

NURTURING LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP IN MARRIAGE

LESSON 3

Purpose To help participants better understand the principle of love and to encourage those who are married to nurture the love in their marriages.

Preparation

1. Consider ways you can apply the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual).
2. Ponder the doctrines and principles outlined in the lesson’s bold headings. Throughout the week, think about ways to teach these doctrines and principles. Seek the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. If the following items are available, prepare to use them as part of the lesson:
 - a. One or more wedding pictures. For example, you could display the picture *Young Couple Going to the Temple* (62559; Gospel Art Picture Kit 609) or you could bring pictures from your wedding and ask participants to bring their own wedding pictures.
 - b. A flower or a picture of a flower.

Suggested Lesson Development

Husbands and wives need to nurture their love for one another.

Display one or more wedding pictures (see “Preparation,” item 3a). Comment on the love that husbands and wives feel for each other when they are first married.

Display a flower or a picture of a flower (see “Preparation,” item 3b). Then have a participant read the following statement by President Spencer W. Kimball, the 12th President of the Church (page 14 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*):

“Love is like a flower, and, like the body, it needs constant feeding. The mortal body would soon be emaciated and die if there were not frequent feedings. The tender flower would wither and die without food and water. And so love, also, cannot be expected to last forever unless it is continually fed with portions of love, the manifestation of esteem and admiration, the expressions of gratitude, and the consideration of unselfishness” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 5).

Explain that this lesson is about how husbands and wives can nurture their love for one another so it will continue to grow.

Expressions of affection and kindness keep love and friendship alive in marriage.

Ask participants who are married to think back to the time when they were newlyweds. Invite them to tell about some things they did for their spouses at that time in their lives.

- Why are such actions necessary throughout marriage?

Explain that a husband and wife must continue to court one another and nurture their friendship throughout their lives. As they do this, they will find that their love for each other grows stronger.

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy observed: “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. Nothing is more inspiring in today’s world of easily dissolved marriages than to observe a husband and wife quietly appreciating and enjoying each other’s friendship year in and year out as they experience together the blessings and trials of mortality” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 81; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 64).

While serving in the Seventy, Elder James E. Faust said that one of the less obvious but more significant reasons for divorce is “the lack of a constant enrichment in marriage, . . . an absence of that something extra which makes it precious, special, and wonderful, when it is also drudgery, difficult, and dull.” He counseled: “In the enriching of marriage the big things are the little things. It is a constant appreciation for each other and a thoughtful demonstration of gratitude. It is the encouraging and the helping of each other to grow. Marriage is a joint quest for the good, the beautiful, and the divine” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 13–14; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 10–11).

- What are some “little things” that can keep love and friendship alive in marriage? (Consider listing participants’ responses on the chalkboard.) What experiences or examples can you share that show the importance of keeping love growing in these ways?

One woman, married for over 35 years, said: “I love it when my husband still brings me little surprises after he has been gone for an evening or a weekend. It doesn’t have to be a big thing, just a cookie or flower he saved from the meeting. I especially love it when he calls me from work in the middle of the day just to ask how my day is going or to share some exciting bit of news. These little things help me feel loved and cherished.”

Point out that husbands and wives need to plan time to be alone together. Have participants read the following counsel from Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Seventy (page 19 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*):

“Keep your courtship alive. Make time to do things together—just the two of you. As important as it is to be with the children as a family, you need regular weekly time alone together. Scheduling it will let your children know that you feel that your marriage is so important that you need to nurture it. That takes commitment, planning, and scheduling” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 86; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 65).

- What can get in the way of husbands and wives taking time to do things together? How can married couples make time to keep their courtship alive?

Proper intimacy in marriage is an expression of love.

Explain that the proper expression of physical intimacy in marriage is approved by the Lord. It brings great blessings to a married couple, helping them unify their souls and strengthen their love for each other. Consider sharing some or all of the following statements:

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained the purposes of physical intimacy in marriage: “Within the enduring covenant of marriage, the Lord permits husband and wife the expression of the sacred procreative powers in all their loveliness and beauty within the bounds He has set. One purpose of this private, sacred, intimate experience is to provide the physical bodies for the spirits Father in Heaven wants to experience mortality. Another reason for these powerful and beautiful feelings of love is to bind husband and wife together in loyalty, fidelity, consideration of each other, and common purpose” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 50; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 38).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “The power to create mortal life is the most exalted power God has given his children. Its use was mandated in the first commandment [given to Adam and Eve], but another important commandment was given to forbid its misuse. The emphasis we place on the law of chastity is explained by our understanding of the purpose of our procreative powers in the accomplishment of God’s plan. The expression of our procreative powers is pleasing to God, but he has commanded that this be confined within the relationship of marriage” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 99; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 74).

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “In the context of lawful marriage, the intimacy of sexual relations is right and divinely approved. There is nothing unholy or degrading about sexuality in itself, for by that means men and women join in a process of creation and in an expression of love” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 311).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “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]. This is a union of such completeness that we use the word *seal* to convey its eternal promise. The Prophet Joseph Smith once said we perhaps could render such a sacred bond as being ‘welded’ one to another [see D&C 128:18]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 100; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 76).

