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Apostles

Disciples and the Defense of Marriage

Disciples of the Lord are defenders of traditional marriage.

We cannot yield. History is not our judge.

A secular society is not our judge. God is our judge!

There is great power in a strong partnership. True partners can achieve more than the sum of each acting alone. With true partners, one plus one is much more than two. For example, Dr. William J. Mayo and his brother, Dr. Charles H. Mayo, formed the Mayo Clinic. Lawyers and others form important partnerships. And in marriage, a husband and a wife can form *the* most significant partnership of all—an eternal family.

Sustainable improvements in any endeavor depend on collaboration and agreement. Great leaders and partners develop the skill of sharing insights and efforts and the pattern of building consensus. Great partners are completely loyal. They suppress personal ego in exchange for being part of creating something larger than themselves. Great partnerships depend upon each partner developing his or her own personal attributes of character.

Guardians of Virtue

Now seems to be my time for attending funerals. I have witnessed many families saying good-bye for a season to those they love and to whom they are sealed. I often leave funerals wondering, “What would I like to have said about me at my funeral?”

It is not too early in your life to ask the same question. What would you like to have said about you at your funeral?

I hope it is said that you were a good husband and father or a good wife and mother, that you were a person of integrity, that you were kind and patient, that you were humble and hardworking, and that you were a person of virtue.

The greatest guardians of all virtues are marriage and family. This is particularly the case with the virtues of chastity and fidelity, both of which are required to create enduring and fully rewarding marriage partnerships and family relationships.

Male and female are created for what they can do and become—together. It takes a man and a woman to bring a child into the world. Mothers and fathers are not interchangeable. Men and women are distinct and complementary. Children deserve a chance to grow up with both a mom and a dad.¹

You will likely encounter increasing debate about the definition of marriage. Many of your neighbors, colleagues, and friends will have never heard logical and inspired truths about the importance of marriage as God Himself defined it. You will have many opportunities to strengthen understanding of the Lord’s side of that argument by the eloquence of your examples, both as individuals and as families.

The Apostle Paul foresaw our circumstances when he said:



“In the last days perilous times shall come.

“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

“Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, . . . despisers of those that are good,

“ . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”

Then he concluded: “From such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:1–5).

After his remarkable prophecy of our time, Paul added this word of warning: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

Ponder that! It means that during these perilous times, life will not be comfortable for true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we will have His approval. He gave us this assurance: “Blessed are all they who are persecuted for my name’s sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (3 Nephi 12:10).

In short, as disciples, each of us will be put to the test. At any hour of any day, we have the privilege of choosing between right and wrong. This is an age-old battle that started in a premortal realm. And that battle is becoming more intense every day. Your individual strength of character is needed now more than ever before.

No Part-Time Disciples

The day is gone when you can be a quiet and comfortable Christian. Your religion is not just about showing up for church on Sunday. It is about showing up as a true disciple from Sunday morning through Saturday night—24/7! There is no such thing as a part-time disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Jesus invites anyone who wants to be His disciple to take up his cross and follow Him (see Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; D&C 56:2; 112:14). Are you ready to join the ranks? Or will you be ashamed of the gospel? Will you be ashamed of your Lord and His plan? (see Mormon 8:38). Will you yield to voices of those who would have you join them on the popular side of contemporary history?

No! The youth of Zion will not falter! I believe you will be courageous and proclaim God's truth with clarity and kindness, even when His truth is politically unpopular! Paul set that pattern when he declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16; see also 2 Timothy 1:8).

Disciples of the Lord are defenders of traditional marriage. We cannot yield. History is not our judge. A secular society is not our judge. God is our judge! For each of us,

Judgment Day will be held in God's own way and time (see Romans 2:5; Alma 33:22; Ether 11:20; D&C 88:104; 133:38).

The future of marriage and of countless human lives will be determined by your willingness to bear solemn witness of the Lord and live according to His gospel. Great protection is available to us as we enter the waters of baptism and take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ. King Benjamin so explained: "And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters" (Mosiah 5:7; see also verse 8).

