

In Praise of Those Who Save

By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

As we emulate the Savior's love, He will surely bless and prosper our righteous efforts to save our marriages and strengthen our families.

Many years ago, I was at the Frankfurt Germany Temple when I noticed an elderly couple holding hands. The caring tenderness and affection they showed to each other warmed my heart.

I'm not completely sure why this scene affected me so profoundly. Perhaps it was the sweetness of the love these two people shared for one another—a compelling symbol of perseverance and commitment. It was clear that this couple had been together for a long time and their affection for one another was still alive and strong.

A Society of Disposables

I think another reason this tender scene has stayed with me for so long is the contrast to some of today's attitudes. In so many societies around the world, everything seems to be disposable. As soon as something starts to break down or wear out—or even when we simply grow tired of it—we throw it out and replace it with an upgrade, something newer or shinier.

We do this with cell phones, clothes, cars—and, tragically, even with relationships.

While there may be value in decluttering our lives of material things we no longer need, when it comes to things of eternal importance—our marriages, our families, and our values—a mind-set of replacing the original in favor of the modern can bring profound remorse.

I am grateful that I belong to a church that values marriage and family. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are known throughout the world for having some of the finest marriages and families you can find. I believe this is, in part, due to the precious truth restored by Joseph Smith that marriages and families are meant to be eternal. Families are not just meant to make things run more smoothly here on earth and to be cast off when we get to heaven. Rather, they are the *order* of heaven. They are an echo of a celestial pattern and an emulation of God's eternal family.

But strong marriage and family relationships do not happen just because we are members of the Church. They require constant, intentional work. The doctrine of eternal families must inspire us to dedicate our best efforts to saving and enriching our marriages and families. I admire and applaud those who have preserved and nourished these critical, eternal relationships.

Today I wish to speak in praise of those who save.

Saving Our Marriages

Over the years, I have performed the sealing ordinance for many hopeful and loving couples. I have never met anyone who, as they looked at each other across the altar, thought they would end up divorced or heartbroken.

Unfortunately, some do.

Somehow, as the days multiply and the color of romantic love changes, there are some who slowly stop thinking of each other's happiness and start noticing the little faults. In such an environment, some are enticed by the tragic conclusion that their spouse isn't smart enough, fun enough, or young enough. And somehow they get the idea that this gives them justification to start looking elsewhere.

Brethren, if this comes close to describing you at all, I warn you that you are on a road that leads to broken marriages, broken homes, and broken hearts. I plead with you to stop now, turn around, and come back to the safe path of integrity and loyalty to covenants. And, of course, the same principles apply for our dear sisters.

Now, just one word to those of our single brethren who follow the deception that they first have to find the "perfect woman" before they can enter into serious courting or marriage.

My beloved brethren, may I remind you, if there were a perfect woman, do you really think she would be that interested in you?

In God's plan of happiness, we are not so much looking for someone perfect but for a person with whom, throughout a lifetime, we can join efforts to create a loving, lasting, and more perfect relationship. That is the goal.

Brethren, those who save their marriages understand that this pursuit takes time, patience, and, above all, the blessings of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It requires you to be kind, envy not, seek not your own, not be easily provoked, think no evil, and rejoice in the truth. In other words, it requires charity, the pure love of Christ.¹

All this won't just happen in an instant. Great marriages are built brick by brick, day after day, over a lifetime.

And that is good news.

Because no matter how flat your relationship may be at the present, if you keep adding pebbles of kindness, compassion, listening, sacrifice, understanding, and selflessness, eventually a mighty pyramid will begin to grow.

If it appears to take forever, remember: happy marriages are meant to *last* forever! So "be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great [marriage]. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great."²

It may be a gradual work, but it doesn't have to be a cheerless one. In fact, at the risk of stating the obvious, divorce rarely happens when the husband and wife are happy.

So be happy!

And brethren, astonish your wife by doing things that make her happy.

Those who save their marriages choose happiness. While it's true that some types of chronic depression require specialized treatment, I am fond of this bit of wisdom by Abraham Lincoln: "Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." It fits nicely with its scriptural companion: "Seek, and ye shall find."³

If we look for imperfections in our spouse or irritations in our marriage, we will certainly find them, because everyone has some. On the other hand, if we look for the good, we will surely find it, because everyone has many good qualities too.

Those who save marriages pull out the weeds and water the flowers. They celebrate the small acts of grace that spark tender feelings of charity. Those who save marriages save future generations.

