

A Challenge to Young Adults

Elder Earl C. Tingey
Of the Presidency of the Seventy
May 2, 2004
Ogden Utah Institute

Welcome

My dear young friends and members of the Church, how honored and delighted I am to be with you this evening in this CES fireside for young adults. We have gathered together tonight in a beautiful institute of religion building here in Ogden, Utah. In my mind's eye I see you in hundreds of chapels and institutes throughout North America and in many parts of the world. I see you sitting together with your friends and spouses, for those of you who are married, anxious to know what the Lord may speak, through me, to you.

I compliment you for your faith and achievements. Never have we had such an enlightened group of young adults in the Church as we have today. We love you. We trust you. We know you are the future leaders of the Church.

I see you as students. Many are employed. I see many of you as single adults. Others are married. As you sit together tonight, set aside the cares and concerns of the world. Listen with open hearts and minds that you may receive answers to your prayers. Listen with faith that you might know the will of the Lord for you.

I bring you the love and greetings of the Brethren of the Church. I have the honor and privilege to associate frequently and closely with the members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, along with other General Authorities. I sit in many meetings where counsel is given that affects all members of the Church. In all of these meetings, prayers are offered. The most prayed over group in the Church, I believe, is missionaries. Next is you. Seldom is a prayer offered where a petition to bless and remember the young adults of the Church is not mentioned.

I have prayed and fasted for you tonight that my words will be helpful. Through faith and prayer, I have sought inspiration that perhaps one person in this vast audience might receive an answer to his or her

personal prayers. If that is achieved, my efforts will have been a great success.

A Time of Great Promise

You live in a time of great promise. Never in the history of the world have there been so many opportunities for choice and success. Along with success comes opportunity for failure. You know this.

You live in a time when the Church is growing and developing into a well-known and highly respected worldwide religion. In almost any country where you may travel, you will find faithful Latter-day Saints. You will find strong and well-established wards and stakes as well as humble branches and districts. Under the inspired leadership and direction of President Gordon B. Hinckley, 118 operating temples dot the land. Wherever you go with a temple recommend, you may have the privilege of participating in temple work.

Be Active in the Church

I have three messages for you tonight. First, be an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

There are more than 850,000 young single adult members of the Church between the ages of 18 and 30 in North America alone. You constitute 15 percent of the total membership of the Church in North America. This number increases by more than one million as we consider the many young single adults in other parts of the world. We also reflect on the many young adult members of the Church who are now married and have families.

The Brethren of the Church are saddened and concerned when we lose contact with young single adult members of the Church. We don't know where some of you live. We don't have a current address for you. We can't be in touch with you to invite you to accept a Church calling, to share in the blessings of Church membership, and to be a full-fledged, participating member of the Church.

We know that many of you have completed wonderful, successful missions for the Church. You have distinguished yourself in a most admirable way by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of the world. You are now home, reestablishing yourself in various educational, employment, and family pursuits.

We know that you are a highly mobile society. You move around a lot. You change addresses and telephone numbers. You are difficult to locate. As you establish yourself in securing a quality education, commencing employment, and looking forward to marriage, you should always keep in mind your Church activity.

I know that tonight, as I speak to you, I am “preaching to the choir.” Many who need to hear my words are not in attendance. Can I challenge each of you to think of a friend or associate in the gospel who has become “lost to the leaders.” Encourage him or her to come back. Encourage these friends to reestablish themselves in the gospel, where they can be participating members of the Church.

Responsibility of Parents

We know that many of you do not now live with your parents. Some have moved out and live alone or in apartments with other young adults. There are several principles I would like to share with you that you should follow in this most critical era of your life, no matter where you live or with whom.

So long as you remain single, your parents and family continue to have responsibility for your spiritual care and counsel. Parental responsibility does not end when you move out of the home. You must continue to honor your parents, seek their counsel, keep them informed of your activity, and live in accordance with the gospel standards you know they desire of you.