I appreciate a statement by Sister Sheri Dew, a former member of the general Relief Society presidency, at a recent Brigham Young University Women's Conference. She

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said: “At the heart of becoming disciples is *doing* what we promise to do every time we partake of the sacrament—which is to ‘always remember’ the Lord. This means remembering Him when we choose what media we’re willing to expose our spirits to. It means remembering Him in how we spend our time and when choosing between a steady diet of pop culture or the Word of God. It means remembering Him in the middle of conflict or when temptation looms. It means remembering Him when critics attack His Church and mock truth. It means remembering that we have taken His name upon us.”²

Sister Dew’s message is consonant with a message from President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95), who said: “If our lives and our faith are centered upon Jesus Christ and His restored gospel, nothing can ever go permanently wrong. . . . If our lives are not centered on the Savior and His teachings, no other success can ever be permanently right.”³

Proclaim the Will of God

Wherever we go, you and I as disciples of the Lord bear a solemn responsibility to proclaim the will of God to all people. And one of the more demanding opportunities of our time is to stand up for the truth regarding the sacred nature of marriage.

Our message is shaped by divine doctrine, canonized in the Bible:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

“God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27).

“God blessed them, and . . . said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28).

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

“And Adam called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living”

(Genesis 3:20; see also Moses 4:26).

God is the Father of all men and women. They are His children. It was He who ordained marriage as the union of a man and a woman. Marriage was not created by human judges or legislators. It was not created by think tanks or by popular vote or by oft-quoted bloggers or pundits. It was not created by lobbyists. Marriage was created by God!

The Ten Commandments forbade adultery and covetousness (see Exodus 20:14, 17; Deuteronomy 5:18, 21).

Those ancient commandments were given later to people of New Testament times (see Matthew 5:27–28; 19:18; Romans 13:9) and Book of Mormon times (see Mosiah 13:22, 24; 3 Nephi 12:27). In modern revelation the Lord has reaffirmed, “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else” (D&C 42:22).

True intimacy, as planned by our Creator, is experienced only within the sacred union of a husband and wife because it is enriched by truth and ennobled by the honoring of covenants a husband and a wife make with each other and with God. It is crucial to note that full fidelity to those covenants forbids pornography, lust, or abuse in any form.

Social and political pressures to change marriage laws have resulted in practices contrary to God’s will regarding the eternal nature and purposes of marriage. Man simply cannot make moral what God has declared to be immoral. Sin, even if legalized by man, is still sin in the eyes of God.

Brothers and sisters, undergirded by incontrovertible truth, proclaim your love for God! Proclaim your love for all human beings, “with malice toward none, with charity for all.”⁴ They as children of God are our brothers and sisters. We value their rights and feelings. But we cannot condone efforts to change divine doctrine. It is not for man to change.



Love Means Obedience

God loves His children. And if they love Him, they will show that love by keeping His commandments (see John 14:15, 21; 1 John 5:2; D&C 46:9; 124:87), including chastity before marriage and total fidelity within marriage. Scriptures warn that behavior contrary to the commandments of the Lord will not only deprive couples of divinely approved intimacy but will also bring about the stern judgments of God (see Leviticus 26:15–20; Psalm 89:31–32; Matthew 5:19).

The noblest yearning of the human heart is for a marriage that will endure beyond death. Complete fidelity to covenants made in holy temples will allow husband and wife to be sealed together throughout all eternity (see D&C 132:7, 19).

The burden of discipleship is heavy. As disciples of the Lord, you will stand as defenders of marriage. And as you are true and faithful, not only will He help you and protect

you (see D&C 84:88), but also He will bless your families (see Isaiah 49:25; D&C 98:37).

You are beneficiaries of the infinite Atonement of the Lord. Because of Him, you will eventually be rewarded with immortality. And because of Him, you may enjoy the blessing of eternal life with Him and your families. ■

From a BYU commencement address, “Disciples of Christ—Defenders of Marriage,” delivered on August 24, 2014. For the full text in English, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
2. Sheri L. Dew, “Sweet above All That Is Sweet” (Brigham Young University Women’s Conference address, May 1, 2014), 7, ce.byu.edu/cw/womensconference/transcripts.php.
3. Howard W. Hunter, “Fear Not, Little Flock” (Brigham Young University devotional, Mar. 14, 1989), 2, speeches.byu.edu.
4. Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address,” Mar. 4, 1865.