are married or single, whatever our home situation might be.

- When was the last time I sincerely praised my companion, either alone or in the presence of our children?

- When was the last time I thanked, expressed love for, or earnestly pleaded in faith for him or her in prayer?
- When was the last time I stopped myself from saying something I knew could be hurtful?
- When was the last time I apologized and humbly asked for forgiveness—without adding the words "but if only you had" or "but if only you hadn't"?
- When was the last time I chose to be happy rather than demanding to be "right"? . . .

Will you join me in seeking the help of the Holy Ghost to teach us how we can better lift each other in our complementary roles as covenant sons and daughters of our loving heavenly parents? ("We'll Ascend Together," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 31–32)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Think of a specific example or teaching from the life of the Savior that could help someone prepare for or nurture his or her marriage.

SECTION 3

How do I cleave to my spouse?

In a revelation given in 1831, the Lord gave some general laws of conduct for members of the Church. Included in this was the command "thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (Doctrine and Covenants 42:22; see also Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5).

In the scriptures the word *cleave* means to cling, adhere, stick, glue, or join. "By scriptural definition, then, we find that God expects us to 'cling' to our

spouse or to ‘stick’ with him or her” (Matthew O. Richardson, “Three Principles of Marriage,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2005, 22).

President Spencer W. Kimball taught the following about the phrase “none else” (Doctrine and Covenants 42:22):

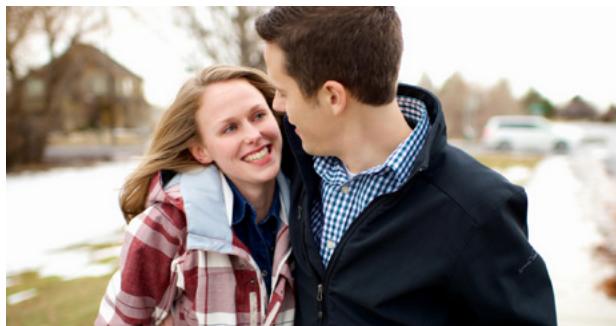


The words *none else* eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes pre-eminent in the life of the husband or wife and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse. (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 250)

Elder Clayton explained how cleaving to our spouse applies as we use social media:



Prophets teach that successful marriage partners are “fiercely loyal” to each other [see Thomas S. Monson, “Priesthood Power,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 68; Gordon B. Hinckley, “Life’s Obligations,” 4]. They keep their social media use fully worthy in every way. They permit themselves no secret Internet experiences. They freely share with each other their social network passwords. They do not look at the virtual profiles of anyone in any way that might betray the sacred trust of their spouse. They never do or say anything that approaches the appearance of impropriety, either virtually or physically. (“Marriage: Watch and Learn,” 84)



Regarding the importance of making your spouse your highest priority, President Nelson taught the following at a priesthood session of general conference. Although this counsel was addressed to husbands, it is equally applicable to both spouses.



Love and care for your wife. Become one with her. Be her partner. . . . No other interest in life should take priority over building an eternal relationship with her. Nothing on TV, a mobile device, or a computer is more important than her well-being. Take an inventory of how you spend your time and where you devote your energy. That will tell you where your heart is. Pray to have your heart attuned to your wife’s heart. Seek to bring her joy. (“We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 68–69)



Act

Follow President Nelson’s invitation to “take an inventory of how you spend your time and where you devote your energy” (“We Can Do Better and Be Better,” 68). What adjustments do you need to make now to be better prepared to cleave to your future spouse or to more fully cleave to your spouse if you are married? Record a plan or a goal you can work on this week.

Want More? (Optional)

Where can I learn more about how to build and preserve a happy and eternal marriage?

In the article “What Happily Married Couples Do” (*Ensign*, Jan. 2012, 12–14), Douglas Brinley shared

what he has learned about happy marriages from his career in marriage counseling.

The video "Enduring Love" (4:17) portrays a husband who struggles through physical limitations to find Christlike ways to love and serve his wife.

In the video "Saving Your Marriage" (2:14), President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency uses an analogy of preserving human life to teach how to heal and strengthen a marriage relationship.

How can I protect my marriage from all forms of infidelity?

In the article "Fidelity in Marriage: It's More Than You Think" (*Ensign*, Sept. 2009, 13–16), Kenneth W. Matheson, a Brigham Young University professor in

the school of social work, discussed how to protect marriage from emotional and spiritual infidelity.

Lori Cluff Schade, a licensed marriage and family therapist, discussed how couples can protect their marriages from the risks of technology-assisted emotional infidelity in the article "Marriage, Technology, and Emotional Infidelity" (*Ensign*, Jan. 2017, 51–55).





LESSON 13 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

The Divine Gift and Sacred Responsibility of Sexual Intimacy

Human sexuality is a sacred gift that is central to the plan of salvation. However, in a world saturated with sexual images and conflicting messages, it can be easy to feel uncertain or confused about the meaning and purpose of sexuality. As you study, seek to better understand the sacred and important role sexual intimacy plays in Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness and consider how this knowledge can bless your life.

SECTION 1

How can I be blessed by understanding that sexual intimacy can be a beautiful and sacred part of marriage?

Our Heavenly Father has given us sexual desires and the power of procreation. President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency explained, “The power to create mortal life is the most exalted power God has given his children” (“The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 74). Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Sister Ruth Lybbert Renlund taught, “Our proper expression of sexuality makes it possible for God’s

plan to unfold on earth and in the eternities, qualifying us to become like our Heavenly Father” (“The Divine Purposes of Sexual Intimacy,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2020, 16).

In Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness, “physical intimacy between husband and wife is intended to be beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife” (*General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 38.6.5, [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org)). Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also explained, “Intimate relations are . . . one of the ultimate expressions of our divine nature and potential and a way of strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife”

("We Believe in Being Chaste," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 42).

Sexual intimacy is an important way to bond wife and husband more closely together. Intimacy can also refer to intellectual, emotional, and spiritual closeness.

In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve began to learn about the importance of intimacy in marriage.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Genesis 2:18, 21–24, and consider how marriage is intended to unite a husband and wife intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. (Note: In this context, the rib can symbolize

proximity and partnership; *cleave* means to cling or remain close to; and "one flesh" [verse 24] can signify an intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and sexual union.)

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught the following about becoming "one flesh" in marriage:



Human intimacy is reserved for a married couple because it is the ultimate symbol of total union, a totality and a union ordained and defined by God. From the Garden of Eden onward, marriage was intended to mean the complete merger of a man and a woman—their hearts, hopes, lives, love, family, future, everything. Adam said of Eve that she was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, and that they were to be "one flesh" in their life together [see Genesis 2:23–24]. ("Personal Purity," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 76)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How can a husband and wife be blessed by viewing sexual intimacy as a symbol of merging "their hearts, hopes, lives, love, family, future, everything"?

SECTION 2

How can viewing the physical body as God does increase my desire and commitment to live the law of chastity?

Because of the beautiful and sacred role God has ordained sexual intimacy to play in marriage, “[He] has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org). The Lord commands us to be morally clean in our thoughts, desires, and actions. This includes refraining from sexual activity before marriage and being totally faithful within marriage (see Exodus 20:14; Alma 39:3–5; Doctrine and Covenants 59:6). This commandment is known as the law of chastity.

It is important to remember that our bodies are not independent of our spirits. The Lord taught that “the spirit and the body are the soul of man” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:15). Regarding the connection between body and spirit, Elder Holland taught:



The body is an essential part of the soul. This distinctive and very important Latter-day Saint doctrine underscores why sexual sin is so serious. We declare that one who uses the God-given body of another without divine sanction abuses the very soul of that individual, abuses the central purpose and processes of life. (“Personal Purity,” 76)

The Apostle Paul provided additional explanation of the sacred connection between the body and spirit when he taught that “the body is not for fornication [sexual activity outside of marriage], but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:13).

**Study in Preparation for Class**

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, and look for how the Lord views our physical bodies.

**Ponder in Preparation for Class**

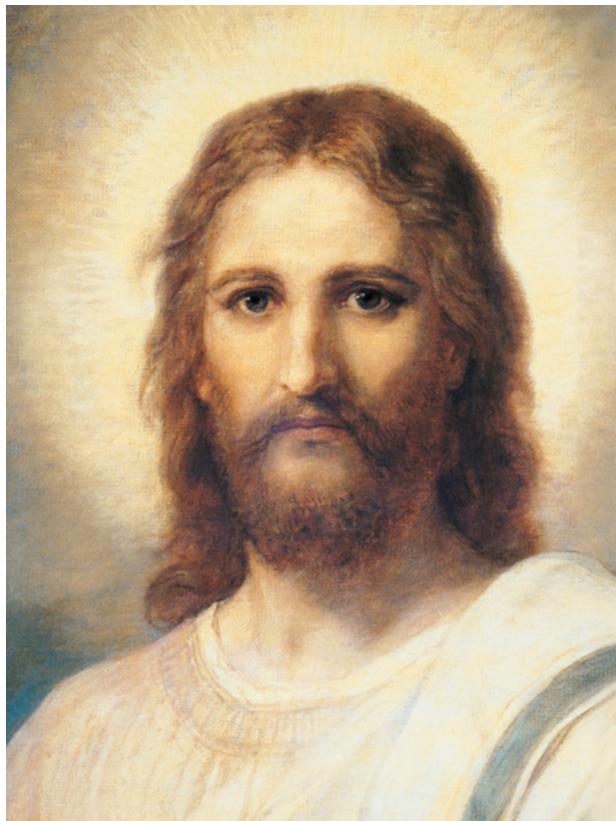
Why is it misleading to view sexual intimacy as merely a physical experience intended to provide physical pleasure?

SECTION 3

What can I do to increase my capacity to live the law of chastity?

As with all of God’s commandments, the law of chastity is intended to bring us greater peace and happiness. For example, the scriptures help us understand that living the law of chastity can increase our confidence in God’s presence, protect us from emotional suffering and damaged relationships, and prevent a loss of the Spirit (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:45; Jacob 2:31–35; Doctrine and Covenants 42:23; 63:16). Keeping the law of chastity can also protect us from contracting harmful diseases and ensure that children are born within the bonds of marriage.

Experiencing sexual feelings is normal. It is important to learn how to channel these feelings in ways the Lord approves. Even if you have the best intentions, there may be times you feel tempted to inappropriately yield to your sexual desires. When you feel tempted, turn to the Lord and He will “make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13; see also Alma 13:28).



Remember, “Jesus Christ . . . knoweth the weakness of man and how to succor them who are tempted” (Doctrine and Covenants 62:1). As you turn to the Lord for help, seek for His guidance regarding practical steps you can take to “bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love” (Alma 38:12).

Sister Wendy W. Nelson, wife of President Russell M. Nelson, taught:



Personal purity is the key to true love. The more pure your thoughts and feelings, your words and actions, the greater your capacity to give and receive true love. . . .

. . . Do whatever it takes to keep your thoughts, feelings, words, and actions pure. Invite the Spirit to guide you. He will help you! . . .

. . . The truth is, the more pure you are, the more marvelous your marital intimacy

will be. (“Love and Marriage” [worldwide devotional for young adults, Jan. 8, 2017], ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave the following counsel to individuals whose relationships are becoming more serious:



You know that you have strong physical emotions and passions that must be controlled and carefully governed. . . . Set your limits. Plant those limits deep into all you do together, so that they cannot be run over or moved aside as you feel strong emotion for each other. (“Complete Honesty, Unselfish Humility” [Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional, Feb. 14, 2017], byui.edu)



If you have broken the law of chastity, remember that through your faith in Jesus Christ and sincere repentance, the Lord can forgive you and make you clean again (see Isaiah 1:16–18; Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43). You will also need to visit with your bishop or branch president. He is authorized to help you resolve the sin with the Lord, and he can provide you additional help and support.



Record Your Thoughts

Record in a notebook or note-taking app the limits or boundaries you have set, or need to set, to help maintain sexual purity for yourself and

those you date. If you are married, what boundaries have you set to ensure you remain completely faithful to your spouse?

Want More? (Optional)

Can you be more specific about what constitutes a sexual transgression and what boundaries I should set to remain pure?

The article "What Exactly Is a Sexual Transgression?" (*New Era*, July 2013, 27) provides examples of behaviors that are violations of the law of chastity.

To learn more about setting boundaries to protect yourself and others, review the section "Keeping the Law of Chastity" in the Gospel Topics article "Chastity" (topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Where can I learn more about how to talk about sexual intimacy in appropriate and healthy ways before and during marriage?

In the article "Conversations about Intimacy and Sex That Can Prepare You for Marriage" (*Ensign*, Aug.

2020, digital only), Chelom E. Leavitt, an assistant professor in the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University, discussed how to talk about sexual intimacy at appropriate times and in appropriate ways.

What if I am married and struggle with finding joy in sexual intimacy?

In the article "They Twain Shall Be One: Thoughts on Intimacy in Marriage" (*Ensign*, Sept. 1986, 49–53), Brent A. Barlow, a former marriage counselor and professor in the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University, offered counsel about marital intimacy.

If I have been a victim of rape or sexual abuse, what is my standing before the Lord?

"Victims of sexual abuse are not guilty of sin and do not need to repent. If you have been a victim of abuse, know that you are innocent and that God loves you" (*For the Strength of Youth* [booklet, 2011], 36). Abuse will be addressed in more detail in lesson 26.



LESSON 14 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Addressing Pornography Use

Our Heavenly Father has given us our physical bodies and sexual feelings as sacred gifts to help us fulfill His plan for our happiness. One way that Satan tempts us to misuse these gifts is by enticing us to view pornography, which is “any depiction, in pictures or writing, that is intended to inappropriately arouse sexual feelings” (Gospel Topics, “Pornography,” topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). As you study this lesson, think about how Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ can empower you to resist or heal from the destructive influences of pornography.

SECTION 1

What has the Lord taught about resisting pornography?

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency taught about the increasing prevalence of pornography:



A primary reason for the growing problem of pornography is that in today’s world, words and images with sexual content and influences are everywhere: they can be found in movies, TV programs, social media, text messages, phone apps, advertisements, books, music, and everyday conversations. As a result, it is inevitable that all of us are being exposed to sexualized messages on a

regular basis. (“Recovering from the Trap of Pornography,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2015, 32)

The production and use of pornography violates the sacredness of our divine nature, our physical bodies, and our sexuality. A recent Church publication notes, “Pornography attacks our happiness with false messages about sex. Healthy sexuality can lead us to find joy and connection, but pornography will isolate us and make us miserable. Pornography objectifies others, encourages selfish gratification, and misrepresents sexuality. It harms us physically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually” (“How Does Using Pornography Affect Me?,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

While giving the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior explained the higher law He expects His disciples

to live. In warning against sexual sin, He taught, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28; see also Doctrine and Covenants 63:16).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles referenced this scripture from Matthew and taught about its application to resisting pornography:



Surely no “commandment,” if we may use that language, could more directly address and condemn the sin of pornography than that passage! We can’t help but wonder if Christ in the meridian of time might have seen such a latter-day threat, not unlike but well beyond whatever salacious or unseemly looks a man or woman might have given one another in the centuries before photos and films, before the Internet. (“The Plague of Pornography” [address given at the Utah Coalition against Pornography, Mar. 12, 2016], utahcoalition.org)



As you read the following statement by President Russell M. Nelson, look for what he invited us to understand in our efforts to battle against the temptation of pornography:



When we understand our nature and our purpose on earth and that our bodies are physical temples of God, we will realize that it is sacrilege to let anything enter that might defile the body. It is truly irreverent to let even the gaze of our precious eyesight or the sensors of our touch or hearing supply the brain with memories that are unclean or unworthy. We will cherish our chastity and avoid “foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown [us] in destruction and perdition” [1 Timothy 6:9]. We will “flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, [and] meekness” [1 Timothy 6:11]—traits that edify the whole soul. (“Your Body: A Magnificent Gift to Cherish,” *New Era*, Aug. 2019, 5–6)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How can understanding our own and others’ divine nature and purpose help us resist pornography?

