

Remarks at the Southern California Regional Satellite Broadcast

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My beloved brothers and sisters, I endorse all that has been said. We have received much good and challenging counsel. Now, I would like to speak to you somewhat in a different vein.

Much more than half a century has passed, but I have never forgotten my father's tenderness toward my mother. She died when she was fifty. During the months of her illness, he was constantly solicitous for her comfort. But this attitude was not expressed only after she became ill. It had been evident to us, her children, throughout our lives. When we were children, we felt a certain security because of it. As we grew older, our thoughts and our actions were colored by that remembered example.

My own beloved eternal companion and I were married for more than half a century before she passed away. She, too, was blessed to come from a home where there was an environment of companionship, love, and trust. I know that most of you have come of such homes. Further, I know that most of you would live with happiness and love in your own homes. But there are many, very many, who do otherwise.

It is difficult for me to understand the tragic accounts of troubled marriages that constantly come before me. They speak of abuse. They speak of dictatorial attitudes and of some husbands who are bullies in their own homes. They speak of violations of trust and of broken covenants. They speak of divorce, and tears, and heartache.

A letter came to my desk from a woman who wrote at length of her troubles. In a spirit of desperation, she asked, "Does a woman have any promise of someday being a first class member of the human race or will she always be considered just a piece of chattel?" She then continued, "To me the answers to these questions are no longer important, but I have daughters. If it is possible for a woman to look forward to an eternity of anything other than being barefoot and pregnant, I would like to be able to teach them this."

There is bitter tragedy in the lines of that letter. I fear there are many others who may feel that same way. The situation is tragic because it is so extremely different from what our Father in Heaven would have for his daughters. Behind this woman's words, I see the picture of a wife who is discouraged, starved for appreciation, ready to give up, and not knowing which way to turn. I see a

husband who has defaulted on his sacred obligations, one who is calloused in his feelings, warped in his perceptions, denying, through his manner of living, the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I do not doubt that there has been fault on her part as well as his. But I am inclined to think that his is the most serious.

The time has now come for all of us to put the past behind us in the spirit of repentance and live the gospel with new dedication. The time is now for husbands and wives who may have offended one another to ask forgiveness and resolve to cultivate one for another, standing before the creator as sons and daughters worthy of his smile upon us. I should like to read the words of the Lord with slight modification:

“[H]e which made them at the beginning, made them male and female, and said For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one...Wherefore they are no more twain but one” (Matt 19:4-6).

God our Eternal Father ordained that we should become companions. That implies equality. Marriage is a joint venture. Of course there are hazards and problems. But these are secondary to the greater opportunities and greater satisfactions that come of sublimating self interests to the good of the partnership. Some years ago, I clipped from the *Deseret News* a column by Jenkins Lloyd Jones who said,

“There seems to be a superstition among many thousands of our young who hold hands...that marriage is a cottage surrounded by perpetual hollyhocks, to which a perpetually young and handsome husband comes home to a perpetually young and beautiful wife. When the hollyhocks wither and boredom and bills appear, the divorce courts are jammed...Life is like an old-time rail journey—delays, sidetracks, smoke, dust, cinders, and jolts, interspersed only occasionally by beautiful vistas and thrilling bursts of speed. The trick is to thank the Lord for letting you have the ride.”

The trick, my brothers and sisters, is to enjoy the journey, traveling hand in hand, in sunshine and storm as companions who love and appreciate one another. Anyone can do it with a disciplined effort to live the gospel. Remember that “[e]xcept the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it” (Psalm 127:1).

At the risk of repeating some things I’ve said before, I should like to suggest four cornerstones on which to establish and nurture our homes. I do not hesitate to promise that if you will do so, your lives will be enriched and be fruitful of great good and your joy will be everlasting.

The first of these I choose to call “mutual respect.” Each of us is an individual. Each of us is different. There must be respect for those differences. And, while it is important and necessary that both the husband and the wife work to ameliorate those differences, there must be some recognition that they exist

and that they are not necessarily undesirable. There must be respect one for the other notwithstanding such differences. In fact the differences may make the companionship more interesting.

I have long felt that happiness in marriage is not so much a matter of romance as it is an anxious concern for the comfort and well being of one's companion. It involves a willingness to overlook weaknesses and mistakes.