In many cases, where opportunities allow, you may wish to continue to live in your parents' home. If you do so, we encourage you to participate in your conventional home ward. Accept a calling where you may serve the members of your home ward. Many returned missionaries bring back a wonderful spirit that can be shared with the youth in Aaronic Priesthood or Young Women or in Sunday School, Primary, and Relief Society callings in the Church. You become a living example to the youth and members of your home ward.

It is concerning to see active, enthusiastic returned missionaries “bounce around” and attend various units and meetings on a Sunday, when their services could so greatly bless their home ward.

If you live in a stake that has a local singles ward, and you choose to do so, then attend that ward regularly and make a concerted effort to bless the members of that ward through your service.

If you are not able to remain at home because of education or employment pursuits, then establish yourself in the ward or branch where you are living.

Be Accountable to a Bishop or Branch President

Every member of the Church should be known by and be accountable to a bishop or branch president. There should be a clear line to someone holding priesthood keys. This relationship will provide you with an opportunity to participate in priesthood ordinances, have interviews, secure recommends for the temple where appropriate, and receive callings in the Church.

One of our greatest concerns is that many of our young adults have not established themselves in a unit where they know they have a bishop and their bishop knows who they are. If you have two bishops, you have no bishop. If your membership record is not in the ward where you attend, you are moving in the direction of becoming lost. If you continue to “bounce around” in your Sunday Church attendance and therefore do not put yourself in a position to accept a call to serve in the Church, you may quickly find yourself becoming “lost to your leaders.”

Local priesthood and auxiliary leaders assist parents in strengthening families. Whether you are living at home or away, your priesthood and auxiliary leaders have the responsibility to assist your parents in helping you. They cannot do this unless they know you and can keep in contact with you.

If there are any within the sound of my voice this evening who have not established themselves in a ward or branch and are not known by their bishop or branch president, will you accept my personal and individual challenge that you immediately correct that matter? Fix your accountability to your priesthood leaders. Sisters, meet and know the Relief Society sisters in your local area. Support the Relief Society “transition” initiative as you move from young

womanhood into Relief Society. Young men, be worthy to assume the increased responsibilities and enter into the additional and sacred covenants that occur as you progress from Aaronic Priesthood to Melchizedek Priesthood. Establish yourself with your local elders quorum and become an active participant.

Have a Church Calling

Being privileged to have a Church calling is one of the most wonderful blessings you can enjoy at your stage of life. You have so much to contribute. Your talents and skills are essential and necessary to a growing Church. You can help and strengthen the ward and branches where you live. If you are a returned missionary, bring to those members the excitement and testimony of your mission so that they may feel and desire to emulate that which you have already successfully accomplished. This is also important if you have not yet served missions.

Prepare Today for Life Tomorrow

The second message I bring to you today is to take this opportunity as a young adult, whether single or married, to prepare for life.

You are in a period of transition where you make choices and decisions. These decisions will affect you throughout your life. Most of you have left your teen years. Adulthood is here. Now is your time to prepare for the future.

I have associated with many hundreds and even thousands of college-age students. These include young people who are single or married and who are pursuing an education or are commencing employment. I can honestly say and could share with you many examples that confirm that what you decide to do with respect to your education, employment, preparation for marriage, and Church activity at this time of your life will basically set the pattern for your future.

In the scriptures, we find several statements that may be of help to you.

Jesus Christ said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

If you can in some way put an overriding umbrella in your decision making that will put first the things of God, you will have made the right decision. It is so easy to make a decision that seems attractive at the

time but which, in the aggregate, leads you away from the kingdom of God.

Nothing else in eternity counts if you do not qualify today to return to and live with our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Always keep in mind the essential doctrines of the gospel in seeking first the kingdom of God.

On another occasion, the Savior said, “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:39).

Do you understand that scripture? Do you understand that losing your life in the service of others allows you to find yourself in the kingdom of God? The alternative—being self-centered or looking inward and not participating in helping others or not allowing yourself to be in the service of God—often creates the result of losing your life in an eternal sense. As you make decisions affecting your future and prepare for your life yet to be lived, your activity and association in the environment of the Church are most important.

Secure a Good Education

As you prepare today for life tomorrow, we encourage you to get a good education and acquire the necessary skills to successfully obtain employment, rear a family, and be a contributing member of society.