SECTION 2

How can I resist the temptation to use pornography?

All of us face temptation as we strive to live virtuous lives. Remember that Jesus Christ “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet [remained] without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). He understands us and can help us resist temptation.



Study in Preparation for Class

In the scriptures, the Lord has provided principles we can apply to protect ourselves and our families against evils like pornography (see Alma 39:8–10; Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46). For example, Joseph in Egypt and King David were both confronted with the temptation to engage in sexual sin. Read one or both of the following passages, and consider what you can learn from the experiences of these two men: Genesis 39:7–12; 2 Samuel 11:1–5 (or you might watch the video “To Look Upon” [4:15], which depicts King David’s experience). Consider reading all of 2 Samuel 11 and 2 Samuel 12:1–10, and think about what you can learn from King David’s failed attempt to cover his sin.

President Oaks counseled:



Do all that you can to avoid pornography. . . . Don’t accommodate any degree of temptation. Prevent sin and avoid having to deal with its inevitable destruction. So, turn it off! Look away! Avoid it at all costs. Direct your thoughts in wholesome paths. (“Pornography,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 90)

Consider watching the video “Watch Your Step” (2:35). Think about how your small decisions have the power to either make you more susceptible to temptation or help you avoid it.

Some people wisely use filters or other external resources to help them avoid pornography. Sister Linda S. Reeves, formerly of the Relief Society General Presidency, taught about our greatest filter:



Filters are useful tools, but the greatest filter in the world, the only one that will ultimately work, is the personal internal filter that comes from a deep and abiding testimony of our Heavenly Father’s love and our Savior’s atoning sacrifice for each one of us. (“Protection from Pornography—a Christ-Focused Home,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 16)



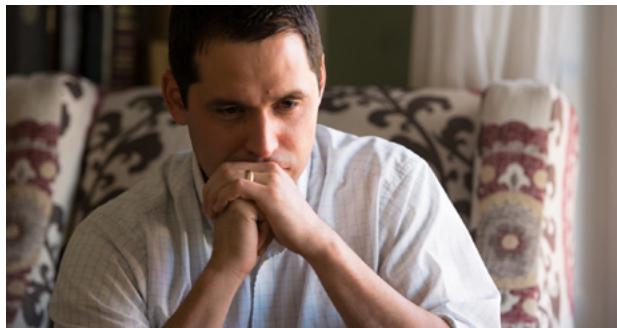
Ponder in Preparation for Class

Prayerfully consider what steps you can take to strengthen your resistance to pornography.

SECTION 3

How can I receive the Savior’s power to heal from the destructive effects of pornography?

Both men and women are being ensnared by pornography. For many people, using pornography isn’t only about gratifying sexual desires. Rather, they use pornography to respond to deeper, underlying needs. They might use it as a way to cope with stress, discomfort, loneliness, boredom, fatigue, anxiety, depression, or feelings of being dismissed or unimportant.



When caught in a destructive cycle of using pornography, some people begin to feel shame or lose hope in their ability to change and be healed. They may feel trapped. Some people try to hide their sins. To those who are hurt by someone else's pornography use, feelings of betrayal, guilt, or anger can feel overwhelming.

Reassuringly, Sister Reeves taught about the Lord's power to heal:



If you are caught in Satan's trap of pornography, remember how merciful our beloved Savior is. Do you realize how deeply the Lord loves and cherishes you, even now? Our Savior has the power to cleanse and heal you. ("Protection from Pornography—a Christ-Focused Home," 15)



Study in Preparation for Class

In the book of Luke we learn of a woman who had suffered for 12 years from "an issue of blood" (Luke 8:43), which she and all of the doctors she visited could not heal. Read Luke 8:43–48, and consider what we can learn from this woman's example about seeking to be healed by the Savior.

Referencing this account, President Nelson taught:



This faithful, focused woman needed to stretch as far as she could to access His power. . . .

When you reach up for the Lord's power in your life with the same intensity that a drowning person has when grasping and gasping for air, power from Jesus Christ will be yours. When the Savior knows you truly want to reach up to Him—when He can feel that the greatest desire of your heart is to draw His power into your life—you will be led by the Holy Ghost to know exactly what you should do [see Doctrine and Covenants 88:63].

When you spiritually stretch beyond anything you have ever done before, then His power will flow into you. ("Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 41–42)

If you have struggled with pornography use or have been hurt by someone else's pornography use, you will need more than your own power to recover from its effects. You need the Lord's power.



Study in Preparation for Class

Take some time to study a resource that interests you in the “Want More?” section of this preparation material. Be prepared to share what you learn in class.

Want More? (Optional)

How does pornography affect those who use it?

Read the article “How Does Using Pornography Affect Me?” ([ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org)) to gain a better understanding of the different aspects of our lives that are affected by pornography use.

Watch the video “What Should I Do When I See Pornography?” (5:45). Although this video was made for children, by watching it you can learn more about how pornography affects our brain chemistry and why it is so important to avoid this temptation. You can also consider how you might teach your children when it’s time about the feelings stirred by pornography.

When would pornography use be considered an addiction?



In his article “Recovering from the Trap of Pornography” (pages 32–38), President Oaks discussed different levels of

pornography use and ways to respond to each level of involvement.

What resources does the Church offer to help in overcoming pornography use?

A resource titled “Help for Me” on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org) offers videos and articles that can help in avoiding pornography use as well as healing from its effects. You can find this resource in the Gospel Library by selecting **Life Help**, then **Pornography**. You could also look into the addiction recovery program at addictionrecovery.churchofjesuschrist.org.

What should I do if someone I am dating is or has been involved with pornography use?

The October 2019 *Ensign* and *Liahona* contain several articles (including digital-only content) for young adults to guide them in responding when someone they are dating struggles with pornography use. For example, see the article “Dating and Pornography” (*Ensign*, Oct. 2019, 69–73).

What should I do if my spouse uses pornography?

Husbands and wives who wonder what to do if their spouse struggles with using pornography can find helpful principles and stories of hope in the resource “Help for Spouses” on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org). You can find this resource in the Gospel Library by selecting **Life Help**, then **Pornography**.



LESSON 15 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

The Commandment to Multiply and Replenish the Earth

What hopes or worries do you have about having children? As you study the following material, pray to deepen your understanding of the sacred purposes that are fulfilled in Heavenly Father’s plan when husbands and wives choose to have children. Consider how a husband and wife can act in faith to honor the divine commandment to multiply and replenish the earth.

SECTION 1

What part does having children play in Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation?

Think about different opinions you have heard people express about having children. Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shared one mother’s perspective:



Many voices in the world today marginalize the importance of having children or suggest delaying or limiting children in a family. My daughters recently referred me to a blog written by a Christian mother (not of our faith) with five children. She commented: “[Growing] up in this culture, it is very hard to

get a biblical perspective on motherhood. . . . Children rank way below college. Below world travel for sure. Below the ability to go out at night at your leisure. Below honing your body at the gym. Below any job you may have or hope to get.” She then adds: “Motherhood is not a hobby, it is a calling. You do not collect children because you find them cuter than stamps. It is not something to do if you can squeeze the time in. It is what God gave you time for” [Rachel Jankovic, “Motherhood Is a Calling (and Where Your Children Rank),” July 14, 2011, desiringgod.org]. (“Children,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 28)

After God created Adam and Eve and joined them in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, He gave them a commandment.

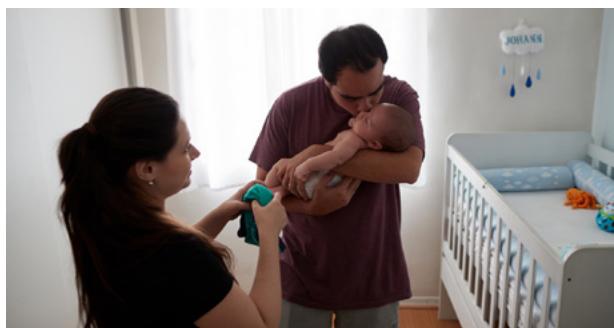


Study in Preparation for Class

Read Genesis 1:27–28, and think about the significance of this being the first commandment God gave to Adam and Eve.

Latter-day prophets have emphasized, “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” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Think about why this commandment needed to be reaffirmed in our day. President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency taught that “Satan’s most strenuous opposition is directed at whatever is most important to God’s plan.” This opposition includes seeking “to discourage childbearing—especially by parents who will raise children in truth” (“Truth and the Plan,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 27).



The gospel of Jesus Christ blesses us with a divine perspective on the importance of children (see, for example, Psalm 127:3 and Matthew 19:13–15). Elder Andersen taught:



It is a crowning privilege of a husband and wife who are able to bear children to provide mortal bodies for these spirit children of God. . . .

When a child is born to a husband and wife, they are fulfilling part of our Heavenly Father’s plan to bring children to earth. The Lord said, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” [Moses 1:39]. Before immortality, there must be mortality. (“Children,” 28)

President M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that having children is part of the purpose of mortality:



The purpose of mortality is to become more like God by gaining physical bodies, exercising agency, and assuming roles that previously belonged only to heavenly parents—roles of husband, wife, and parent. . . .

. . . One essential purpose of mortal life is that we can replicate that family experience ourselves, only this time as parents rather than just as the children. . . .

Heavenly Father wants us to . . . obey His first commandment to “multiply and replenish”—not only to fulfill His plan but also to find the joy that His plan was designed to give His sons and daughters. (“The Opportunities and Responsibilities of CES Teachers in the 21st Century” [evening with a General Authority, Feb. 26, 2016], broadcasts [.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org))



Discuss in Preparation for Class

Discuss the following questions with someone who has children. If you are married and have children, consider discussing these questions with your spouse.

- What have you learned about Heavenly Father from your experience as a parent?
- How has being a parent enriched your life? (Consider learning how other married couples might answer this question by watching the

video "Having Children Enriches Your Life" [4:30].)

SECTION 2

How can my spouse and I decide when to have children and how many children to have?

Married couples face important questions of when to have children and how many to have.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Alma 37:37, and look for counsel that can help a married couple in making these decisions.

Elder Andersen addressed the importance of counseling with the Lord in making these decisions:



When to have a child and how many children to have are private decisions to be made between a husband and wife and the Lord. These are sacred decisions—decisions that should be made with sincere prayer and acted on with great faith. . . .

Brothers and sisters, we should not be judgmental with one another in this sacred and private responsibility. ("Children," 28, 30)



Some people who righteously desire to have children may not have the opportunity in this life. Regarding this, Elder Andersen taught:



The bearing of children can . . . be a heart-breaking subject for righteous couples who marry and find that they are unable to have the children they so anxiously anticipated or for a husband and wife who plan on having a large family but are blessed with a smaller family.

We cannot always explain the difficulties of our mortality. Sometimes life seems very unfair—especially when our greatest desire is to do exactly what the Lord has commanded. As the Lord's servant, I assure you that this promise is certain: "Faithful members whose circumstances do not allow them to receive the blessings of eternal marriage and parenthood in this life will receive all promised blessings in the eternities, [as] they keep the covenants they have made with God" [General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 38.1.4, ChurchofJesusChrist.org]. ("Children," 30)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Why is it important for husbands and wives to counsel with Heavenly Father regarding when to have children and how many children to have?

SECTION 3

How can understanding the sacredness of life in God's plan influence our choices?

Through living prophets, the Lord has emphasized the sacredness of human life and what all children, including those who are unborn, are entitled to:

We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's 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. ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World")



Regarding the sanctity of life, President Russell M. Nelson taught:



No one can cuddle an innocent infant, look into those beautiful eyes, feel the little fingers, and kiss that baby's cheek without a deepening reverence for life and for our Creator. Life comes from life. It is no accident. It is a gift from God. ("Abortion: An Assault on the Defenseless," *Ensign*, Oct. 2008, 37)

The declarations in the family proclamation speak against various practices that are widely accepted today, such as abortion and having children outside of marriage. Regarding abortion, in many parts of the world, this practice is considered acceptable, and millions of abortions are performed each year.

Church leaders have provided the following instruction about abortion:

The Lord commanded, "Thou shalt not . . . kill, nor do anything like unto it" (Doctrine and Covenants 59:6). The Church opposes elective abortion for personal or social convenience. Members must not submit to, perform,

arrange for, pay for, consent to, or encourage an abortion. The only possible exceptions are when:

- Pregnancy resulted from forcible rape or incest.
- A competent physician determines that the life or health of the mother is in serious jeopardy.
- A competent physician determines that the fetus has severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth.

Even these exceptions do not automatically justify abortion. Abortion is a most serious matter and should be considered only after the persons responsible have consulted with their bishops and received divine confirmation through prayer. (*General Handbook*, 38.6.1)

Some unwed parents choose abortion because they feel unable to provide their child with the "secure, nurturing, and consistent relationship" he or she needs. In this circumstance, adoption can be "an unselfish, loving decision that blesses the child, birth parents, and adoptive parents in this life and throughout the eternities" (First Presidency statement, Oct. 4, 2006, as cited in *Ensign*, Oct. 2008, 37).



Ponder in Preparation for Class

What did you learn from the teachings in this section about our Heavenly Father? How could you use what you know about God's plan to explain why "elective abortion for personal or social convenience" is contrary to His will? (*General Handbook*, 38.6.1).

Want More? (Optional)

Where can I learn more about the Church's teachings on topics related to having children?

The following resources provide information on different topics related to having children:

- Abortion: Russell M. Nelson, "Abortion: An Assault on the Defenseless," *Ensign*, Oct. 2008, 32–37; "Abortion," *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 38.6.1, ChurchofJesusChrist.org; Neil L. Andersen, "The Personal Journey of a Child of God," *Liahona*, May 2021, 45–49.
- Adoption: Gospel Topics, "Adoption," topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

- Birth control: *General Handbook*, "Birth Control," 38.6.4; Gospel Topics, "Birth Control," topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
- Infertility: Rachel Sheffield, "Finding Peace from Stories of Infertility in the Bible," *Liahona*, Sept. 2020, ChurchofJesusChrist.org, digital only; James Knab, "Happiness during Infertility," *Ensign*, June 2019, ChurchofJesusChrist.org, digital only.
- Stillborn children: *General Handbook*, "Children Who Die before Birth (Stillborn and Miscarried Children)," 38.7.3.

In the video "Today's Family: Elder Andersen on Children" (2:35), Elder Andersen speaks of the Lord's feelings about those who faithfully bring children into the world.



LESSON 16 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Obtaining Happiness in Family Life through Jesus Christ

Reflect for a minute on times when you have felt happiness and peace in your life. While serving as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, Elder Richard J. Maynes taught, “The joy we experience in this life will be in direct proportion to how well our lives are centered on the teachings, example, and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ” (“The Joy of Living a Christ-Centered Life,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 28). As you study in preparation for class, consider how establishing your personal and family life on Jesus Christ and His teachings can bring you greater happiness, peace, and stability, regardless of your circumstances.

SECTION 1

How can my family and I build a spiritual foundation on Jesus Christ?

