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Revealed Realities of MORTALITY

Each person is placed on the earth in unique circumstances. Despite our uniqueness, the Lord has revealed truths about the purposes of mortal life that apply to all of us. He taught these truths to our first parents, Adam and Eve, and has reconfirmed them in our day.

I refer to these truths as the “realities of mortality.” If we are to gain the fullest blessings and benefits from our mortal experience, we must understand and embrace these revealed realities. Failure to understand or, worse, knowingly ignoring them will result in our time on earth being misspent, underutilized, and perhaps utterly wasted.

It is not enough to merely arrive on earth, receive a mortal body, and live here for a lifetime. To make our time here meaningful, we must live and experience the God-ordained purposes of mortality—fully, completely, and wholeheartedly—rather than becoming distracted by things

that are interesting, comfortable, and convenient.

When Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden, they entered into a mortal world. The Lord prepared them for their mortal experience by teaching them the realities they would experience. I want to review three of those realities.

As I begin, remember that many premortal spirits did not receive mortal bodies because they did not keep their first estate.¹ They are intent on preventing us from experiencing the fullness of mortality. They seek to keep us from experiences that lead to our eternal happiness.

Reality Number 1: Work helps us develop the qualities and attributes essential for eternal life.

God said to Adam, “By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou shalt return unto the ground” (Moses 4:25; see also Genesis 3:19). Some people characterize the

Lord’s words as a curse on Adam and his posterity for partaking of the forbidden fruit. However, I hear these words as coming from a loving Father explaining to a young and inexperienced son the conditions in the fallen, mortal world in which the son will soon live.

Like an earthly father preparing a son about to leave home, the Father was helping the first man prepare to live on his own away from home. He was explaining that work was a new reality—a reality of mortality.

Heavenly Father knew that Adam and Eve would soon have to struggle against the elements and the earth itself. In contrast to their experiences in the Garden of Eden, where everything was provided for them, mortal life would require physical and mental effort, sweat, patience, and persistence to survive.

Learning to work—training and disciplining our minds, bodies, and spirits to exert, produce, achieve, and

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progress—is a foundation reality of every mortal life. It is one of the ways we become like God and accomplish His purposes on the earth. Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost all work. Their work and their glory is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). The reality is there can be no glory without work.

One of the principal reasons men need to work is to provide for their families. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” lists “provide” as one of the three roles given specifically to men.² A man who knows how to work and provide for himself has the confidence that he can marry and provide for a wife and children.

Bishop H. David Burton, former Presiding Bishop of the Church, said: “To work—honestly and productively—brings contentment and a sense of self-worth. Having done all we can to be self-reliant, to provide for our own needs and those of our family, we can turn to the Lord in confidence to ask for what we might yet lack.”³

Satan is ever alert to destroy the purposes of God and to subvert our mortal experience. To counter the emphasis the Father places on work, the adversary has convinced many in our day that a primary goal in life is to avoid work. In today’s societies, many people concentrate on finding jobs that pay well but require little

work, investments or schemes that pay high returns without effort, and programs that pay for what they want at no cost to them. Some seek to avoid work by borrowing and living on money they never intend to repay. They are unwilling to work, budget, and save before they spend. Church leaders have counseled that we should work for what we obtain and “avoid debt except for the most fundamental of needs.”⁴

Another insidious tactic the adversary employs in this generation is to channel men’s natural ambition to work and achieve into virtual dead ends. God placed in young men the desire to compete and achieve, with the intent that they use this ambition to become faithful providers for a family. In our youth, this ambition can be channeled into academic, athletic, or other pursuits that help to teach persistence, discipline, and work. Satan, however, would subtly intercept that ambition and channel it into a virtual world of video games that eat up time and ambition and lead to addiction.

No matter how hard you play a video game, virtual work can never bring you the satisfaction that accompanies real work. Real work is the effort, persistence, patience, and discipline to achieve worthwhile knowledge, perform a needed labor, or accomplish a challenging goal.

If we do not learn to work while in mortality, we will fail to achieve our full potential and happiness in this life, and we will not develop the qualities and attributes essential for eternal life.

Reality Number 2: Through eternal marriage we can obtain all of the blessings Heavenly Father wants to give us.

The Lord has promised in the oath and covenant of the priesthood:

“Whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken . . . become . . . the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

“And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord; “. . . He that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

“And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be giveth unto him.

“And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood” (D&C 84:33–35, 37–39).

Our loving Father wants each of His children to receive everything—a fulness, His fulness. In order to receive this fulness, “a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]” (D&C 131:2).

Eternal marriage, and all that it is designed to help us learn and

experience, is the key to obtaining all of the blessings Heavenly Father wants to give His children. Only a family—a man and a woman who live worthy to enter the house of the Lord and are sealed to each other—can become eligible. The full blessings of the priesthood are received together as husband and wife or not at all.

It is interesting that in the oath and covenant of the priesthood, the Lord uses the verbs *obtain* and *receive*. He does not use the verb *ordain*. It is in the temple that men and women— together—obtain and receive the blessings and power of both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. After a couple has received these blessings in the house of the Lord, it is principally in their home life where they develop godly characteristics and attributes—sacrificing for and serving each other, loving each other with full fidelity, and being united in their love for each other and God.

