

Eternal Marriage

Lesson 41

Purpose To help class members understand how to prepare now for eternal marriage in the future.

Preparation

1. Prayerfully study Genesis 2:24; Doctrine and Covenants 49:15; 131:1–4; Moses 3:24.
2. Additional reading: “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
3. If *Old Testament Video Presentations* (53224) is available, prepare to show “Marriage in the Covenant,” a six-minute segment.
4. Materials needed:
 - a. The plan of salvation chart you made for lesson 2 (or the copy of the chart found in the picture section of the manual).
 - b. A picture of a temple (such as picture 8 in the picture section of the manual).
 - c. A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.

Note to the teacher Temple marriage opens the door to exaltation in the celestial kingdom. After a husband and wife have been sealed in the temple, they must keep the covenants they have made and live the principles of love and obedience to achieve an eternal marriage. Those who live for eternal marriage will realize great blessings here on earth and in the next life.

During the lesson be sensitive to the feelings of class members whose parents are divorced or have not been married in the temple.

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

Families Can Be Together Forever

Story and
discussion

Tell class members that throughout today’s lesson you are going to share a true story about a young woman named Chris (from Chris Geilman, “As Long As You Both Shall Live,” *New Era*, Jan. 1994, 9–11). Then read the beginning of the story:

Chris and her husband were first married in a civil ceremony conducted by their branch president. Later Chris said of that ceremony: “I remember nothing of what was said except the final words: ‘as long as you both shall live.’ We were in love, and the fact that we had not been married in the temple seemed unimportant.”

At the time Chris did not plan on being married in the temple. She said: “I had joined the Church five years earlier and had received several lessons concerning

the importance of temple marriage. But . . . eternity seemed such a long way off. . . . I also felt temple marriage was for the ‘elite’ of the Church, not for someone like me who was still stumbling about with a youthful testimony.”

Five months after the wedding, Chris and her husband discovered that they were expecting their first child.

- How do you think this news affected Chris’s feelings about eternity and temple marriage?

Continue reading the story:

Chris said: “My greatest jolt about the nearness of eternity came . . . when I discovered that we were expecting our first child. I felt nauseated, thrilled, humbled, and terrified all at the same time. As the months passed, a deep love for that little person inside of me began to grow and fill my very being. As this love grew, so did the reality that I wanted this child to be ours for all eternity. . . .

“My love for my husband was also blossoming beyond anything I had ever imagined. . . . The words ‘as long as you both shall live’ began to haunt me. Eternity was creeping ever closer, and I wanted our happiness to last forever.”

- What did Chris and her husband need to do so their happiness could last forever? (They needed to be married in the temple.)

Explain that in the temple, through the power of the priesthood, Chris and her husband could be married for eternity, not just until death. Their children would then be “born in the covenant,” which means that they could be sealed together as a family forever.

Point out that many people consider marriage to be only a social custom or a legal agreement between a man and a woman that they will live together. Others see marriage as outdated and unnecessary. To Latter-day Saints, marriage is much more. God ordained marriage from the very beginning (see Genesis 2:24; D&C 49:15; Moses 3:24). Marriage is the most sacred relationship that can exist. Our Heavenly Father has given us eternal marriage so we can become like him.

- Why did Chris feel at first that getting married in the temple was unimportant? (She felt that “eternity [was] a long way off”; she thought that only the “elite” members of the Church were sealed in the temple.)
- What convinced Chris that it was important to be married in the temple? (Her love for her husband grew, and she wanted their child to be born in the covenant. She wanted to be with her family forever.)

Video
presentation

Explain that one reason for getting married in the temple is that we love our family members and want to be with them forever. Show the video segment “Marriage in the Covenant.”

After you have shown the video segment, ask:

- How will your decision to marry in the temple affect your children and grandchildren in the future?

Eternal Marriage Is Essential for Exaltation

Story and
discussion

Continue with the story about Chris:

The members of the ward where Chris and her husband lived often went on trips to the temple. Chris later recorded how she felt when she could not go with them: “I was learning that unless I made the covenants that are part of the temple ceremony, I would be on the outside looking in for the rest of eternity.”