When a building is constructed, careful attention is given to its foundation and the type of ground it will rest on. A secure foundation will stabilize the building and protect it against the forces of nature and the stress of daily use. How can this concept relate to you as you build your personal and family life?



The prophet Helaman taught his sons about the need to build their spiritual foundation on Jesus Christ.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Helaman 5:12, and look for how building on “the rock of our Redeemer” can strengthen us against influences that threaten our personal and family life.

As you read the following statement by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, look for how we can build the foundation of our personal and family life on Jesus Christ:



Ordinances and covenants are the building blocks we use to construct our lives upon the foundation of Christ and His Atonement. We are connected securely to and with the Savior as we worthily receive ordinances and enter into covenants, faithfully remember and honor those sacred commitments, and do our best to live in accordance with the obligations we have accepted. And that bond is the source of spiritual strength and stability in all of the seasons of our lives. (“Therefore They Hushed Their Fears,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 48)

While serving in the Presidency of the Seventy, Elder Donald L. Hallstrom taught the following about building on the foundation of Jesus Christ:



All the tools you need to build, repair, or strengthen your foundation are available to you. . . . They include consistent, quality prayer; daily gospel study through the scriptures; actively participating in the meetings of the Church, especially by partaking of the sacrament with real intent; continual selfless service; and diligent covenant keeping.

Another essential tool is the counsel of living prophets. (“Jesus Christ: Our Firm Foundation,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2016, 61)



Record Your Thoughts

Think about some of the most effective ways you or your family have built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. List in a notebook or note-taking app a few habits or practices that you could share in class.

SECTION 2

What blessings are available to me and my family if we choose to build our foundation on Jesus Christ and His teachings?

Latter-day prophets have declared, “Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



Study in Preparation for Class

Think of a teaching of Jesus Christ that has brought you happiness in your personal or family life as you have applied it. Find a scripture passage that contains this teaching. Come to class prepared to share what you find.

When a group of people, such as a family, decide to build their lives on the Savior and His teachings, they can experience great blessings. This is one reason why the concept of Zion, a people who are “of one heart and one mind, and [dwell] in righteousness” (Moses 7:18), is so beautiful and powerful. One example of this kind of people can be found in the Book of Mormon. After the Savior visited the inhabitants of the Americas, the people collectively committed to live His teachings.



Study in Preparation for Class

Study 4 Nephi 1:1, 11–13, 15–18, and look for what teachings the people chose to live and how living these teachings affected them.



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Where have you seen examples of the types of blessings described in this scripture passage? What might it look like if a family worked together to build their lives on Jesus Christ and His teachings? How can you begin now to seek, or how can you continue to seek, this ideal?



SECTION 3

What obstacles can keep me and my family from building a foundation on Jesus Christ?

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles addressed ways the adversary attempts to keep us from building our life on the Savior and His teachings:



Satan and his hosts will do all in their power to keep you from obtaining the ordinances required for the ideal family. He will attempt to distract you from centering your mind and heart on raising a strong family by nurturing your children as the Lord requires.

... Satan has a powerful tool to use against good people. It is distraction. He would have good people fill life with “good things” so there is no room for the essential ones. (“First Things First,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 7)

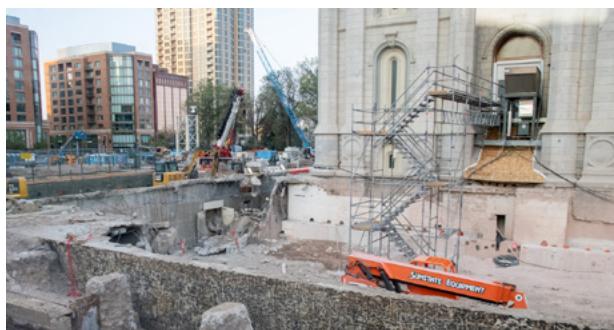
Think about some “good things” you have seen distract people from focusing on what is essential in their personal or family life.

Some of us might have cultural or family traditions or practices that keep us from building our foundation firmly on Jesus Christ and His gospel (see Doctrine and Covenants 93:39). President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency taught:



To help its members all over the world, the Church teaches us to give up any personal or family traditions or practices that are contrary to the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ and to this gospel culture. ("The Gospel Culture," *Ensign*, Mar. 2012, 42)

Consider what other obstacles might be holding you or your family back from more fully building your foundation on the Savior.



After discussing the work that was being done by the construction crew to fortify and renovate the foundation and structure of the Salt Lake Temple, Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles suggested the following:



An introspective look may reveal that we too and our families could benefit from our doing some needed maintenance and renovation work, even a seismic upgrade! We might start such a process by asking:

"What does my foundation look like?"

"What comprises the thick-walled, stable, strong cornerstones that are part of my personal foundation, upon which my testimony rests?"

"What are the foundational elements of my spiritual and emotional character that will allow me and my family to remain steadfast and immovable, even to withstand the earth-shaking and tumultuous seismic events that will surely take place in our lives?" ("A Good

Foundation against the Time to Come," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 50)



Act

Reflect on the questions Elder Stevenson asked. How can you more fully establish your foundation—your priorities, values, decision-making, use of time, and so forth—on Jesus Christ and His gospel? Record a goal or a plan you can work on this week.

Want More? (Optional)

How can I anchor my personal and family life more firmly in Jesus Christ and His gospel?



In his talk "How Firm Our Foundation" (*Ensign*, May 2002, 75–78), President Russell M. Nelson taught about the importance of firmly anchoring our faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel.

Watch the video "Spiritual Whirlwinds" (2:24), and consider what winds, or obstacles, might be distracting you or your family from building your foundation more firmly on the Savior.

What family traditions or elements of my culture might I need to give up to build (or build more firmly) on the foundation of Jesus Christ and His gospel?



In his talk "The Culture of Christ" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 48–50), Elder William K. Jackson of the Seventy addressed the need to give up any family traditions or elements

of our culture that go against the teachings and commandments of Jesus Christ.

What can I do if my spouse loses his or her faith in our spiritual foundation?

Sometimes a spouse may lose their faith in Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. The following resources provide perspective and counsel for responding if this happens:

"When He Stopped Believing" (*Ensign*, July 2012, 62–64)

"Maintaining Hope and Keeping Your Marriage Strong If Your Spouse Leaves the Church" (*Liahona*, Apr. 2021, digital only)

"How to Cope When a Loved One Changes Beliefs" (5:31)



LESSON 17 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Equal Partnership in Marriage

Within the family, the Lord has entrusted men and women “with different but equally significant roles [that] complement each other” (M. Russell Ballard, “The Sacred Responsibilities of Parenthood,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2006, 29). Prophets have taught that “in these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org). These responsibilities will be discussed in greater depth over the next few lessons.

SECTION 1

How can I be an equal partner in marriage?

We can learn important truths about the relationship the Lord intends for a husband and wife from the way He described the creation of Eve as recorded in the book of Moses.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Moses 3:18, 21–23, and think about the meaning of the symbolism used to describe Eve’s creation.



The description of Eve's creation from the rib of Adam is figurative (see Spencer W. Kimball, "The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood," *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, 71). President Russell M. Nelson explained one possible symbolic meaning of the rib:



The rib, coming as it does from the side, seems to denote partnership. The rib signifies neither dominion nor subservience, but a lateral relationship as partners, to work and to live, side by side. ("Lessons from Eve," *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 87)

President Linda K. Burton, former Relief Society General President, taught the following about the meaning of *help meet*:



The phrase *help meet* means "a helper suited to, worthy of, or corresponding to him" [Genesis 2:18, footnote b]. For example, our two hands are similar to each other but not exactly the same. In fact, they are exact opposites, but they complement each other and are suited to each other. Working together, they are stronger. ("We'll Ascend Together," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 30)

Some cultural or personal beliefs and behaviors can keep us from being an equal partner in marriage. President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency described some of these circumstances and how to overcome them:



Some . . . husbands have the false idea that the husband rests while the wife does most of the work at home or that the wife and children are just servants of the husband. This

is not pleasing to the Lord because it stands in the way of the kind of family relationships that must prevail in eternity and it inhibits the kind of growth that must occur here on earth if we are to qualify for the blessings of eternity. Study the scriptures and you will see that Adam and Eve, our first parents, the model for all of us, prayed together and worked together (see Moses 5:1, 4, 10–12, 16, 27). That should be our pattern for family life—respecting each other and working together in love. ("The Gospel Culture," *Ensign*, Mar. 2012, 44)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

What blessings can come to a marriage if the husband and wife see and support each other as equal partners?

SECTION 2

What does it mean to preside in a family setting?

The Lord has appointed unique responsibilities to husbands and wives in the family that are "equal in value and importance" (Quentin L. Cook, "Great Love for Our Father's Children," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 79). Some of these responsibilities will

be discussed in coming lessons. But one example is the following sacred responsibility that the Lord has given to husbands and fathers: “By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org). In the absence of a husband or father, the wife or mother presides in the home (see Russell M. Nelson, “Spiritual Treasures,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 79).



Consider how the following teachings can add to your understanding of how a father can preside over his family in love and righteousness:

Presiding in the family is the responsibility to help lead family members back to dwell in God’s presence. This is done by serving and teaching with gentleness, meekness, and pure love, following the example of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 20:26–28). Presiding in the family includes leading family members in regular prayer, gospel study, and other aspects of worship. Parents work in unity to fulfill these responsibilities. (“Parents and Children,” *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2.1.3)

The Apostle Paul taught about a husband’s responsibility to selflessly preside when he said: “The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. . . . Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:23, 25). President Ezra Taft Benson, after citing Ephesians 5:23,

emphasized how the Savior is a perfect example of how to preside:



That is the model we are to follow in our role of presiding in the home. We do not find the Savior leading the Church with a harsh or unkind hand. We do not find the Savior treating His Church with disrespect or neglect. We do not find the Savior using force or coercion to accomplish His purposes. Nowhere do we find the Savior doing anything but that which edifies, uplifts, comforts, and exalts the Church. Brethren, I say to you with all soberness, He is the model we must follow as we take the spiritual lead in our families. (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 196)

In an inspired letter to Church members, the Prophet Joseph Smith described the importance of exhibiting Christlike attributes when leading others. These attributes apply to presiding in the family.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–43, and consider marking the Christlike attributes you find.



Record Your Thoughts

Select one of the Christlike attributes you identified or marked, and record your thoughts about one or more of the following questions: Why does this attribute matter in presiding over a family? How can this attribute help me be an equal partner in marriage? When has Jesus Christ exemplified this attribute in His presiding

role? Be prepared to share your thoughts in class.

SECTION 3

How can spouses righteously counsel together in leading their family?

The meaning of “presiding in the family” can be misunderstood. For example, some people have misinterpreted the language of scripture passages like Genesis 3:16 (the Lord telling Eve that Adam will “rule over” her) to mean that a husband can be domineering or controlling, which is false. This instruction from the Lord pertains instead to a husband’s responsibility to preside in love and righteousness. As President Gordon B. Hinckley taught concerning the meaning of this phrase, it is the husband’s “governing responsibility to provide for, to protect, to strengthen and shield the wife” (“Daughters of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 99; see also Spencer W. Kimball, “The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, 72).

Regarding the unrighteous practice of husbands being domineering or controlling, Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



Is yours a culture where the husband exerts a domineering, authoritarian role, making all of the important decisions for the family? That pattern needs to be tempered so that both husband and wife act as equal partners, making decisions in unity for themselves and their family. No family can long endure under fear or force; that leads to contention and rebellion. Love is the foundation of a happy

family. (“Removing Barriers to Happiness,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 86)

With humility, respect, and kindness, couples should counsel together in making decisions for their family. Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



In family council, wives and husbands, as equal partners, make the most important decisions. They decide how the children will be taught and disciplined, how money will be spent, where they will live, and many other family decisions. These are made jointly after seeking guidance from the Lord. (“The Lord Is My Light,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 64)



Keep in mind these additional important truths related to counseling together as spouses and fostering equality in marriage:

Husbands and wives are meant to have “an equal voice and vote” in making decisions (L. Whitney Clayton, “Marriage: Watch and Learn,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 84).

Wives are needed to “speak as ‘a contributing and full partner’ [Spencer W. Kimball, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 106] as [they] unite with [their] husband in governing [their] family” (Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 97).

Husbands and wives have “equal power to receive revelation for their family” (Quentin L. Cook,

“Great Love for Our Father’s Children,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 79).

Parents can hold family councils with their children to counsel together about decisions or challenges that may pertain to the entire family (see M. Russell Ballard, “Family Councils,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 63–65).



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How can counseling together in righteousness bless couples and their children?

Want More? (Optional)

What other principles can guide me in being an equal partner in marriage?

In the article “Counseling Together in Marriage” (*Ensign*, June 2012, 10–13), a marriage and family therapist taught three principles that can help spouses be equal partners as they counsel together and lead their family.

Where can I learn more about presiding in the family?



In his talk “The Melchizedek Priesthood and the Keys” (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 69–72), President Dallin H. Oaks expounded on the meaning and practice of presiding in the family.



Read President Nelson’s conference address “Our Sacred Duty to Honor Women” (*Ensign*, May 1999, 38–40) to discover how to preside in selfless ways.



LESSON 18 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Providing for Temporal Needs

The Lord cares about our temporal, or physical, well-being. He has revealed truths that can help you provide for your own and your family's physical needs in ways that will also help you grow spiritually. As you study this material, consider how you might be better able to apply these truths.

SECTION 1

What is my responsibility in providing for my family's temporal needs?

Shortly after the Church of Jesus Christ was restored, the Lord revealed some temporal responsibilities of Church members.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Doctrine and Covenants 75:28–29; 83:4, and consider how the Lord's counsel applies to you.

Through Latter-day prophets, the Lord has reaffirmed that “parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness [and] to provide for their physical and spiritual needs” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

To fulfill this duty to provide for their children’s physical needs, parents must learn to be self-reliant. Self-reliance is a fundamental principle of the gospel. It is “the ability, commitment, and effort to provide the necessities of life for self and family” (*Providing in the Lord’s Way: Summary of a Leader’s Guide to Welfare* [2009], 1).



Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught the following principles about self-reliance:



Self-reliance is taking responsibility for our own spiritual and temporal welfare and for those whom Heavenly Father has entrusted to our care. Only when we are self-reliant can we truly emulate the Savior in serving and blessing others.

It is important to understand that self-reliance is a means to an end. Our ultimate goal is to become like the Savior, and that goal is enhanced by our unselfish service to others. Our ability to serve is increased or diminished by the level of our self-reliance. ("A Gospel Vision of Welfare: Faith in Action," in *Basic Principles of Welfare and Self-Reliance* [worldwide leadership training meeting, 2009], 1–2; see also ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

Consider the importance of the following instruction about self-reliance:

When you are self-reliant, you use the blessings and abilities God has given you to care for yourself and your family and to find solutions for your own problems. Self-reliance does not mean that you must be able to do all things on your own. To be truly self-reliant, you must learn how to work with others and

turn to the Lord for His help and strength. (*For the Strength of Youth* [booklet, 2011], 41)

President Spencer W. Kimball taught, "No true Latter-day Saint, while physically or emotionally able, will voluntarily shift the burden of his [or her] own or his [or her] family's well-being to someone else" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 116; see also 1 Timothy 5:8). Know that the Lord will help you in your efforts to become self-reliant. Jesus Christ taught that "through [His] providence," the Church could "stand independent" both temporally and spiritually (Doctrine and Covenants 78:14). Likewise, the Savior "through [His] providence" can help you become self-reliant and able to provide for yourself and your family.