One man [Rabbi Julius Gordon] has said, "Love is not blind; it sees more, not less. But because it sees more, it is willing to see less." Many of us need to stop looking for faults and begin looking for virtues. Booth Tarkington once remarked, that the "ideal wife is any woman who has an ideal husband." Unfortunately some women want to remake their husbands after their own design. Some husbands regard it as their prerogative to compel their wives to fit their standards of what they think to be the ideal. It never works. It only leads to contention, misunderstanding, and sorrow.

It is commonplace with us to say that we are sons and daughters of God. There is no basis in the gospel for inferiority or superiority as between the husband and the wife. Do you think for a moment that God our Eternal Father loves his daughters less than he loves his sons? No man can demean or belittle his wife as a daughter of God without giving offense to her Father in Heaven.

I am offended by the sophistry that the only latter day saint woman is to be barefoot and pregnant. It's a clever phrase but it's false. Of course, we believe in children. The Lord has told us to "multiply and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28) that we might have joy in our posterity. And there is no greater joy than the joy that comes of happy children in good homes. But he did not designate the number, nor has the church. That sacred matter is left to the couple and the Lord. Husbands, wives: respect one another. Live worthy of the respect *of* one another. Cultivate that kind of respect which expresses itself in kindness, forbearance, patience, forgiveness, true affection, without officiousness, and without show of authority.

I pass now to the second cornerstone. For want of a better name, I call it the "soft answer." The writer of Proverbs long ago declared, "[a] soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1). I hear so many complaints from men and women that they cannot communicate with one another. Perhaps I am naive but I do not understand this. Communication is largely a matter of conversation. They must have communicated when they were courting one another. Can they not continue to speak together after marriage? Can they not discuss with one another, in an open and frank and candid and happy way, their interests, their problems, their challenges, their desires?

It seems to me that communication is largely a matter of talking with one another. But let that talk be quiet. For quiet talk is the language of love. It is the language of peace. It is the language of God. It is when we raise our voices, that tiny molehills of difference become mountains of conflict.

It seems to me that there is something significant in the description of Elijah's contest with the priests of Baal: "[A] great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks" (1 Kings 19:11). That is a rather vivid description of some of the arguments that take place between husbands

and wives. But notes the writer of the scripture:

“[T]he Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice” (1 Kings 19:11-12).

The voice of heaven is a still small voice. The voice of peace in the home is a quiet voice. Husbands, wives, remember: “he [or she] that is slow to anger is better than the mighty” (Prov. 16:32). Cultivate the art of the soft answer. It will bless your homes, bless your lives, bless your companionships, and bless your children.

Cornerstone number three: financial honesty. I am satisfied that money is the root of more trouble in marriage than all other causes combined. I am confident that there is no better discipline, nor one more fruitful with blessings in the handling of our resources, than the commandment to ancient Israel through the prophet Malachi who said:

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse...and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Mal. 3:10).

We live in an age of persuasive advertising and of skillful salesmanship all designed to entice us to spend. An extravagant husband or wife can jeopardize any marriage. I think it is a good principle that each have some freedom and independence with everyday necessary expenditures, while at the same time, discussing and consulting and agreeing on large expenditures. There would be fewer rash decisions, fewer unwise investments, fewer consequent loses, fewer bankruptcies, if husbands and wives would counsel together on such matters and seek counsel from others.

Live honestly with the Lord. Live honestly with one another as companions. Live honestly with others. Make timely payment of obligations a cardinal principle of your lives. Consult with one another and be unified in decisions. The Lords will bless you as you do so.

The final cornerstone on which to build your home: family prayer. I know of no other practice, that will have so salutary an effect upon your lives as will the practice of kneeling together in prayer. The very words “Our Father in Heaven” have a tremendous effect. Your daily conversations with him will bring peace into your hearts and a joy into your lives that can come from no other source. Your companionship will sweeten through the years. Your love will strengthen. Your appreciation one for another will grow. Your children will be blessed with a sense of security that comes of living in a home where dwells the spirit of God. I pray that the Lord may so bless them and that as parents, you will be directed to bless them with these same words.

All to His glory and to the glory of our Father in Heaven, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Amen.