- What do you think Chris meant when she said that she “would be on the outside looking in for the rest of eternity”? (She and her husband would not be able to receive exaltation in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. Use the following discussions to help class members understand this.)

Chart and
chalkboard
discussion

Display the plan of salvation chart. Briefly review the plan of salvation.

In the top left corner of the chalkboard, write *Celestial Kingdom*.

- What are some things we must do to be able to enter the celestial kingdom?

Below the words *Celestial Kingdom*, list class members’ answers to this question. Answers may include the following:

Be baptized
Receive the gift of the Holy Ghost
Exercise faith in Jesus Christ
Obey the commandments

Scripture and
chalkboard
discussion

Have class members read Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4.

To the right of the words *Celestial Kingdom*, write the word *Exaltation*. Explain that exaltation is life in the highest of the three degrees of the celestial kingdom.

- In addition to the requirements to enter the celestial kingdom, what ordinance must we receive to reach exaltation?

On the chalkboard, write *Be married in the temple* under the word *Exaltation*. The chalkboard should look something like this:

CELESTIAL KINGDOM	EXALTATION
Be baptized	Be married in the temple
Receive the gift of the Holy Ghost	
Exercise faith in Jesus Christ	
Obey the commandments	

Testify that only those who have been married in the temple and have lived worthily can receive exaltation.

Preparation for Temple Marriage

Quotation

Read the following statement by President Spencer W. Kimball:

“Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all the decisions and has the most far-reaching effects for it has to do not only with the immediate happiness, but eternal joys. It affects not only the two people involved, but their children and . . . their children’s children down through the latest generations.

“In selecting a companion for life and for eternity, certainly the most careful planning and thinking and praying and fasting should be done to be sure that of all the decisions, this one must not be wrong. . . .

“We recommend then that all boys and girls from their infancy up plan to be married only in the temple, to keep their lives spotless so that this can be accomplished” (*The Matter of Marriage* [address delivered at the Salt Lake Institute of Religion, 22 Oct. 1976], 4–5).

Picture and discussion

Display the picture of the temple, and write on the chalkboard *Aspire to something higher*. Explain that when we aspire to obtain something, we are willing to work diligently to obtain it.

- What can you do at this time in your life to prepare to be married in the temple?

Explain that preparation for eternal marriage takes obedience, thought, and prayer. Only members of the Church who live righteously are permitted into the temple.

Story and discussion

Continue with the story about Chris:

After Chris decided that she wanted to marry her husband in the temple, her outlook on life changed. “All of my thoughts became centered around what I would have to do to be worthy of entering the temple,” she said.

- How do you think it helped Chris to center all her thoughts on being worthy to enter the temple?
- How would remembering the temple so often influence the things we do and say?

Quotation and discussion

Read the following statement by President Howard W. Hunter, fourteenth President of the Church:

“I invite the Latter-day Saints to look to the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of your membership. It is the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church worthy to enter the temple. . . . The things that we must do and not do to be worthy of a temple recommend are the very things that ensure we will be happy as individuals and as families.

“Let us be a temple-attending people. Attend the temple as frequently as personal circumstances allow” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 8).

- What do you think it means to “look to the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of [our] membership”?
- How can you follow President Hunter’s counsel to be a temple-attending member of the Church?

Explain to class members that they can go to the temple to perform baptisms for the dead (see lesson 45, page 271).

- How can serving in the temple now help you prepare to be married in the temple later?

Point out that serving in the temple brings us great joy and helps us draw nearer to our Heavenly Father. Then remind class members that they need a temple recommend to be able to enter a temple and perform baptisms for the dead. To obtain a temple recommend, they must have an interview with their bishop or branch president to determine whether they are worthy to enter the temple. Read the questions listed below, which give a general idea of the questions that are asked in an interview for a temple recommend. Invite class members to think about how they would answer each question:

1. Do you have a testimony of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost?
 2. Do you sustain the prophet and other Church leaders?
 3. Do you strive to keep the commandments?
 4. Do you treat your family members with love and respect?
 5. Do you attend your Church meetings?
 6. Are you honest with those around you?
 7. Do you keep the Word of Wisdom?
 8. Are you morally clean?
- Why do you think it is necessary to demonstrate worthiness to be able to enter the temple?