Ponder in Preparation for Class

What thoughts or feelings do you have about the responsibility to provide for your family's temporal needs?

SECTION 2

What can help me develop self-reliance and become a better provider?

A diligent work ethic is essential for developing self-reliance and providing for our families. Beginning with Adam, our Heavenly Father has commanded His children to work (see Moses 4:25, 29; 2 Thessalonians 3:10–13). Hard work and diligence are characteristics of God and of those who strive to follow Him (see 2 Nephi 5:17; Mosiah 27:3–4).



Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized the importance of hard work when he taught:



God has designed this mortal existence to require nearly constant exertion. . . . By work we sustain and enrich life. It enables us to survive the disappointments and tragedies of the mortal experience. Hard-earned achievement brings a sense of self-worth. Work builds and refines character, creates beauty, and is the instrument of our service to one another and to God. A consecrated life is filled with work, sometimes repetitive, sometimes menial, sometimes unappreciated but always work that improves, orders, sustains, lifts, ministers, aspires. (“Reflections on a Consecrated Life,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 17)

In addition to the responsibility parents have “to provide for their [children’s] physical and spiritual needs,” “by divine design, fathers . . . are responsible to provide the necessities of life . . . for their families” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”). Elder Christofferson encouraged those who are preparing to be fathers when he said:



Prepare now by being diligent in school and planning for postsecondary training. Education, whether in a university, technical school, apprenticeship, or similar program, is key to developing the skills and capabilities you will need. (“Fathers,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 96)



The counsel to seek education is important for all disciples of Jesus Christ. The Lord instructs us to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 88:118; see also *Doctrine and Covenants* 90:15). Regarding this responsibility, President Russell M. Nelson taught:



Because of our sacred regard for each human intellect, we consider the obtaining of an education to be a religious responsibility. . . . Our Creator expects His children everywhere to educate themselves. (“Where Is Wisdom?,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 6)

Consider other potential blessings of education that go beyond helping us to better provide for our family’s financial needs. Obtaining education can bring personal fulfillment and can help us meet the Lord’s expectation to develop and use the gifts and abilities He has given us (see Matthew 25:14–30). Obtaining education can improve our ability to navigate life’s challenges. Education also increases our capacity to serve others and to build the Lord’s kingdom.

President Thomas S. Monson taught:



Your talents will expand as you study and learn. You will be able to better assist your families in their learning, and you will have peace of mind in knowing that you have prepared yourself for the eventualities that you may encounter in life. (“Three Goals to Guide You,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 119)



In some cases, because of death or divorce or other extenuating circumstances, the mother must provide for the family (see paragraph 7 of the family proclamation). In other cases, both parents need to be employed to help meet the basic needs of their family. President M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles provided an important caution and helpful counsel in making decisions regarding both parents being employed:



Today there is significant pressure in our materialistic world to have and spend more money. Unfortunately, this draws married mothers to work outside the home in order to provide a second income. As husbands, wives, and children recognize the difference between basic necessities and material wants, they lessen family financial burdens and contribute to helping mothers be at home. Decisions about working outside the home are difficult ones and need to be made prayerfully, keeping ever in mind the counsel of the living prophets on this complex issue. ("The Sacred Responsibilities of Parenthood," *Ensign*, Mar. 2006, 31; see also Alma 37:37)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How has the Lord helped you, or how can He help you, develop a diligent work ethic or obtain more education?

SECTION 3

What financial principles can guide me in providing for my family?

The earth belongs to the Lord (see Psalm 24:1). He gives us power and access to earthly resources to provide for our temporal and spiritual needs (see Deuteronomy 8:10, 18; Doctrine and Covenants 59:18–20). To the Lord, all things are spiritual, even His temporal laws (see Doctrine and Covenants 29:34). He knows both the blessings and the spiritual risks associated with seeking and obtaining money and possessions. He has revealed principles to help us manage these resources in ways that can bless and protect us as individuals and families.



Study in Preparation for Class

Select at least two of the following scripture passages, or find two of your own, and identify the principles of wise financial management they teach. Come to class prepared to discuss what you discover.

- Malachi 3:8–10
- Matthew 6:19–21
- Luke 14:28–30
- 1 Timothy 6:6–10
- Jacob 2:18–19

- Doctrine and Covenants 104:13–18
- Doctrine and Covenants 104:78



Record Your Thoughts

Write some of the wise choices you have made in providing for your temporal needs, as well as some of the ways you feel you can improve in your efforts to provide for your temporal needs.

Want More? (Optional)

How can I know what my career should be?



In his talk “Life’s Greatest Decisions,” President Monson provided criteria for young adults to consider in choosing their career ([Church Educational System fireside for young adults, Sept. 7, 2003], 1–7, broadcasts .ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also Sarah Jane Weaver, “You Have Choices, Eternal Consequences,” *Church News*, Oct. 3, 2003).

How can I become a better provider?

In the video “Becoming Provident Providers” (2:35), Elder Hales shares a personal experience to teach principles that can help us stay out of debt and live frugally.

The Church offers many self-reliance resources, such as *Personal Finances for Self-Reliance* and *Starting and Growing My Business for Self-Reliance* (see ChurchofJesusChrist.org/self-reliance). Consider how participating in one or more of these courses or working through one or more of the course workbooks could help you in your efforts to provide for your temporal needs. You can also learn more about provident living by studying the *All Is Safely Gathered In* pamphlets (see providentliving .ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

What difference can additional education make in my ability to provide for myself and my family?

Watch the video “Wagner’s Story” (2:05) to learn the difference that additional education made for one young adult in being able to provide for his family.

How can I choose between being at home with my children and working when I have the option to not work?

One mother desired to pursue a professional passion as well as to be home with her young children. Learn how the Lord guided her in the article “Striving to Become an Intelligent and Noble Mother” (Lilian Pagaduan-Villamor, *Ensign*, Aug. 2018, 16–17).



LESSON 19 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

The Sacred Responsibilities of Mothers

President Russell M. Nelson observed, “It would be impossible to measure the influence that [covenant-keeping] women have, not only on families but also on the Lord’s Church, as wives, mothers, and grandmothers; as sisters and aunts; as teachers and leaders; and especially as exemplars and devout defenders of the faith” (“A Plea to My Sisters,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 95–96). As you study this material, think about the influence righteous women have had in your life.

SECTION 1

How does the role of motherhood apply to all women?

Motherhood is eternal in nature. On earth, motherhood has been associated with womanhood since the creation of Eve: “Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living; for thus have I, the Lord God, called the first of all women, which are many” (Moses 4:26).

Think about how the role of motherhood applies to all women as you read the following statement by Sister Sheri L. Dew, former counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency:



While we tend to equate motherhood solely with maternity, in the Lord’s language, the word *mother* has layers of meaning. Of all the words they could have chosen to define her role and her essence, both God the Father and Adam called Eve “the mother of all living” [Moses 4:26]—and they did so *before* she ever bore a child. . . . Motherhood is more than bearing children, though it is certainly that. It is the essence of who we are as women. It defines our very identity, our divine stature and nature, and the unique traits our Father gave us. . . .

As daughters of our Heavenly Father, and as daughters of Eve, we are all mothers and we have always been mothers. (“Are We Not All Mothers?,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 96, 97)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

President Nelson taught that “every woman is a mother by virtue of her eternal divine destiny” (“Sisters’ Participation in the Gathering of Israel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 68). Ponder what this statement means for you and the women in your life.

SECTION 2

How does Heavenly Father help women fulfill their sacred responsibility to nurture?

Our Heavenly Father has appointed mothers to be “primarily responsible for the nurture of their children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org)). President Susan W. Tanner, former Young Women General President, defined what it means to nurture:



To nurture is to teach, to foster development, to promote growth, to feed, and to nourish. Who would not shout for joy at being given such a blessed role? (“My Soul Delighteth in

the Things of the Lord,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 82)

Heavenly Father has blessed His daughters “with an innate capacity to love and nurture,” which can help women fulfill this influential and sacred responsibility (*Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* [2011], 171).

Sister Neill F. Marriott, former counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, taught that Heavenly Father will help His daughters in their efforts to nurture others:



Sisters, all of us came to earth with . . . life-giving, nurturing, maternal gifts because that is God’s plan. . . .

When we ask ourselves, “What shall we do?” let’s ponder this question: “What does the Savior do continually?” He nurtures. He creates. He encourages growth and goodness. . . .

. . . As we ask Father in Heaven to make us builders of His kingdom, His power will flow into us and we will know how to nurture, ultimately becoming like our heavenly parents. (“What Shall We Do?,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 11, 12)

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency taught about additional gifts Heavenly Father has given to women to help them fulfill their sacred call to nurture:



As daughters of God, you have an innate and great capacity to sense the needs of others and to love. That, in turn, makes you more susceptible to the whisperings of the Spirit. The Spirit can then guide what you think, what you say, and what you do to nurture people so the Lord may pour knowledge, truth, and courage upon them. (“Women and Gospel Learning in the Home,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 59)



Some women may worry that they are not inclined to be very nurturing. Like all gifts of God, nurturing requires practice and help from heaven to develop and properly apply. Jesus Christ is the perfect example of nurturing. As He has shown, nurturing doesn't always look the same in every situation. He is both merciful and firm as He helps others to grow.



Study in Preparation for Class

With the help of the Holy Spirit, women (and men) can learn to nurture like the Savior does. Choose one or two of the following passages that provide examples of nurturing from the Savior's life. Look for what you can learn from Him about nurturing.

- Matthew 14:14–21
- Mark 10:13–16
- Luke 10:38–42
- John 13:4–17

What other examples of the Savior nurturing others can you think of?



Ponder in Preparation for Class

When have you been the recipient of a woman's Christlike, inspired nurturing? Consider how you might seek to develop this Christlike attribute in your life.

SECTION 3

What difference do mothers make in Heavenly Father's plan?

Some women may have hesitations about having children. Their hesitations can be intensified by voices in society that downplay or even mock the importance of motherhood. Think about how understanding the importance of mothers in Heavenly Father's plan can help you reject these or related attitudes and behaviors.

President Nelson explained, "You sisters were chosen before the foundation of the world to bear and care for God's children; in doing so, you glorify God" ("What Will You Choose?", *Ensign*, Jan. 2015, 31).

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about how bearing children furthers our Heavenly Father's plan:



Most sacred is a woman's role in the creation of life. We know that our physical bodies have a divine origin [see Moses 2:27] and that we must experience both a physical birth and a spiritual rebirth to reach the highest realms in God's celestial kingdom [see Moses 6:57–60]. Thus, women play an integral part (sometimes at the risk of their own lives) in God's work and glory "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" [Moses 1:39]. ("The Moral Force of Women," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 30)



Regarding the ways women bless lives in fulfilling their role of motherhood, Elder Christofferson taught:



A mother can exert an influence unequaled by any other person in any other relationship. By the power of her example and teaching, her sons learn to respect womanhood and to incorporate discipline and high moral standards in their own lives. Her daughters learn to cultivate their own virtue and to stand up for what is right, again and again, however unpopular. A mother's love and high expectations lead her children to act responsibly without excuses, to be serious about education and personal development, and to make ongoing contributions to the well-being of all around them. ("The Moral Force of Women," 30)

Sister Marriott also taught about the powerful influence of mothers:



I believe that "to mother" means "to give life." Think of the many ways you give life. It could mean giving emotional life to the hopeless or spiritual life to the doubter. With the help of the Holy Ghost, we can create an emotionally healing place for the discriminated against, the rejected, and the stranger. In these tender yet powerful ways, we build the kingdom of God. ("What Shall We Do?," 11)



Study in Preparation for Class

The Book of Mormon account of the stripling warriors is an example of how impactful righteous mothers can be. Read Alma 56:45–48; 57:21–26, looking for the difference a mother's efforts with her children can have on them, society, and the world.

As you read the following testimony shared by President Julie B. Beck, former Relief Society General President, consider the impact of the women you know who honor their divine mission to mother:



There is no limit to what a woman with a mother heart can accomplish. Righteous women have changed the course of history and will continue to do so, and their influence will spread and grow exponentially throughout the eternities. How grateful I am to the Lord for trusting women with the divine mission of motherhood. ("A 'Mother Heart,'" *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2004, 77)



Act

Consider writing and sending a note of appreciation to a mother or mother figure whose nurturing influence has blessed your life.

Want More? (Optional)

How can I defend the divine role of motherhood?



Read about how one mother defended the role of motherhood in the story told by President Bonnie L. Oscarson, former Young Women General President, in the talk "Defenders of the Family Proclamation" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 16).

Where can I learn more about the influence righteous mothers can have?

To learn about an example of a mother's righteous impact on others, you might read about Lucy Mack Smith in chapter 1, "Ask in Faith," of *Saints: The Story*

of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days, vol. 1, *The Standard of Truth*, 1815–1846 (2018), 5–11.

President Gordon B. Hinckley testified of the importance of women in God's plan in the video "The Women in Our Lives" (2:42).

The video "To Every Mother" (2:26) pays tribute to the impact of loving mothers. As you watch this video, you could reflect on your own mother, a loving mother figure, or the type of mother you would like to be.

Consider watching the video "Make It a Good Day—Happy Families" (4:24), and think about the ways the mother in this video is shaping her children's growth.

What encouragement is there for mothers who feel inadequate?

In the video "Motherhood: An Eternal Partnership with God" (3:46), Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shares an encouraging tribute to mothers who may feel inadequate in their role. His teachings are a powerful reminder that mothers are partners with God and that they can turn to Him for help to fulfill their sacred role and responsibilities.

The video "You Are Enough" (1:14) reminds women of their gifts and strength.



LESSON 20 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

The Sacred Responsibilities of Fathers

Heavenly Father has appointed to His sons the responsibilities “to preside over their families in love and righteousness and . . . to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org). As you study this lesson, think about how you have been blessed by fathers and other men who have sought to fulfill these sacred responsibilities.

Note: In this lesson, we will focus on the responsibility to protect. The topics of presiding and providing were discussed in previous lessons.

SECTION 1

How can men pattern their efforts as fathers after Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ?

While serving in the Relief Society General Presidency, President Linda K. Burton spoke about some challenges that men face:



It must be difficult, at best, for covenant men to live in a world that not only demeans their divine roles and responsibilities but also sends false messages about what it means to be a “real man.” One false message is “It’s all about me.” On the other end of the scale

is the degrading and mocking message that husbands and fathers are no longer needed. I plead with you not to listen to Satan’s lies! He has forfeited that sacred privilege of ever becoming a husband or father. Because he is jealous of those who have the sacred roles he will never fill, he is intent on making “all men . . . miserable like unto himself” [2 Nephi 2:27]! (“We’ll Ascend Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 30)

We can withstand false messages about fatherhood by looking to Heavenly Father as the perfect example of righteous fatherhood. Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



The perfect, divine expression of fatherhood is our Heavenly Father. His character and attributes include abundant goodness and perfect love. His work and glory are the development, happiness, and eternal life of His children [see Moses 1:39]. Fathers in this fallen world can claim nothing comparable to the Majesty on High, but at their best, they are striving to emulate Him, and they indeed labor in His work. They are honored with a remarkable and sobering trust. ("Fathers," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 94)

We also learn principles of righteous fatherhood from the example of Jesus Christ. When we are spiritually reborn, He becomes the Father of our new life (see Mosiah 5:7; Ether 3:14; Doctrine and Covenants 25:1).