Fulness, priesthood, family—these three related words are all encapsulated in the reality of eternal marriage. Doing all within our power to make eternal marriage a reality of our mortal life ensures that we will not waste our time on earth.

Satan, ever the deceiver, is abroad in our day twisting and distorting the realities of mortality. He is working overtime to destroy the very meaning

and importance of marriage in the minds of men and women. To some, he sells the lie that marriage is not necessary, that love is enough. To others, he attempts to use new legal definitions of marriage to legitimize immoral relationships. To those

who believe in marriage as God has defined it, he lowers its priority in relation to education and financial security. He engenders fear of the sacrifices and difficulties associated with marriage. Frozen by fear, many sit still as objects being acted upon rather than moving forward and acting in faith.

Some people, overwhelmed by the demands of building real relationships but feeling a desire for companionship and intimacy, are lured

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by false hope into the virtual world. Their attempts at virtual intimacy can bring nothing but greater emptiness, longing, and shame. Many are drawn into empty searching again and again until their pattern becomes an addiction that can never be satisfied.⁵ They are caught in a cycle that gradually destroys their will to withstand. They still have their agency but not enough hope in their ability to resist. Caught in this web, they risk missing out on the fulness and joy of one of the most sublime realities of mortality—eternal marriage.

If you are caught in this web, get help. Do not wait. To do so will delay your growth and progress in mortality.

Examine your life. Be sure that your mind has not been darkened by false

ideas related to marriage. Remember that successful marriages are built on “faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.”⁶

Begin today to build those attributes in your personal life. As you do, the Lord will open the way for you to receive the fulness of the blessings He has prepared for His children—the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. Don’t let your mortality “be utterly wasted” (Joseph Smith—History 1:39).

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Reality Number 3: Bearing and raising children helps us develop our capacity to become like God.

At the time He “blessed,” or sealed, Adam and Eve to create the first family on earth,⁷ God gave them a commandment: be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth (see Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28). Marriage and children go together. The procreative powers that make mortal birth possible are to be used only between a man and a woman, legally and lawfully wedded.⁸

Adam and Eve understood that bearing children was an important reality of mortality. They obeyed God’s commandment, “and Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth” (Moses 5:2). Prophets in our day have declared that “God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force.”⁹

In today’s world, however, many people no longer believe that “children are an heritage of the Lord” (Psalm 127:3).

Several years ago, a couple who was about to marry came to me. They asked for my advice regarding children. I reminded them of the commandment they would receive when they were sealed, and I counseled them that they could keep this



commandment in counsel with the Lord. I reminded them that it is a commandment like tithing, Sabbath observance, or other commandments. Once a covenant is made, the question is not whether to keep it but how to keep it in a way that is pleasing to and approved by the Lord.

I watched as they started their marriage. He had a year left of undergraduate studies, and she had another year in a master's program. They felt directed to have their family immediately—despite the schooling and uncertainty over future jobs. It was not easy or convenient to have a child so soon. He had to search for a job, they had to move, and she had to finish her degree. They faced stress and sacrifice. He had to rush home each day and watch the baby while she completed her thesis and practical training. She studied and wrote between nursing and changing diapers.

The Lord has blessed and prospered them. While many others lost jobs in the economic turndown of 2008, he was retained and promoted. Because they lived frugally, they are out of debt except for a mortgage, and they have since been able to completely pay for a master's program with no debt. All the while, they have continued to learn the valuable lessons that can come only with parenthood. Bearing children is neither easy

nor convenient, but it is a commandment that helps us realize the real blessings of mortality.

A Great Gift

Mortality is one of the greatest gifts our Father has given us. He loves us and wants us to use this gift fully and completely. Only by embracing and focusing on the realities God has revealed can we fulfill the purposes for which we came to earth. Satan knows he can do nothing to stop us from obtaining bodies, so he tries to divert us from the purposes for which they were created—to work, to marry, and to bear children.

Let us not live aimlessly and without purpose, only to find in the end that we have spent our time on earth disconnected from the revealed realities of mortality essential to achieve our purposes here. Let us avoid the illusions of the precepts of men and cling to the revealed realities given by God so that our journey through mortality may be rich, full, and real. ■

From a devotional address, "The Realities of Mortality," delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on February 19, 2013. For the full address, go to web.byui.edu/devotionalsandpeeches.

NOTES

1. See Abraham 3:26, 28.
2. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. H. David Burton, "The Blessing of Work," *Ensign*, Dec. 2009, 43.
4. Neil L. Andersen, "Reverence for God Is the Beginning of Wisdom," *Ensign*, Jan. 2013, 38; see also Robert D. Hales, "Becoming



THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL INCREASE

"Those who do not marry or those who cannot have children are not excluded from the eternal blessings they seek but which, for now, remain beyond their reach. We do not always know how or when blessings will present themselves, but the promise of eternal increase will not be denied any faithful individual who makes and keeps sacred covenants."

President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Witness," *Ensign*, May 2014, 95.

- Provident Providers Temporally and Spiritually," *Ensign*, May 2009, 7–10.
5. Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "Addiction is the craving of the natural man, and it can never be satisfied" ("Becoming Provident Providers Temporally and Spiritually," 10).
 6. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 129.
 7. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:115, 2:71.
 8. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 129.
 9. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 129.