Qualities of Eternal Marriage

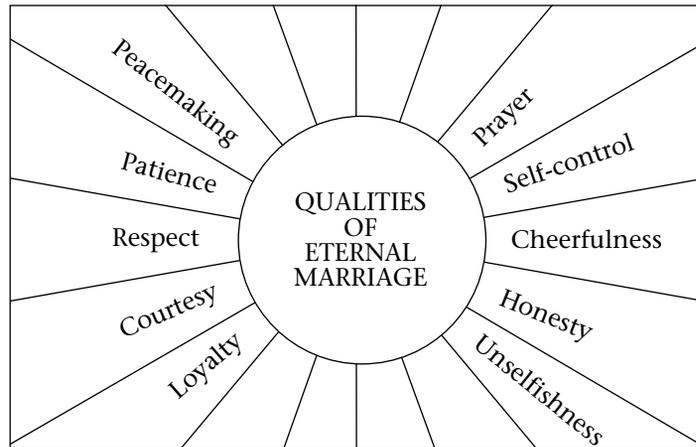
Explain that to be exalted in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom, a husband and wife should strive to have a celestial married life as well as a temple ceremony. The continued righteousness of those married in the temple is as important as the marriage ceremony itself.

Draw a sunburst on the chalkboard. In the center, write *Qualities of Eternal Marriage* (see the illustration on the next page).

- What qualities might help a husband and wife strive to have a “celestial” relationship? (If class members have difficulty answering this question, ask what qualities help them in their family relationships right now. Then point out that these same qualities will help them when they marry.)

Chalkboard
discussion

Write class members' answers on the lines that move out from the circle.
The completed diagram will look something like this:



Choose three or four qualities listed on the chalkboard, and discuss each by asking, "How can this quality strengthen marriages?"

Emphasize that these qualities will help class members now, as they relate with other people. As class members develop these qualities, they will also be more prepared to be good, loving husbands and wives in the future.

Eternal Marriage Brings True Happiness

Story

Read Chris's testimony of temple marriage:

"Finally, one year and two days after our civil marriage, my wonderful husband and I knelt across the altar from each other in the Ogden Temple, surrounded by smiling friends and family members. We gazed on our 'eternal' reflection in the mirrors, tears cascading down our cheeks.

"Four weeks later, our first beautiful baby was born in the covenant. Never had we seen such a living miracle, and she was ours for eternity.

"Over 16 years have passed since that day in the Ogden Temple. The doubts and fears of our first year have been replaced by the peace of knowing ours is a forever family. I shudder to think of the chance we took, and of what these past 16 years would have been like if we had not been sealed in the temple. Many of the couples who begin as we did never do go to the temple.

"I cherish being able to return often to the temple. Within its walls I am reminded that I now possess all I need to be truly happy—forever."

Testimony

Testify of the beauty and importance of temple marriage. Express your gratitude for the promise that we can be together forever with our family members.

Encourage class members to choose a quality from the list on the chalkboard that they can develop now to help them prepare for an eternal marriage later.

**Enrichment
Activities**

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. If *Doctrine and Covenants Video Presentations* (53912) is available, show “Temples Unite Families,” a five-minute segment. The first part of this segment is an excerpt from the conference talk in which President Howard W. Hunter made the statement quoted in the lesson (see page 244).
2. With class members, sing or read the words to “Families Can Be Together Forever” (*Children’s Songbook*, 188).
3. Give each class member a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Then give class members three or four minutes to write down some of the qualities they would like their future husband or wife to have. After they have done this, have them write down a few things they can do that will prepare them to be able to marry someone like the person they have described.
4. Read the short story “What Is It?” (Laura Gough, *New Era*, July 1994, 26–27). In this story, a young woman on a bus trip tells her companions about the purpose of the temple they have just passed.