Study in Preparation for Class

During His mortal ministry, the Savior taught His followers about His role as the Good Shepherd. Read John 10:11–15, and think about how the Savior's example as the Good Shepherd can be compared to the efforts of a righteous father in a family.



Record Your Thoughts

Search for a scripture passage or account that teaches principles of righteous fatherhood from the example of Heavenly Father or Jesus Christ. Record the principles you find, and write about how men can apply these principles in our day. Be prepared to share your thoughts in class.

SECTION 2

How can being loving and fully present help fathers protect their families?

President M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that a father's responsibility to protect his family includes both physical and spiritual protection:



Fathers are expected by God and His prophets not only to provide for their families but also to protect them. Dangers of all sorts abound in the world in which we live. Physical protection against natural or man-made hazards is important. Moral dangers are also all around us, confronting our children from their early years. Fathers play a vital role in protecting children against such snares. ("The Sacred Responsibilities of Parenthood," *Ensign*, Mar. 2006, 30)



Adding to the ways fathers can protect their children, President Howard W. Hunter taught:



A righteous father protects his children with his time and presence in their social, educational, and spiritual activities and responsibilities. Tender expressions of love and affection toward children are as much the responsibility of the father as the mother. Tell your children you love them. ("Being a Righteous Husband and Father," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 51)

Watch the video "Father's Day" (2:30), and think about how a father protects his children by doing the things shown in the video.

Being a father who is loving and fully present takes intentional and consistent effort. Consider what you can learn from the following example of President Russell M. Nelson:



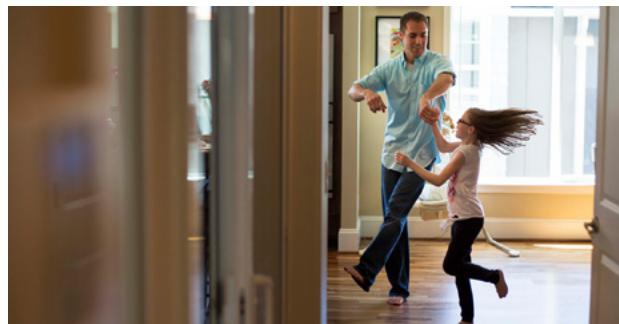
My work is to support my wife and my children, not the other way around. . . . When you're home, you're home. Leave the day's traffic behind. Give them 100 percent of your attention when you're there. I used to tell myself, "Don't you walk into that house, Russell, until you can bless the lives of your children and wife." (In Vivian S. Lee, "Elder Russell M. Nelson, M.D., '47," *Good Notes* (blog), *University of Utah Health*, Sept. 12, 2014, uofuhealth.utah.edu/notes)

A father's positive influence on his children can have remarkable effects on their development. For

example, research suggests that a loving and involved father can:

- Foster the development of self-respect, self-control, stress tolerance, and sense of gender within his sons and daughters.
- Increase the likelihood of his children being emotionally secure and confident and forming better relationships with others.
- Decrease the prevalence of child poverty, crime, and drug abuse. (See James E. Faust, "Fathers, Mothers, Marriage," *Ensign*, Aug. 2004, 3–7; Sarah Keenan, "Elephants, Fathers, and Families," *Ensign*, Sept. 2018, 54–58; see also the references cited in these articles.)

The protecting influence of a father is a powerful complement to the essential nurturing influence of a mother. As equal partners in marriage, wives and mothers share in the responsibility to protect their families. Husbands and wives can work and counsel together as they fulfill this sacred duty.



The role of fatherhood and the sacred responsibility to protect apply to all of Heavenly Father's sons by virtue of their divine eternal nature and destiny. Although men fulfill this responsibility foremost within their immediate family, they can also fulfill this responsibility in other settings. Consider the examples of Jethro with his son-in-law Moses (see Exodus 18) and Helaman with the stripling warriors (see Alma 56–57). What other scriptural examples can you think of?



Ponder in Preparation for Class

In what ways have you been blessed and protected by the love and involvement of a righteous father or father figure in your life?

SECTION 3

How can divine revelation and priesthood power help fathers protect their families?

From an experience of Joseph of Nazareth, we can learn an important principle about how to protect our families.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Matthew 2:13–15, and look for what helped Joseph protect the Christ child and Mary from danger.



Revelation can similarly help fathers in our day protect and bless their families. As President Ballard counseled, “Fathers should seek constantly for guidance from the Holy Ghost so they will know what to do, what to say, and also know what *not* to do and what *not* to say” (“The Sacred Responsibilities of Parenthood,” 30).

Men who are covenant-keeping followers of Jesus Christ have another sacred gift they can use to protect their families. Speaking to men, President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about this gift:



You have the power of the priesthood directly from the Lord to protect your home. There will be times when all that stands as a shield between your family and the adversary's mischief will be that power. (“The Power of the Priesthood,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 9)

President Nelson taught men how they can increase their priesthood power to protect their families:



Make your focus on *daily* repentance so integral to your life that you can exercise the priesthood with greater power than ever before. This is the only way you will keep yourself and your family spiritually safe in the challenging days ahead. (“We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 69)





Act

Consider writing and sending a note of appreciation to your father or a man who has been a protecting or stabilizing influence in your life.

Want More? (Optional)

Where can I learn more about righteous fatherhood?



Elder Christofferson's talk "Fathers" (pages 93–97) provides excellent counsel about how to be a righteous, loving father.

Watch the video "Let Us Be Men" (3:11), in which Elder Christofferson shares an account of his father's Christlike sacrifice for his wife and family.

Watch the inspirational video "A Father Indeed" (7:08), and think about what you can learn from the example of this loving and fully present father.

How can men increase in priesthood power?



In his talk "The Price of Priesthood Power" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 66–69), President Nelson taught about several ways men can increase their priesthood power.



LESSON 21 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Rearing Children in Love

Being a parent isn't easy. However, we aren't alone. While serving as a member of the Seventy, Elder Bradley D. Foster taught, "Our Heavenly Father wants us to succeed because really, after all, they were His children before they were ours" ("It's Never Too Early and It's Never Too Late," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 51). As you study this lesson, consider how you can follow our Heavenly Father's example in how you raise your current or future children.

SECTION 1

How can I rear my children in love?

Latter-day prophets have declared, "Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," ChurchofJesusChrist.org). President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then of the First Presidency, suggested one way parents can fulfill this responsibility:



In family relationships *love* is really spelled *t-i-m-e*, time. Taking time for each other is the key for harmony at home. ("Of Things That Matter Most," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 22)

Parents and children can spend meaningful time together in many ways. While serving in the Young Women General Presidency, President Susan W. Tanner taught:



A loving relationship requires constant and ongoing talking, playing, laughing, and working moments. I . . . believe that parents and children need to participate in each other's everyday, ordinary experiences. ("Did I Tell You . . . ?," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 75)

Even if it may be easier for parents to do a job themselves, "working moments" can provide great opportunities for parents and children to talk together. Working together can also help parents teach their children the value of work and avoiding idleness (see Doctrine and Covenants 68:31).



President Uchtdorf shared other ways parents can spend time with their children:



Since "no other success can compensate for failure" [J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* (1924), 42] [within our families], we must place high priority on our families. We build deep and loving family relationships by doing simple things together, like family dinner and family home evening and by just having fun together. ("Of Things That Matter Most," 21–22)

As President Uchtdorf notes, doing wholesome recreational activities can contribute to successful family relationships (see also "The Family: A Proclamation to the World"). These experiences can help "create meaningful family bonds that give . . . children an identity stronger than what they can find with their peer group or at school or anywhere else" (M. Russell Ballard, "What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 43).



President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency taught principles that can guide parents in choosing activities to do with their children:



In choosing how we spend time as a family, we should be careful not to exhaust our available time on things that are merely good and leave little time for that which is better or best. A friend took his young family on a series of summer vacation trips, including visits to memorable historic sites. At the end of the summer he asked his teenage son which of these good summer activities he enjoyed most. The father learned from the reply, and so did those he told of it. "The thing I liked best this summer," the boy replied, "was the night you and I laid on the lawn and looked at the stars and talked." Super family activities may be good for children, but they are not always better than one-on-one time with a loving parent. ("Good, Better, Best," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 105)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

What are some ways you have seen your parents or parents you know rear their children in love? What kinds of activities do you want to do with your children in the future?

SECTION 2

How can I discipline my children in a loving way?

One challenging part of parenting can be disciplining your children. In this area, we can learn from the Lord, who demonstrated how to discipline with love. For example, when early Church members delayed building the Kirtland Temple, He

chastened them. (*Note:* To *chasten* means to discipline or correct.)



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Doctrine and Covenants 95:1, looking for why the Lord chastens His followers.

Think about how the following counsel from President Tanner can help parents discipline their children in a Christlike way.



Sometimes discipline, which means "to teach," is confused with criticism. Children—as well as people of all ages—improve behavior from love and encouragement more than from fault-finding. ("Did I Tell You . . . ?" 74)

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled parents to be cautious in the way they discipline. (*Note:* Although he was speaking to fathers, his counsel applies to mothers as well.)



In discipline a father must exercise particular care, lest there be anything even approaching abuse, which is never justified. When a father provides correction, his motivation must be love and his guide the Holy Spirit:

"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, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

"That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death" [Doctrine and Covenants 121:43–44].

Discipline in the divine pattern is not so much about punishing as it is about helping a loved one along the path of self-mastery. ("Fathers," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 95)



In helping children learn from and correct their misbehavior, parents should establish logical consequences for actions. Parents must be careful to not continue disciplinary practices that may be accepted in their cultures or families but do not align with the Lord's teachings.

President Russell M. Nelson provided additional counsel:



When a child needs correction, you might ask yourself, "What can I say or do that would persuade him or her to choose a better way?" When giving necessary correction, do it quietly, privately, lovingly, and not publicly. If a rebuke is required, show an increase of love promptly so that seeds of resentment may not remain. To be persuasive, your love must be sincere and your teachings based on divine doctrine and correct principles. ("Salvation and Exaltation," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 9–10)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Think of times when you have been corrected by the Lord or the Holy Ghost has prompted you to change in some way. What can you learn about disciplining children from those experiences?

SECTION 3

How can I teach my children to love and serve one another?

Church leaders in our day have reaffirmed that “parents have a sacred duty . . . to teach [their children] to love and serve one another” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”). While serving in the Young Women General Presidency, President Bonnie L. Oscarson gave the following counsel about loving and serving our family members:



Begin your service in your own homes and within your own families. These are the relationships that can be eternal. Even if—and maybe especially if—your family situation is less than perfect, you can find ways to serve, lift, and strengthen. Begin where you are, love them as they are, and prepare for the family you want to have in the future. (“The Needs before Us,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 27)

Satan seeks to disrupt the love and the service family members can experience in their home. One way he does this is by stirring up contention.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read 3 Nephi 11:29–30, and think about how the Savior’s teachings to the Nephites can apply to families.



Study in Preparation for Class

King Benjamin taught parents in his day how they should help their children learn to live and interact with their family members. Read Mosiah 4:14–15, looking for King Benjamin’s counsel to parents.



Record Your Thoughts

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency taught, “[Jesus] has offered us the family as an example of an ideal setting in which we can learn how to love as He loves” (“Our Perfect Example,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 71). Think of a time when the Savior lovingly served someone. Write about how you could love and serve a family member in this or another Christlike way. Prepare to share your thoughts in class.

Want More? (Optional)

What are some additional ways that parents can show love to their children and connect with them?



In the talk "Our Duty to God: The Mission of Parents and Leaders to the Rising Generation" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 95–98), Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shared ways to better love

and serve in our families. You might also watch the video "Parenting: Touching the Hearts of Our Youth" (3:02), in which Elder Hales explains the need for parents to connect with their children.

Consider reading the article "Parenting, Unplugged" (*Ensign*, June 2014, 63), which encourages parents to set aside technology sometimes so they can better connect with their children.



LESSON 22 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Rearing Children in Righteousness

Raising children to be spiritually strong in today's world can feel overwhelming. However, a promise the Savior gave to the Nephites applies to us in our day: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (3 Nephi 22:13). As you study this lesson, consider how you can fulfill your "sacred duty to rear [your] children in . . . righteousness" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

SECTION 1

What does the Lord expect of me as a parent?

Early in this dispensation, Jesus Christ taught parents about their responsibility to raise their children in righteousness. He declared, "I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 93:40). The Savior then admonished the Prophet Joseph Smith and other Church leaders to set their homes in order and to be "more diligent and concerned at home" (verse 50; see verses 41–50).

Latter-day prophets likewise express the need for parents to be intentional in their efforts to teach the gospel in their homes. They have also emphasized that gospel learning is to be "home centered and

Church supported" (David A. Bednar, "Prepared to Obtain Every Needful Thing," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 101; see also pages 102–4).

While serving in the Sunday School General Presidency, President Tad R. Callister taught:



As parents, we are to be the prime gospel teachers and examples for our children—not the bishop, the Sunday School, the Young Women or Young Men, but the parents. As their prime gospel teachers, we can teach them the power and reality of the Atonement—of their identity and divine destiny—and in so doing give them a rock foundation upon which to build. When all is said and done, the home is the ideal forum for teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. ("Parents: The Prime Gospel Teachers of Their Children," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 32–33)



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Doctrine and Covenants 68:25, 28, and consider marking truths that parents are accountable to help their children understand.

After referencing these verses, Sister Cheryl A. Esplin, former counselor in the Primary General Presidency, commented:



Teaching our children to understand is more than just imparting information. It's helping our children get the doctrine into their hearts in a way that it becomes part of their very being and is reflected in their attitudes and behavior throughout their lives. ("Teaching Our Children to Understand," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 10)

While serving in the Primary General Presidency, President Joy D. Jones taught:



We cannot wait for conversion to simply happen to our children. Accidental conversion is *not* a principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Becoming like our Savior will not happen randomly. Being intentional in loving, teaching, and testifying can help children begin at a young age to feel the influence of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is essential to our children's testimony of and conversion to Jesus Christ; we desire them to "always

remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them" [Doctrine and Covenants 20:79]. ("Essential Conversations," *Liahona*, May 2021, 12–13)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

How can parents help their children "get the doctrine into their hearts in a way that it becomes part of their very being"? How can parents help their children feel and learn from the Holy Ghost?

SECTION 2

What practices can help me lead my children to the Savior?

Nephi and his people actively sought to help their children learn of the Savior.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read 2 Nephi 25:26, and think about how parents in our day could follow the example of these Nephites.

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave counsel to guide parents in helping their children learn of and from the Savior:



Are there images of the Savior in our homes? Do we talk often to our children about the parables of Jesus? "The stories of Jesus [are] like a rushing wind across the embers of faith in the hearts of our children" [Neil L. Andersen, "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus,"

Ensign or Liahona, May 2010, 108]. When your children ask you questions, consciously think about teaching what the Savior taught. For example, if your child asks, “Daddy, why do we pray?” You might respond, “That’s a great question. Do you remember when Jesus prayed? Let’s talk about why He prayed and how He prayed.” (“We Talk of Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 89)

The counsel the prophet Moses gave to Israelite parents can apply to us: “Thou shalt teach [the commandments] diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

President Jones reflected the spirit of Moses’s counsel when she taught:



[One] key to helping children become sin-resistant is to begin at very early ages to lovingly infuse them with basic gospel doctrines and principles—from the scriptures, the Articles of Faith, the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, Primary songs, hymns, and our own personal testimonies—that will lead children to the Savior.