It costs money to go to school. Learn how to save money and use what funds are available to you, either through scholarship, family contribution, or otherwise. This will help minimize the debt you have when you complete your education.

Be studious and progressive in securing your education. Fill up the semester hours with productive and important courses so that you may expeditiously complete your education and not linger for unnecessary and unprofitable years of schooling when you could have otherwise completed your schooling and be gainfully employed.

Where you are both securing an education and are married, it will require the very best of decision making between husband and wife to sacrifice and care for your family in such a way that the needs of the family and your employment and education will not be jeopardized.

Those of you, single or married, who are not currently pursuing an education but are employed, either full- or part-time, work hard and develop a good work ethic. Be productive; magnify your employment

skills. Be loyal to your employer. Seek opportunities for advancement and for additional responsibility. Pay your tithes and offerings. Save some of your income and develop the habit of thrift and self-reliance.

Know the True Value of Money

One of the great challenges at this stage of your life is to know how to make decisions with respect to how you spend your money.

On a wall of a bank in downtown Salt Lake City is the following quote from President Brigham Young:

“If you wish to get rich, save what you get. A fool can earn money; but it takes a wise man to save and dispose of it to his own advantage.”¹

There can be a tendency to acquire many “toys” and “things.” In our society today there are so many enticing and interesting products that are available. They provide joy and relaxation. They are intriguing, and they seem necessary.

The Savior once addressed that situation:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19–21).

Be careful that you do not unwisely surround yourself with physical, temporal “playthings” that may not be necessary or essential to you at this stage of your life. Many of our young people get off track when they make unwise decisions in these matters.

As young married couples, do not feel that you must immediately emulate and provide for yourself what your parents had when you left their home. In most cases, it has taken your parents decades to acquire the lovely furnishings and conveniences of a modern home, and it is simply not practical that you should seek to acquire them as you begin your new family home.

I can personally testify that some of the sweetest memories my wife and I have are when our growing family was living in a small apartment as I was completing law school. We had few of life’s luxuries. For one year our kitchen table was a used card table. A bed was a hand-me-down gift from a friend. With my

law books in hand, I went to a nearby laundromat each evening to launder diapers. This was before disposable diapers. We did not have a washing machine or a dryer. We didn’t know we were poor because we had each other and the blessings of the gospel. These blessings completely overshadowed the physical possessions we did not have or need at that point of our lives.

Pioneer Examples

In discussions of this kind, I am always drawn to the examples of our pioneer forebears. They had so little. They sacrificed so much. Their hearts and minds were truly fixed on the important decisions of life. They left their homes and families and went west because that is what the prophets counseled. They took so very little with them. They lost so much along the way. In many cases they lost lives and family members through tragedy, starvation, and deprivation.

But they knew where they were going. They knew what they had to do to acquire the necessary skills and opportunities to finally establish themselves. As you read of these pioneers, many of whom are your forebears, you should be deeply grateful for the decisions they made.

Did it ever occur to you that you are the pioneers of your own children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren yet to be born? Your decisions today will affect what your descendants will be in decades to come. Will they look back on your life and draw strength and faith from the decisions you are making today?

Be Willing to Accept the Responsibilities of Marriage

The third message I would like to discuss with you today, and it connects with the previous two messages, is to be willing to accept the responsibilities of marriage.

Now I know that there may be some in this audience tonight who will sigh deeply and shake their heads as I announce this part of my talk. Some may say, “Here we go again. Everyone’s telling me to get married.” My desire is not to approach this subject in any way that will offend you. However, I will attempt to teach you the doctrine of the Church as it relates to this important principle.

The Brethren of the Church have a very deep and abiding concern that our young single adults know the

doctrine of the Church with respect to marriage. What I am about to discuss with you are not things that are said only at BYU or in our Church schools. These are things that need to be said to and understood by the entire Church. All young single adults anywhere in the world need to know and understand these truths and principles.

The doctrine of the Church with respect to the eternal family is very clear. Let me quote from the Doctrine and Covenants:

“Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world.

“Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory” (D&C 132:15–16).