Brethren, remember why you fell in love.

Work each day to make your marriage stronger and happier.

My dear friends, let us do our very best to be numbered among those hallowed and happy souls who save their marriages.

Saving Our Families

Today I also wish to speak in praise of those who save their relationships with their families. Every family needs saving.

As wonderful as it is that this Church is known for its strong families, we may often feel this must apply to every Latter-day Saint family except ours. But the reality is that there are no perfect families.

Every family has moments of awkwardness.

Like when your parents ask you to take a "selfie" of them, or when your great-aunt insists that you are still single because you are just too picky, or when your opinionated brother-in-law thinks his political view is the gospel view, or when your dad arranges a family portrait with everyone dressed like characters in his favorite movie.

And you get the Chewbacca costume.

Families are like that.

We may share the same gene pool, but we are not the same. We have unique spirits. We are influenced in different ways by our experiences. And each of us ends up different as a result.

Rather than attempting to force everyone into a mold of our own making, we can choose to celebrate these differences and appreciate them for adding richness and constant surprises to our

lives.

Sometimes, however, members of our families make choices or do things that are thoughtless, hurtful, or immoral. What should we do in these cases?

There is not one solution that covers every situation. Those who save their families are successful because they counsel with their spouse and family, seek the will of the Lord, and listen for the promptings of the Holy Ghost. They know that what is right for one family may not be right for another.

However, there is one thing that is right in every case.

In the Book of Mormon we learn of a people who had discovered the secret to happiness. For generations, “there was no contention. ... And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.” How did they do it? “Because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.”⁴

Whatever problems your family is facing, whatever you must do to solve them, the beginning and the end of the solution is charity, the pure love of Christ. Without this love, even seemingly perfect families struggle. With it, even families with great challenges succeed.

“Charity never faileth.”⁵

It is true for saving marriages! It is true for saving families!

Set Aside Pride

The great enemy of charity is pride. Pride is one of the biggest reasons marriages and families struggle. Pride is short-tempered, unkind, and envious. Pride exaggerates its own strength and ignores the virtues of others. Pride is selfish and easily provoked. Pride assumes evil intent where there is none and hides its own weaknesses behind clever excuses. Pride is cynical, pessimistic, angry, and impatient. Indeed, if charity is the pure love of Christ, then pride is the defining characteristic of Satan.

Pride may be a common human failing. But it is not part of our spiritual heritage, and it has no place among holders of the priesthood of God.

Life is short, brethren. Regrets can last a long time—some will have repercussions that echo through eternity.

The way you treat your wife or children or parents or siblings may influence generations to come. What legacy do you want to leave your posterity? One of harshness, vengeance, anger, fear, or isolation? Or one of love, humility, forgiveness, compassion, spiritual growth, and unity?

We all need to remember, “Judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.”⁶

For the sake of your family relationships, for the sake of your soul, please be merciful, for “mercy triumphs over judgment.”⁷

Set aside pride.

Sincerely apologizing to your children, your wife, your family, or your friends is not a sign of weakness but of strength. Is being right more important than fostering an environment of nurturing, healing, and love?

Build bridges; don't destroy them.

Even when you are not at fault—perhaps especially when you are not at fault—let love conquer pride.

If you do this, whatever adversity you are facing will pass, and because of the love of God in your hearts, contention will fade. These principles of saving relationships apply to all of us, regardless of whether we are married, divorced, widowed, or single. We all can be saviors of strong families.

The Greatest Love

Brethren, in our efforts to save our marriages and families, as in all things, let us follow the example of the One who saves us. The Savior won “our souls with love.”⁸ Jesus Christ is our Master. His work is our work. It is a saving work, and it begins in our homes.

Love in the fabric of the plan of salvation is selfless and seeks the well-being of others. That is the love our Heavenly Father has for us.

As we emulate the Savior's love, He will surely bless and prosper our righteous efforts to save our marriages and strengthen our families.

May the Lord bless you in your untiring and righteous efforts to be numbered among those who save. This is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See 1 Corinthians 13:4–7; see also Moroni 7:47.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.
3. Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9; 3 Nephi 14:7.
4. See 4 Nephi 1:15–16.
5. 1 Corinthians 13:8; see also Moroni 7:46.
6. James 2:13, English Standard Version.
7. James 2:13, English Standard Version.
8. “O God, the Eternal Father,” *Hymns*, no. 175.