Creating consistent habits of prayer, scripture study, family home evening, and Sabbath worship leads to wholeness, internal consistency, and strong moral values—in other words, spiritual integrity. . . .

Brothers and sisters, hold your little ones close—so close that they see your daily religious behavior and watch you keeping your promises and covenants. “Children are great imitators, so give them something great to imitate” [anonymous]. (“A Sin-Resistant Generation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 88–89)



Record Your Thoughts

Take a few minutes to record righteous behaviors or habits you can begin or continue developing now that will increase your ability to raise your children in righteousness. What spiritual practices do you want to establish with your family in the future?

SECTION 3

What can I do if a family member strays from the gospel path?

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



One of the greatest heartaches a valiant parent in Zion can suffer is a child who strays from the gospel path. Questions of “Why?” or “What did I do wrong?” and “How can this child now be helped?” are pondered without ceasing in the minds and hearts of such parents. (“Faithful Parents and Wayward Children: Sustaining Hope While Overcoming Misunderstanding,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2014, 28)



Lehi and Sariah understood the heartache that comes when children stray from the gospel path.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read 1 Nephi 8:37–38, looking for how Lehi tried to help Laman and Lemuel after he saw in vision their rejection of the Lord.

Notice how tenderly Lehi preached to, or taught, his children. Elder Ulisses Soares of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about ways we can respond if a family member strays from the gospel path:



It is hard to understand all the reasons why some people take another path. The best we can do in these circumstances is just to love and embrace them, pray for their well-being, and seek for the Lord's help to know what to do and say. Sincerely rejoice with them in their successes; be their friends and look for the good in them. We should never give up on them but preserve our relationships. Never reject or misjudge them. Just love them! The parable of the prodigal son teaches us that when children come to themselves, they often desire to come home. If that happens with your dear ones, fill your hearts with compassion, run to them, fall on their neck, and kiss them, like the father of the prodigal son did [see Luke 15:20].

Ultimately, keep living a worthy life, be a good example to them of what you believe, and draw closer to our Savior, Jesus Christ. He knows and understands our deep sorrows and pains, and He will bless your efforts and dedication to your dear ones if not in this life, in the next life. ("How Can I Understand?," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 8)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

What are other examples from the scriptures of righteous parents whose child or children strayed from the gospel path? (Consider, for example, Lehi and his sons Laman and Lemuel or Alma and his son Alma the Younger.) What can you learn from these parents' responses that can guide you in responding to family members who may stray?

Want More? (Optional)

Where can I learn more about how to rear children in righteousness?



In his talk "A Prayer for the Children" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 85–87), Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized the need for parents

to "live the gospel as conspicuously as [they] can" (page 86).

In the video "More Diligent and Concerned at Home" (1:27), Elder Bednar suggests three ways to live the gospel as a family.



In his talk "The Music of the Gospel" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 54–56), Elder Wilford W. Andersen, formerly of the Seventy, used an incident involving a young doctor and an old Native American man to teach the importance of helping children to experience "the joyful spiritual feeling that comes from the Holy Ghost" (page 54). You might also watch the inspirational message "The Music of the Gospel" (5:43).

What other resources can help me know how to respond to children who stray from the gospel path?



In his article "Faithful Parents and Wayward Children: Sustaining Hope While Overcoming Misunderstanding" (pages 28–33), Elder Bednar explained important truths regarding children who leave the Church.

One Church member shared inspired insights about responding to a child's choice to turn away from the gospel in the article "When a Child Leaves the Church" (*Ensign*, Feb. 2016, 44–47).



LESSON 23 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

When Blessings of Eternal Marriage or Children Are Delayed

Many people experience delays in receiving their righteous desires for marriage or children, and these delays can bring discouragement, worry, or heartache. As you study this material, think about why we can trust that the Lord will fulfill His promised blessings for our eternal families if we are faithful to Him. Also consider why we are all needed in the Savior’s Church and in God’s plan, whatever our family circumstances are.

SECTION 1

What if my circumstances don’t match those described in the family proclamation?

Church leaders teach ideals of family life. They also recognize that not everyone experiences these ideals. For example, in the family proclamation, prophets teach that some “circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation” in fulfilling sacred family responsibilities (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles acknowledged that faithful Church members experience a variety of family circumstances:



There are so many, young and old, who are loyal and true to the gospel of Jesus Christ, even though their own current experience does not fit neatly inside the family proclamation: children whose lives have been shaken by divorce; . . . divorced women and men who have been gravely wounded by the unfaithfulness of a spouse; husbands and wives who are unable to have children; . . . single women and men who, for various reasons, have been unable to marry. (“The Eye of Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 36)

President M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



More than half of adults in the Church today are widowed, divorced, or not yet married. Some wonder about their opportunities and place in God's plan and in the Church. We should understand that eternal life is not simply a question of current marital status but of discipleship and being "valiant in the testimony of Jesus" [Doctrine and Covenants 76:79; see also Doctrine and Covenants 121:29]. . . .

. . . All those who accept the Savior's gracious gift of repentance and live His commandments will receive eternal life, even though they do not attain to all its characteristics and perfections in mortality. ("Hope in Christ," *Liahona*, May 2021, 55)



Some people might wonder why Church leaders continue to teach about ideals of family life when many Church members do not experience these ideals.

Sister Sharon Eubank of the Relief Society General Presidency shared some of her experience and insight as a single adult:



Being single myself, I get how this feels. You have no wingman; sitting at church is awkward; parties can be torture; relatives feel they can comment when no one should be saying a word. . . .

Fitting into a Church focused on family can also be challenging. But the reality is that a majority of Church members do not live in perfect family situations. I'm not sure *anyone*

lives in that perfect, ideal family. So why keep the emphasis? Because family is our destiny, and we are on this earth to learn the skills of strong family relationships, no matter what our own situation is. ("A Letter to a Single Sister," *Ensign*, Oct. 2019, 40)

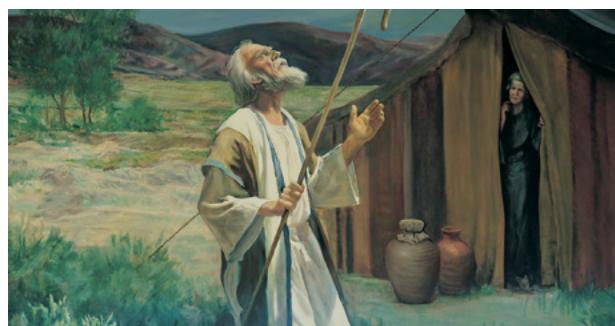


Ponder in Preparation for Class

In what ways can we exercise faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings on the family even when our family circumstances are not ideal?

SECTION 2

How can I move forward in faith when desired blessings are delayed?



Abraham and Sarah knew what it was like to have some desired blessings be delayed and others go unfulfilled in this life. When Abraham was 75 years old, he and Sarah had no children (see Genesis 11:29–30; 12:4). Yet the Lord promised him, "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth" (Genesis 13:16). The Lord also promised that Abraham and his posterity would be given the land of Canaan as an inheritance (see Genesis 17:8). Later, when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90, they

were promised that Sarah would bear a son to be named Isaac (see Genesis 17:17, 19). Though this promise and some other promises to them were fulfilled, the Lord's promises that they would have innumerable posterity and receive the promised land were not fulfilled in Abraham's and Sarah's lifetimes.

In the book of Hebrews, the Apostle Paul referenced these promises to Abraham and Sarah.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Hebrews 11:8, 11–13, and consider what you can learn from Abraham and Sarah's example about exercising faith in Jesus Christ when desired blessings are delayed or unfulfilled in this life.



President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency explained, "Faith means trust—trust in God's will, trust in His way of doing things, and trust in His timetable" ("Timing," *Ensign*, Oct. 2003, 12).

Waiting upon the Lord for blessings we desire can test our patience and obedience. While serving as a member of the Seventy, Elder Spencer J. Condie shared:



Sometimes, in our earthly impatience, we may lose sight of the Lord's precious promises and disconnect our obedience from the fulfillment of these promises. ("Claim the Exceeding Great and Precious Promises," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 17)

President Ballard similarly taught the following about waiting upon the Lord:



Waiting upon the Lord implies continued obedience and spiritual progress toward Him. Waiting upon the Lord does not imply biding one's time. You should never feel like you are in a *waiting room*. . . .

The personal growth one can achieve now while waiting upon the Lord and His promises is an invaluable, sacred element of His plan for each one of us. . . . The Lord honors those who serve and wait upon Him in patience and faith [see Isaiah 64:4; Doctrine and Covenants 133:45]. ("Hope in Christ," 55)



Record Your Thoughts

Record experiences or teachings that have shaped your confidence that the Lord will fulfill His promises even if blessings are delayed.

SECTION 3

How can I contribute in the Lord's Church regardless of my family circumstances?

Some Church members whose family circumstances don't currently match those described in the family

proclamation may wonder how they fit in the Church. The Apostle Paul compared the Church of Jesus Christ to the physical body to teach us why each Church member is needed.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12, 16–17, 21, 25–27, and think about how every member of the Church is vital and contributes to the whole.



Our unique circumstances can bring value and experience to our ward or branch families. President Ballard emphasized:



Never forget that you are a child of God, our Eternal Father, now and forever. He loves you, and the Church wants and needs you. Yes, we need you! We need your voices, talents, skills, goodness, and righteousness. (“Hope in Christ,” 55)

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also taught:



Any one of us could isolate ourselves from this ward family on the basis of our differences. . . . Instead, let us share our gifts and talents with others, bringing brightness of hope and joy to them, and in so doing lift our own spirits. (“Belonging to a Ward Family,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1996, 16)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

What can I do to better understand other members of my ward or branch and help them to feel valued and included? If I feel like I don’t belong in the Church, what can I do to allow the Savior to help me feel my value and place in His Church?

Want More? (Optional)

How can I know where I belong in God’s plan and in the Lord’s Church if I don’t feel like my family circumstances are ideal?



At the FamilySearch RootsTech 2021 conference, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland and Sister Patricia Terry Holland taught about the importance of seeing ourselves and others as members of the eternal family of God. You can listen to their remarks in

the video “Elder and Sister Holland Keynote: Family Discovery Day” (time code 30:58–34:58).

The video “Songs Sung and Unsung” (2:56) illustrates the value that each individual member of the Savior’s Church brings to the whole.



In the talk “The Eye of Faith” (pages 36–37), Elder Andersen shared one single sister’s perspective and efforts to serve her family and serve in the Lord’s Church while experiencing a delay in receiving desired blessings.

How can I help other Church members feel supported and included?



In the talk "Eyes to See" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 16–17), Sister Michelle D. Craig of the Young Women General Presidency shared the example of a young woman who reached out to a sister in her ward who had recently separated from her husband.

Where can I learn more about the Church's teachings on various family circumstances?

The following resources provide counsel and encouragement for individuals in varying family circumstances:

- Single adults: Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Conversation with Single Adults," *Ensign*, Mar.

1997, 58–63; M. Russell Ballard, "Hope in Christ," *Liahona*, May 2021, 53–56.

- Divorce: Jackie W., "Rebuilding My Life after Divorce," *Liahona*, Sept. 2020, [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org), digital only; "My Experience with Divorce" (4:20); "Faith Journey: When Parents Get Divorced" (3:05).
- Single parents: David S. Baxter, "Faith, Fortitude, Fulfillment: A Message to Single Parents," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 37–39; "His Grace: Finding Peace in Christ as a Single Parent" (3:17).
- Infertility: Jodi King, "Belonging in the Church through the Lens of Infertility," *Liahona*, Mar. 2020, 46–49; see also the additional resources in the "Want More?" section of the class preparation material for lesson 15.



LESSON 24 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Addressing Mental Health with Hope and Compassion

Our mental and emotional health influences our thoughts, feelings, behavior, resilience, and more. Even as we strive to maintain good health, we may experience mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression. As you study this lesson, consider what you can do to improve your mental health. Also think about how you can be more like the Savior as you interact with family members and others who may experience these kinds of challenges or who may be having suicidal thoughts.

SECTION 1

What can I do to be more mindful of my mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being?

We all have days or periods when we feel sad, stressed, or anxious. It is important to be mindful of how we feel and why we feel the way we do and to do the best we can to manage these emotions in healthy ways.

As the Savior traveled throughout the land of Israel, He surely felt the weight of His ministry. He tutored His Apostles and was patient with their weaknesses. Multitudes pressed upon Him to witness His

miracles or to be healed. His enemies continually looked for opportunities to publicly discredit Him. He was mocked, derided, rejected, and betrayed. Truly, He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3).

Jesus often went to places where He could be alone and commune with God (see Matthew 14:22–23; Mark 1:35; 6:31, 46; Luke 5:16). Following His example can strengthen our mental, emotional, and spiritual health. (*Note:* In some situations of severe mental health challenges or thoughts of suicide, it is better to be with others rather than be alone.)

President M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles asked young adults:



Do you have any personal quiet time? . . .
. . . As our world gets brighter, louder, and busier, we have a greater challenge feeling the Spirit in our lives. If your life is void of quiet time, would you begin tonight to seek for some? ("Be Still, and Know That I Am God" [Church Educational System devotional for young adults, May 4, 2014], broadcasts .ChurchofJesusChrist.org)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Find a quiet place to reflect on your mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being by pondering the following questions:

1. Do I take time every day to deepen my relationship with God? Do I actively look for ways to develop healthy relationships with family and friends? Do I regularly exercise, eat healthy meals, and get enough sleep? Do I have meaningful work and make time for wholesome recreational activities?
2. How mindful am I of my emotional well-being? Can I identify when I am feeling a certain way and why? Do I have healthy ways to cope with negative emotions? When I feel stressed or anxious, do I have healthy ways to take mental breaks and relax?

3. How can my life be blessed when I slow down and reflect on my mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being?

Consider listening to the song "Slow Down" (6:07), performed by Sissel and The Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square.

SECTION 2

What can I do to better understand the experience of having mental health challenges?

During the Savior's earthly ministry, He healed people from all kinds of afflictions (see Matthew 4:23). President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency concluded, "Surely these healings included those whose sicknesses were emotional, mental, or spiritual" ("He Heals the Heavy Laden," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 6).



As mentioned previously, we all have moments or days when we feel overwhelmed, sad, or anxious. If we struggle with these or similar feelings for a prolonged period of time, or if these feelings begin interfering with our daily life, it is important to seek help (see "How can I tell if I'm just having a hard time right now or if I'm struggling with a mental health challenge?", ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

While sinful behavior can cause mental, emotional, and spiritual suffering, it is crucial that we do not attribute all such challenges to sin or a lack of faith.

Some of the Lord's most faithful children experience mental health challenges, such as severe anxiety or clinical depression. Though we don't know everything about mental illness, we do know it is complex. Mental illness can be linked to chemical imbalances in the brain, genetic and environmental factors, traumatic events, brain injury, or substance abuse. In our day, "one in four people will be affected by mental or emotional illness at some point in their lives" (Bonnie L. Oscarson, "5 Resources to Help Youth Facing Emotional and Mental Illness," Nov. 21, 2017, ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

If you experience mental illness, fasting and praying for relief, seeking priesthood blessings, and attending the temple can often bring strength and healing. At other times, the illness may persist. If this occurs, know that your efforts are not in vain (see 2 Corinthians 12:7–10). The Lord is watching over you and can sanctify this experience for your good (see Doctrine and Covenants 122:7).