President Howard W. Hunter, the 14th President of the Church, counseled that even within the relationship of marriage, the sacred procreative powers must not be misused: “Tenderness and respect—never selfishness—must be the guiding principles in the intimate relationship between husband and wife. Each partner must be considerate and sensitive to the other’s needs and desires. Any domineering, indecent, or uncontrolled behavior in the intimate relationship between husband and wife is condemned by the Lord” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 51).

Read Exodus 20:14, 17 with participants. Then share the following statement by President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of the Church:

“We believe in chastity before marriage and total fidelity after marriage. That sums it up. That is the way to happiness in living. That is the way to satisfaction. It brings peace to the heart and peace to the home” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 49).

Emphasize that husbands and wives should be careful not to do anything that even approaches infidelity. For example, they must always maintain appropriate emotional and physical boundaries between themselves and coworkers of the opposite sex.

- Why is complete fidelity in a marriage relationship vitally important?
- How is viewing unwholesome or pornographic material a betrayal of trust in a marriage? In what ways does flirting with a member of the opposite sex harm a marriage?

Share one or both of the following statements:

President Howard W. Hunter advised: “Be faithful in your marriage covenants in thought, word, and deed. Pornography, flirtations, and unwholesome fantasies erode one’s character and strike at the foundation of a happy marriage. Unity and trust within a marriage are thereby destroyed” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50).

President Ezra Taft Benson, the 13th President of the Church, counseled: “If you are married, avoid flirtations of any kind. . . . What may appear to be harmless teasing or simply having a little fun with someone of the opposite sex can easily lead to more serious involvement and eventual infidelity. A good question to ask ourselves is this: Would my spouse be pleased if he or she knew I was doing this? Would a wife be pleased to know that her husband lunches alone with his secretary? Would a husband be pleased if he saw his wife flirting and being coy with another man? My beloved brothers and sisters, this is what Paul meant when he said: ‘Abstain from all appearance of evil’ (1 Thessalonians 5:22)” (“The Law of Chastity,” in *Brigham Young University 1987–88 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [1988], 52).

Married couples should strive to have charity, the pure love of Christ.

- Read John 13:34–35 and Ephesians 5:25 with participants. What do these passages teach about how husbands and wives should treat one another?

Emphasize that although a married couple’s physical relationship is important, it is not the most important aspect of their love. Share the following statement by President Spencer W. Kimball:

“[Love in marriage] is deep, inclusive, comprehensive. It is not like that association of the world which is misnamed love, but which is mostly physical attraction. When marriage is based on this only, the parties soon tire of one another. . . . The love of which the Lord speaks is not only physical attraction, but spiritual attraction as well. It is faith and confidence in, and understanding of, one another. It is a total partnership. It is companionship with common ideals and standards. It is unselfishness toward and sacrifice for one another. It is cleanliness of thought and action and faith in God and his program. It is parenthood in mortality ever looking toward godhood and creation, and parenthood of spirits. It is vast, all-inclusive, and limitless. This kind of love never tires or wanes. It lives on through sickness and sorrow, through prosperity and privation, through accomplishment and disappointment, through time and eternity” (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 130–31).

Explain that the love President Kimball spoke of is charity, the pure love of Christ. Read Moroni 7:45–48 with participants. Ask participants to identify

characteristics of charity as they read. Write these characteristics on the chalkboard as shown below:

Charity:
Suffereth long.
Is kind.
Envieth not.
Is not puffed up (proud).
Seeketh not her own.
Is not easily provoked.
Thinketh no evil.
Rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth.
Beareth all things.
Believeth all things.
Hopeth all things.
Endureth all things.
Never faileth.
Is the greatest of all.
Is the pure love of Christ.
Endureth forever.

Point out that other than the commitment to love Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and come unto them, the commitment of marriage—especially eternal marriage—is the most important commitment we ever make. Husbands and wives must work continually to develop charity toward one another.

To help participants apply this principle, direct their attention to the characteristics of charity that you have written on the chalkboard. Invite them to discuss ways in which specific characteristics, such as “seeketh not her own” or “never faileth,” may be expressed in the marriage relationship. Ask them to share examples they have seen of some of these characteristics.

Conclusion

Emphasize that husbands and wives must nurture their love and friendship. They need to keep their love alive by continuing to do little things that show affection and kindness. They should be sensitive to each other’s spiritual, physical, and emotional needs as they share the joys and burdens of life together. They must resolve never to do anything to destroy the love that is essential in a marriage relationship. And they should “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that [they] may be filled with [charity]” (Moroni 7:48). As marriage partners continue to have a total commitment to each other, their love for each other will increase over the years. They will find that they are developing love that is truly Christlike.

Refer to pages 12–15 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the article “Oneness in Marriage,” by President Spencer W. Kimball. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.