Consider how the following principles can support you in your efforts to maintain or improve your mental health:

- **Stay focused on Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.** Especially when it is challenging to feel Their influence, choose to act with faith in Them. Reflect on times when you have felt Their influence. Remember that the Savior can always help because He "descended below all things" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:6). He perfectly understands the despair and frustration of those who experience mental illness. The prophet Alma testified that Jesus Christ knows "according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12).
- **Share what you experience with loved ones.** Keeping mental illness secret can increase feelings of isolation and prevent you from receiving

necessary, even lifesaving, help. Helping others understand what you experience will increase their ability to support you.

- **Seek help from competent medical professionals.** Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles advised:



If things continue to be debilitating, seek the advice of reputable people with certified training, professional skills, and good values. Be honest with them about your history and your struggles. ("Like a Broken Vessel," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 41)

If you have family members or know others who experience mental illness, think about how understanding these principles can also help you support them.

When someone shares a mental health challenge with you, listen with love and refrain from judgment. As Sister Reyna I. Aburto of the Relief Society General Presidency taught:



Listening with love is one of the greatest gifts we can offer, and we may be able to help carry or lift the heavy clouds that suffocate our loved ones and friends [see Romans 2:19; 13:12] so that, through our love, they can once again feel the Holy Ghost and perceive the light that emanates from Jesus Christ. ("Thru Cloud and Sunshine, Lord, Abide with Me!," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 58)





Ponder in Preparation for Class

Think about how seeking to better understand mental health challenges can increase your patience with and compassion for those who experience them. Consider watching the video "Like a Broken Vessel" (11:36), which provides personal accounts of individuals who have lived with mental illness, as well as counsel from Elder Holland.

SECTION 3

What can I do to help prevent suicide or help those who have lost a loved one to suicide?

Severe mental health challenges are among the risk factors for suicide. "Most people who attempt suicide do not want to die; they simply want relief from the physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual pain they are going through" ("Preventing Suicide and Responding after a Loss," [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](#)).



If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, seek help immediately. This may include going to a hospital emergency room or calling a free crisis help line. (Find links to help

lines around the world at "In Crisis? Talk Now," [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](#).)



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Mosiah 18:8–9, and think about how this passage can guide you in helping those who are struggling with mental health challenges or thoughts of suicide. (After reading this passage, you may find it helpful to read the article "How to Help Someone in Crisis" on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](#).)

When someone takes his or her life, we can feel inconsolable grief. Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles noted that it can take a long time to heal after losing someone to suicide. He then gave the following counsel:



Try to just get through the next day and then the next day and the next day. . . . The Lord will help us with that. . . . He's there every day. ("Grieving after a Suicide" [video], [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](#))

Jesus Christ has perfect understanding, empathy, and love. We can and should leave all judgment in His hands. President Ballard taught:



Obviously, we do not know the full circumstances surrounding every suicide. Only the Lord knows all the details, and he it is who will judge our actions here on earth.

When he does judge us, I feel he will take all things into consideration: our genetic and chemical makeup, our mental state, our intellectual capacity, the teachings we have received, the traditions of our fathers, our health, and so forth. ("Suicide: Some Things We Know, and Some We Do Not," *Ensign*, Oct. 1987, 8)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Consider what you can do to help prevent suicide. For ideas, consider the counsel provided by Sister Carol F. McConkie, former counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, in the video "Preventing Suicide" (1:43).

Want More? (Optional)

Where can I learn more about what the Church teaches about mental health challenges and suicide?

Gospel Library provides important resources on mental health and suicide for individuals, family members, and Church leaders (see the "Life Help" section in the Gospel Library app or on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org)).

How can I know if I am experiencing an anxiety disorder?

In the article "Anxiety and Anxiety Disorders" (*Ensign*, Mar. 2017, 54–61), Lyle J. Burrup of Family Services

explained the difference between normal anxious feelings and anxiety disorders that can strongly interfere with a person's life.

How can depression affect me?

In the article "I Finally Admitted That I Had Depression. Christ Helped Me Out of the Darkness" (*Liahona*, Sept. 2020, [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org), digital only), a Church member shared her experience with depression and suggested tools that can help with managing it.

What can we do to help individuals who may be having suicidal thoughts?

The following videos provide ideas for preventing suicide and helping individuals who have suicidal thoughts:

- "Understanding Suicide" (2:22) ([ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org))
- "Choose to Stay" (3:49) ([ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org))
- "Sitting on the Bench: Thoughts on Suicide Prevention" (6:42) ([ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org))
- "Finding Christ during Difficult Times" (4:35) ([ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org))



LESSON 25 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Repentance and Forgiveness in Family Life

“Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles” of the gospel of Jesus Christ (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Two of these principles are repentance and forgiveness. What role have these principles played in your family life? As you study this material, consider how Jesus Christ can help you in your efforts to repent of wrongs or offenses you may have committed toward your family members. Also consider how the Savior can help you forgive family members who may offend or hurt you.

SECTION 1

How can my repentance bless my family?

While serving in the Primary General Presidency, Sister Cheryl A. Esplin taught:



Families are the Lord’s workshop on earth to help us learn and live the gospel. (“Filling Our Homes with Light and Truth,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 8)

As we strive to learn and live the Savior’s gospel in our homes, there will be times when we make mistakes. Although disagreements and offenses occur in every family, this doesn’t mean family members are excused from being Christlike in the way they treat each other. Rather, our mistakes give

us opportunities to practice the gospel principles of repentance and forgiveness in our families.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained what repentance means:



Repentance means a change of mind and heart—we stop doing things that are wrong, and we start doing things that are right. It brings us a fresh attitude toward God, one-self, and life in general. (“Point of Safe Return,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 100)

The Savior told a parable about a son who needed to repent because of choices that harmed himself and his family. This son prematurely took his inheritance and wasted it with reckless living. Impoverished and hungry, he began feeding pigs

for work and was even desperate enough to eat the pigs' food. (See Luke 15:11–16.)



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Luke 15:17–24, and consider marking principles you learn about repentance in family life.



Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about how we and our family members can be blessed by our repentance:



Repentance not only changes us, but it also blesses our families and those we love. With our righteous repentance, in the timetable of the Lord, the lengthened-out arms of the Savior will not only encircle us but will also extend into the lives of our children and posterity. Repentance always means that there is greater happiness ahead. ("Repent . . . That I May Heal You," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 42)

While serving as a member of the Seventy, Elder L. Whitney Clayton taught how regular self-examination and prompt repentance can bless marriages. Consider how these practices can help in all of your family relationships:



I have learned that happy marriages rely on the gift of repentance. It is an essential element in every good marital relationship.

Spouses who regularly conduct honest self-examination and promptly take needed steps to repent and improve experience a healing balm in their marriages. ("Marriage: Watch and Learn," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 84)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Take a few minutes to conduct an honest self-examination. Do you need to repent of any choices that have harmed or are harming relationships with any family members? If so, what can you do to turn to the Lord and begin this process? Also consider the choices you are making that bless your relationships with your family members and how you can continue making similar choices.

SECTION 2

How can I forgive a family member who has wronged me?

In the Savior's parable of the prodigal son, the older son refused to join in the celebration held in honor of his younger brother's return (see Luke 15:25–32). Like this older son, there may be times when we need to apply the following counsel from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



Let people repent. Let people grow. Believe that people can change and improve. ("Remember Lot's Wife": Faith Is for the Future" [Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 13, 2009], speeches.byu.edu)

Just as there may be times when you need to seek forgiveness from a family member, sometimes you might need to extend forgiveness to a family member who has offended or hurt you.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Doctrine and Covenants 64:8–11, looking for what the Lord taught early Latter-day Saints about forgiving others.

After citing part of this scripture passage, Elder Holland explained:



It is . . . important for some of you living in real anguish to note what [the Lord] did *not* say. He did *not* say, "You are not allowed to feel true pain or real sorrow from the shattering experiences you have had at the hand of another." *Nor* did He say, "In order to forgive fully, you have to reenter a toxic relationship or return to an abusive, destructive circumstance." But notwithstanding even the most terrible offenses that might come to us, we can rise above our pain only when

we put our feet onto the path of true healing. That path is the forgiving one walked by Jesus of Nazareth, who calls out to each of us, "Come, follow me" [Luke 18:22]. ("The Ministry of Reconciliation," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 79)



Sometimes you may feel reluctant or unable to forgive. Or you may feel that the distance between you and a family member is too great for your relationship to be reconciled. Consider how the following counsel from President James E. Faust of the First Presidency can help you in your efforts to forgive:



We need to recognize and acknowledge angry feelings. It will take humility to do this, but if we will get on our knees and ask Heavenly Father for a feeling of forgiveness, He will help us. . . .

. . . It is not easy to let go and empty our hearts of festering resentment. The Savior has offered to all of us a precious peace through His Atonement, but this can come only as we are willing to cast out negative feelings of anger, spite, or revenge. ("The Healing Power of Forgiveness," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 69)

Elder Massimo De Feo of the Seventy also emphasized the importance of focusing on the Savior:



My dear brothers and sisters, if you are struggling to find the strength to forgive, don't think of what others have done to you, but think of what the Savior has done for you, and you will find peace in the redemptive

blessings of His Atonement. ("Pure Love: The True Sign of Every True Disciple of Jesus Christ," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 82)

Forgiveness and healing can take time. Be patient with yourself as you seek the Lord's help and His gift of healing.



Record Your Thoughts

Consider what you have learned and felt while studying this material. Record your desires or goals related to repentance and forgiveness in your family life. How can you invite the Savior to help you in your efforts?

Want More? (Optional)

Where can I learn more about the role of repentance in my family?

In the "Repentance" section of family.ChurchofJesusChrist.org, you can find teachings about how repentance can increase happiness in your family life.



President Russell M. Nelson's address "We Can Do Better and Be Better" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67–69) can help us understand the principle of repentance and how to do and be better.



Consider what you can learn about repentance from an experience of Joseph and Emma Smith, as told by President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency in his talk "Two

"Lines of Communication" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 85).



Where can I learn more about the doctrine of forgiveness?



In his talk "The Healing Ointment of Forgiveness" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 33–35), Elder Kevin R. Duncan of the Seventy taught important truths about forgiveness.

In the article "Forgiving Others: Misconceptions and Tips" (*Ensign*, Apr. 2018, 18–21), the author discusses misconceptions people have about forgiveness and offers suggestions to help us forgive others.

How can the Lord help me forgive?

Read the account shared by Kelly Smith in the article "Building a Successful Marriage" (*Liahona*, Nov. 1998, 31) to learn how the Lord helped one couple reconcile in a moment of conflict.

In the article "My Journey to Forgiving" (*Ensign*, Feb. 1997, 40–43), a Church member explained how she was able to forgive her former husband who had been unfaithful to her.

How can forgiveness bless me and my relationships with my family members?

Learn from one Church member's experience with forgiving her father in the video "I'm a Mormon, New York Mother, and Forgiving Daughter" (3:32).



LESSON 26 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Recognizing and Healing from Abuse

Abuse is a serious sin. Prophets and apostles have warned that “individuals who . . . abuse spouse or offspring . . . will one day stand accountable before God” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org). As you study this lesson, look for how you can recognize when abuse is happening and how those who have been affected by abuse can be healed by the Lord.

SECTION 1

What is abuse?

Our choices can have a variety of consequences for us and others. Sadly, some people use their moral agency unrighteously to abuse others.

“Often there is not a single definition of abuse that can be applied in all situations. Instead, there is a spectrum of severity in abusive behavior. This spectrum ranges from occasionally using sharp words to inflicting serious harm” (*General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 38.6.2.4, ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Abuse can

happen through neglect or mistreatment of others in physical, sexual, emotional, or financial ways.

As one Church publication notes:

The Lord expects us to do everything we can to prevent abuse and to protect and help victims. No one is expected to endure abusive behavior. . . .

. . . Victims . . . are never to blame for the harmful behavior of others—no matter who abuses them. A victim is not guilty. (*Gospel Topics*, “Abuse,” topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)



Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles addressed our responsibility as disciples of Jesus Christ to refrain from abusing others, especially our family members:



How doubly careful we have to be as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . In no case are we to be guilty of any form of abuse or unrighteous dominion or immoral coercion—not physical or emotional or ecclesiastical or any other kind. . . .

In too many instances, otherwise faithful men, women, and even children can be guilty of speaking unkindly, even destructively, to those to whom they may well be sealed by a holy ordinance in the temple of the Lord. *Everyone has the right to be loved, to feel peaceful, and to find safety at home.* Please, may we try to maintain that environment there. The promise of being a peacemaker is that you will have the Holy Ghost for your constant companion and blessings will flow to you “without compulsory means” forever [Doctrine and Covenants 121:46]. (“Not as the World Giveth,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 37; see also Ephesians 4:29–32)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

What gospel principles are violated when abuse occurs?

SECTION 2

How can I recognize if abuse is happening?

“There are common signs to watch for of how abuse often begins and continues” (“Recognizing Patterns of Abuse,” abuse.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Recognizing and understanding these signs can open the door for the Lord to work through you to help stop abuse or prevent situations that may lead to abuse.



Study in Preparation for Class

Spend a few minutes studying the resource “Recognizing Patterns of Abuse” (abuse.ChurchofJesusChrist.org), and attend class ready to share what you learned.



Never minimize the seriousness of abuse to yourself or to anyone else. “If you or someone you know has been abused, seek help immediately from civil authorities, priesthood leaders, child protective services, or adult protective services” (“In Crisis? Talk Now,” abuse.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). For additional information on reporting abuse, see “What Should I Do If I Know or Suspect That Someone Is Being Abused?” (abuse.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Reflect on how you can use the teachings in this section to protect yourself and to be an instrument of the Lord in protecting others from abuse.

SECTION 3

How can I heal if I've been abused?

Victims of abuse suffer deep wounds. The pain and trauma they have experienced can lead to mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical challenges.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles cautioned:



If you have been abused, Satan will strive to convince you that there is no solution. . . . His strategy is to do all possible to separate you from your Father and His Son. Do not let Satan convince you that you are beyond help. ("To Heal the Shattering Consequences of Abuse," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 41)

The Master Physician, Jesus Christ, can provide hope and ultimate healing to all of God's children. Elder Scott further taught:



Moral agency is a vital element in our Father in Heaven's plan of happiness. He understood that some of His spirit children would use that agency improperly, causing serious problems to others. Some would even violate sacred trust, such as a father or family member abusing an innocent child. Since our Heavenly Father is completely just, there has to be a way of overcoming the tragic consequences of such damaging use of agency for both the victim and the perpetrator. That secure healing comes through the power

of the Atonement of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to rectify that which is unjust. Faith in Jesus Christ and in His power to heal provides the abused with the means to overcome the terrible consequences of another's unrighteous acts. . . .

Healing may begin with a thoughtful bishop or stake president or a wise professional counselor. If you had a broken leg, you wouldn't decide to fix it yourself. Serious abuse can also benefit from professional help. There are many ways to begin healing, but remember that a full cure comes through the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Master and Redeemer. Have faith that with effort His perfect, eternal, infinite Atonement can heal your suffering from the consequences of abuse. ("To Heal the Shattering Consequences of Abuse," 40, 42)



The prophet Isaiah spoke of the Savior's mission and power to heal.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Isaiah 61:1–3, and look for the hope Jesus Christ offers to anyone who has suffered abuse.

To better understand the phrase "beauty for ashes" (verse 3), it may help to know that the Israelites would traditionally pour ashes on their heads

during times of sadness or despair. The Lord promised to replace these ashes with beauty, or with a crown or head covering of beauty. Those who exercise faith in Jesus Christ can experience this sacred gift of healing and love.

Consider watching the video “The Prince of Peace” (2:32), and think about how Jesus Christ can help give peace to victims of abuse.

President Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President, reaffirmed:



No matter what we have suffered, [Jesus Christ] is the source of healing. Those who have experienced any manner of abuse . . . can all be made whole by the Redeemer of the world. However, He will not enter without invitation. We must come unto Him and allow Him to work His miracles. (“That Your Joy Might Be Full,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 86)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

What have you done to invite comfort, help, and healing from the Savior, in any circumstance? What can help you to be patient and faithful throughout the time it may take to heal?

Want More? (Optional)

Where can I learn more about patterns of abuse?

In the article “Hearts Pierced with Deep Wounds: Understanding Abuse in the Family” (*Ensign*, Oct.

2020, 49–53), Jason B. Whiting, a professor at Brigham Young University, described five typical abusive patterns and provided a message of hope.

Where can I learn more about healing from abuse?

In the video “Living with the Pain of Childhood Abuse” (4:50), a woman who suffered abuse as a child shares how she began to find mental and emotional healing through God’s love.

Talking about abuse with appropriate individuals can invite healing, as illustrated in the experience one woman shared in the video “Talking about Sexual Abuse” (3:18).

In the article “A Bridge to Hope and Healing” (*Ensign*, Apr. 2017, 59–63), one Church member shared principles of healing from the effects of sexual abuse.

You can find ideas for helping someone heal from abuse in the resource “How Can I Support Someone Who Has Been Abused?” (abuse.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

What hope is there for someone who has abused someone else?



The Lord offers healing and forgiveness to perpetrators of abuse who choose to repent. Elder Scott taught principles that can help victims, perpetrators, and those who wish to provide support to help individuals heal in his talk “To Heal the Shattering Consequences of Abuse” (pages 40–43).



LESSON 27 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Promoting and Defending the Family as the Fundamental Unit of Society

President M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “The world needs to know what the [family] proclamation teaches, because the family is the basic unit of society, of the economy, of our culture, and of our government. And as Latter-day Saints know, the family will also be the basic unit in the celestial kingdom” (“What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 42). As you think about the fundamental role the family plays in society and eternity, consider what you can do to promote and defend it.

SECTION 1

What influences are contributing to the disintegration of the family?

Many factors are weakening the family in modern societies. Because the Lord loves and wants to bless us, He speaks through prophets to warn us of these and other dangers. Latter-day prophets have warned that “the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Evidence of “the disintegration of the family” surrounds us. For example, we see

- increases in unmarried cohabitation, in children born outside of marriage, and in single-parent families;
- decreases in marriages and birth rates;
- the prevalence of abortion, divorce, abuse, and dysfunction in family life; and
- public policies and media that undermine the family.

(See Bruce C. Hafen, “The Proclamation on the Family: Transcending the Cultural Confusion,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2015, 54; Dallin H. Oaks, “Protect

the Children,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 43; “Divorce,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 70; Julie B. Beck, “Teaching the Doctrine of the Family,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2011, 14.)



The Apostle Paul warned of dangers that would exist in the last days.



Study in Preparation for Class

Read 2 Timothy 3:1–6, 13, and ponder how the conditions Paul described contribute to the disintegration of the family. Consider also how the disintegration of the family can accelerate these attitudes in society. (You might want to read the footnotes or look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary to deepen your understanding of this passage.)

Elder Bruce D. Porter, formerly of the Seventy, discussed one reason men and women have become “lovers of their own selves” (2 Timothy 3:2):



The disintegration of millions of families has taken place in part because popular media and culture have glorified the pursuit of self: of the wholly autonomous individual unconnected with social or moral obligations,

free to pursue whatever ends he or she chooses so long as it does not cause direct physical harm to other aggrandizing selves. (“Defending the Family in a Troubled World,” *Ensign*, June 2011, 15)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

What effects do you think the disintegration of the family has on society? What examples have you seen of these effects?

SECTION 2

What responsibility do I have to promote and defend the family?

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have given this charge: “We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”).

There are many ways we can fulfill this prophetic charge. Consider some of the following ideas:

- Work to strengthen your own family.
- Learn the issues that threaten the family where you live.
- Support or defend political leaders, organizations, and public policies that promote the family.
- Use social media to promote positive family values.
- Look for opportunities to share gospel teachings and your feelings about the family.



Our family circumstances do not have to be perfect for us to promote or defend the family. Our voices are needed, whatever our family circumstances.

While serving in the Young Women General Presidency, President Bonnie L. Oscarson taught:



We need to boldly defend the Lord's revealed doctrines describing marriage, families, the divine roles of men and women, and the importance of homes as sacred places—even when the world is shouting in our ears that these principles are outdated, limiting, or no longer relevant. Everyone, no matter what their marital circumstance or number of children, can be defenders of the Lord's plan described in the family proclamation. (“Defenders of the Family Proclamation,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 15)

There may be times when you feel afraid to promote or defend the family because of opposition you may experience. Consider how you can draw strength from the actions of Captain Moroni and the Nephites, who courageously stood up to Lamanite aggression “to support their lands, and their houses, and their wives, and their children” (Alma 43:9).



Act

Make a simple plan of actions you can take to better promote or defend the family. Be

prepared to share at least one idea from your plan in class.

SECTION 3

How can I be more confident in talking with others about the Lord's teachings on the family?

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency noted that teachings in the family proclamation are “visibly different from some current laws, practices, and advocacy of the world in which we live” (“The Plan and the Proclamation,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 29). Over the course of your life, you will likely discuss topics related to marriage and the family with people who hold views that differ from yours. At such times, refrain from becoming confrontational (see Doctrine and Covenants 19:30). Rather, strive to be among the “peaceable followers of Christ” (Moroni 7:3; see also verses 4–5) and to “[speak] the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).



Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about following the example of Jesus Christ in how we respond to individuals who may oppose our beliefs:



To respond in a Christlike way cannot be scripted or based on a formula. The Savior responded differently in every situation. When He was confronted by wicked King Herod, He remained silent. When He stood before Pilate,

He bore a simple and powerful testimony of His divinity and purpose. Facing the money-changers who were defiling the temple, He exercised His divine responsibility to preserve and protect that which was sacred. Lifted up upon a cross, He uttered the incomparable Christian response: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Some people mistakenly think responses such as silence, meekness, forgiveness, and bearing humble testimony are passive or weak. But to "love [our] enemies, bless them that curse [us], do good to them that hate [us], and pray for them which despitefully use [us], and persecute [us]" (Matthew 5:44) takes faith, strength, and, most of all, Christian courage. ("Christian Courage: The Price of Discipleship," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 72)



Consider how the following principles can help you as you talk with others about marriage and the family:

- *Follow the Spirit.* The Spirit can help you know what to say and what not to say (see Doctrine and Covenants 100:5–6). His influence can also help you control your emotions (see Galatians 5:22–23).
- *Engage in active listening.* Give your full attention to others when they are talking. Refrain from interrupting them or coming up with a response

in your mind as they speak. To ensure you understand what they have said, you can ask clarifying questions or summarize what you have heard them say.

- *Seek to build bridges of understanding.* Don't allow your differences to overshadow what you have in common. As you talk, look for common ground and build on it.
- *Share the Lord's teachings in simple, clear, and non-combative language.* Avoid jargon that is unique to members of the Church (see David A. Edwards, "Communication Breakdown," *New Era*, Oct. 2012, 32–33). Rather, use words and phrases that are accurate, foster understanding, and promote goodwill. Keep your responses brief. Let love fill your heart so your tone is one of kindness.
- *Bear a pure and simple testimony.* Your testimony does not need to be prefaced by saying, "I testify . . ." Rather, you can say things like, "My life has been blessed because . . .," "I have felt . . .," or "This is important to me because . . ."
- *When you disagree, choose to not become disagreeable.* Remain calm and respectful so you can foster friendship and not create an enemy. You can express that you respect the other person's perspective, while also acknowledging that the two of you might not agree on a particular topic. Remember that any spirit of contention will cause the Holy Ghost to leave (see 3 Nephi 11:29).



Ponder in Preparation for Class

What is one way you can improve your ability to have Christlike conversations about marriage and the family with others?

Want More? (Optional)

How can I use social media to promote the family?

You can find ideas for effectively using social media to share your beliefs and feelings about the family by reviewing "What to Share" (ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Where can I find more ideas for how to defend the family?



In her talk "Defenders of the Family Proclamation" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 14–17), President Oscarson taught

important principles to guide us in defending marriage and the family.

The article "Be a Defender of the Family" (*New Era*, Mar. 2012, 6–9) also shares ideas for how you can defend the family.

Where can I learn more about how to respond to those who oppose my beliefs?

The video "Everyday Example: When Beliefs Are Questioned" (12:48) provides an example of how you might talk with people who oppose your beliefs about the family.



LESSON 28 CLASS PREPARATION MATERIAL

Feeling Hope for Building an Eternal Family

Think about what you have learned and experienced in your study of the eternal family during this course. How have these teachings influenced your testimony, desires, and actions? As you study this final lesson, consider what the Lord might want you to do so you can live with greater hope as you strive to build and strengthen your own eternal family.

SECTION 1

Why can I have hope for building an eternal family?

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency taught that we can have hope for building a loving eternal family:



All of us hope for the joy of living in loving families. For some of us, it is a feeling we have not experienced—a feeling we know is possible but have not yet realized. We may have seen it in the lives of others. For others of us, family love has seemed more real and precious when death has separated us from a child, a mother, a father, a brother, a sister, or a loving and beloved grandparent. . . .

. . . If we are blessed to find the restored gospel, we can choose to make and keep

the covenants with God that qualify us for eternal life. As we endure in that faithfulness, the Holy Ghost will confirm our hope and confidence that we are on the path to eternal life, to live in families forever in the celestial kingdom. (“The Hope of Eternal Family Love,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2016, 4)

Our faith in our Heavenly Father’s plan and in His Son, Jesus Christ, can give us hope that we can build an eternal family. The Lord wants to help us, and through His power we can overcome challenges. In the New Testament we read of how Elisabeth became pregnant well beyond childbearing years and Mary, a virgin, became the mother of the Son of God. Each of these women faced different circumstances, but they both understood that “with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).



Record Your Thoughts

Identify an example from the scriptures or your own family experience of how the Lord helps those who trust in Him and seek His help. Take a few minutes to record your responses to the following questions in a notebook or note-taking app:

- What truths about the Lord might the individual (or individuals) in this account counsel you to remember?
- What might the individual (or individuals) counsel you to do in your efforts to build an eternal family?

SECTION 2

How can I have hope for building an eternal family if I don't come from a family that is strong in following the Savior?

Some young adults have not experienced or witnessed righteous family patterns in their families. Some have watched their parents' marriages end in divorce. Those who have experienced these or other difficult circumstances may wonder if they really can build an eternal family.



Elder Yoon Hwan Choi of the Seventy taught about the difference our choices can make for our eternal family:



All of us are in the middle of an eternal family. Our role can be a turning point at which significant changes can occur in positive or negative ways. . . .

. . . There are generations before us and after us depending on us to follow Christ so that we can be an eternal family of God. ("Don't Look Around, Look Up!," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 91, 92)

The prophet Abraham is a powerful example of how we can choose to be a positive "turning point" for our own family. Some of Abraham's family, including his own father, had turned away from the commandments of the Lord. They chose instead to worship false gods. (See Abraham 1:5–6.)



Study in Preparation for Class

Read Abraham 1:2, and look for what Abraham desired and chose despite his circumstances.

When wicked priests attempted to sacrifice Abraham to their false gods, the Lord miraculously saved Abraham. Later, He led Abraham and some of his extended family to another land. While they were there, the Lord promised Abraham important

blessings, including the blessing of an eternal family. (See Abraham 1:7–18; 2:3–4, 8–11.)

Like Abraham, we can seek after the blessings of an eternal family and receive the Lord’s help in building one, whatever our family’s circumstances have previously been.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles testified:



To children whose family situation is troubled, we say, you yourself are no less for that. Challenges are at times an indication of the Lord’s trust in you. He can help you, directly and through others, to deal with what you face. You can become the generation, perhaps the first in your family, where the divine patterns that God has ordained for families truly take shape and bless all the generations after you. (“Fathers,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 96)



Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shared his own experience with choosing to build an eternal family. Read the statement below or listen to it, beginning at time code 25:47 and ending at 28:15.



With the help of the Lord, you can create an eternal family, even if you did not come from the kind of Latter-day Saint home that sometimes is featured on the covers of the [Church] magazines. Please always remember: it begins with you!

The very fact that I had not experienced righteous family patterns in my boyhood home created in me a strong desire to work diligently with Susan to make sure such patterns were always a part of the home we created together. As we counseled with one another and pleaded for help in our prayers, we were inspired and blessed to help our children learn the principles of the Savior’s restored gospel. We certainly were not perfect parents, but we received the spiritual gifts we needed and found “help . . . beyond [our] own” [“Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 220].

You and I are not trapped in our past experiences. We are not wholly and totally victims of our present circumstances or captives of our environment. The Holy Ghost will teach us all things that we should do, including patterns of family righteousness in which we have not previously participated. It begins with you! And with the Lord’s help, you can do it.

Some of you have had your hearts broken by family members or respected leaders who have not honored sacred marriage covenants. You may ask yourself, “If my parents or other couples I have known were sealed in the temple and their marriages did not succeed, what hope can I have that my marriage will last forever?”

To you who have experienced the heartache of a divorce in your family or felt the agony of violated trust, please remember it begins again with you! One link in the chain of your generations may have been broken, but the other righteous links and what remains of the chain are nonetheless eternally important. You can add strength to your chain and perhaps even help to restore the broken links. That work will be accomplished one by one. (“A Welding Link” [worldwide devotional for young adults, Sept. 10, 2017], broadcasts .ChurchofJesusChrist.org)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Think about your future (or current) children. What righteous family patterns might they want you to start or continue? Are there any patterns of unrighteous behavior they would want you to discontinue? How can the Lord help you as you do so?

SECTION 3

What have you learned and experienced in your study of the eternal family?

As you approach the end of this course, consider what you have learned about the importance of the family in our Heavenly Father's plan of salvation and in your own life.

Regarding the importance of families, President M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



Brothers and sisters, the most important cause of our lifetime is our families. If we will devote ourselves to this cause, we will improve every other aspect of our lives and will become, as a people and as a church, an example and a beacon for all peoples of the earth. ("That the Lost May Be Found," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 98)



Ponder in Preparation for Class

Look back through the titles of the lessons in this course. As you do, reflect on the following questions:

- How has this course influenced your understanding and testimony of the Lord's teachings on marriage and the family?
- What has been one of your most significant takeaways from this course?
- What have you learned about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ throughout this course? How has your relationship with Them been strengthened?

Want More? (Optional)

How can I apply the truths taught in the family proclamation to find greater happiness in my life?

The "Happiness in Family Life" section of the Church website includes teachings about several principles in the family proclamation.

Review the article "Seeing Yourself in the Family Proclamation" (*Ensign*, Sept. 2020, 12–23) to better understand how the principles in the family proclamation can bless your life.

How can I continue my study of some of the topics we have discussed in this course?

Consider taking one or more of the following institute courses if they are offered in your area:

- Preparing for an Eternal Marriage (REL 234)
- Building an Eternal Marriage (REL 235)
- Introduction to Family History (REL 261)
- Jesus Christ and the Everlasting Gospel (REL 250)