In simple, plain “Dick and Jane” language, marriage for time and all eternity is essential for exaltation. Now, there are many factors when opportunity is not afforded in this life that come into play, but I do not wish to dwell on these exceptions tonight. I would like to have you focus on the essential importance and necessity of eternal marriage, as taught in the doctrines of the Church.

Challenges That May Delay Marriage

With this scripture in mind, let me try and analyze, with your patience, what might be some of the factors in life that may have a tendency to delay marriage. Let me list a few ideas.

1. To some, there may seem to be less pressure or encouragement for returned missionaries to get married. If that is your understanding, it is based on a false premise. All returned missionaries should be encouraged when they return home to remain active in the Church, secure an education, acquire employment skills, and move in the direction of finding an eternal companion. When the latter occurs, you can continue your schooling and education as a married couple.
2. Some young men may be fearful of commitment. They may not feel they can meet the expectations of some young women. The phrase “high maintenance” is often used to describe those who may give the impression they need more than the other can provide. Proper communication can remove that uncertainty.
3. Selfishness, to care only for self, can be an easy way out. A style of living that emphasizes this attribute is contrary to the principles of the gospel.
4. Career orientation may put marriage in a far lesser role. Marriage and continued education go hand in hand and result in successful marriages. A career or profession without family, where family is possible, is very sad and a great tragedy.
5. Worldliness. Do not let your life be simply an existence that is fun, thrilling, or selfish. Life is more than an amusement park. Do not be hooked on obtaining possessions. Accept responsibility.
6. Family example may suggest failure in marriage. A negative perception of marriage as a result of family, friends, or media may deter one from marriage. Some say, “Why get married when there are so many divorces?” This shows a lack of confidence. The existence of divorce does not mean you cannot have a happy and successful marriage. Don’t let the actions of others make your decisions. Some may say, “Elder Tingey, I have seen too much of failure and unhappiness in marriage.” I agree. Each case of failure is tragic. Each is sad. You must determine that yours will not be a failure.
7. An emphasis on education may completely overshadow the importance of marriage. This excuse is usually related to money, or the lack of money. Postponing marriage to the time when all education is completed, debts paid, and money is sufficient to sustain a stylish living is not wise. So much of life together—struggling, adjusting, and learning to cope with life’s challenges—will be lost. Delaying having children, when you can, may result in great unhappiness.
8. The lack of sufficient financial resources to sustain and support a family may tempt some to delay marriage. For some, the frustration of living in a small, inexpensive apartment and not driving a new car every three years is troubling. On that

basis, some dislike married life. People with this viewpoint are trying to escape reality.

These and many, many other reasons may result in a delay of marriage. It is not my purpose and intent in this talk tonight to answer each of these objections to your personal satisfaction. I will simply declare the doctrine of the Church with respect to marriage and encourage you to have sufficient faith that you may make a decision to move forward in this most important decision of your life.

Fear

If I could coin one word that would best describe all of the delays to marriage that I previously noted and many others, it would be *fear*—fear of the future, fear of failure.

It is not unusual to have fear. Fear can be overcome by preparation. Fear can be overcome by faith.

When the Apostles of old feared that a great storm would sink their ship, Christ “arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

“And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?” (Mark 4:39–40).

Of all the subjects I have heard President Hinckley speak of, and he has addressed many vital and important subjects throughout his lifetime, the one principle that he seems to incorporate in all of his talks is the principle of faith.

The Apostle Paul taught, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

How can I help you replace some of your fears, with respect to marriage, with faith?

Lack of Money

Money, or the lack of it, may be an overriding fear many may have that would tend to delay marriage. Remember the story of the rich young man who approached the Savior and asked, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?”

“And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

“He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

“Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?”

“Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

“But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions” (Matthew 19:16–22).

One of life’s greatest challenges and blessings is to start off having little of life’s physical possessions but working toward succeeding in all of your dreams and goals. There isn’t any other way to do it. Be willing to start with modest surroundings and grow into the successful couple you would like to become. The fear of having insufficient money may be overcome with that kind of faith and works.

President Heber J. Grant once taught, “We can hide the blessings of the Lord by clinging too firmly to the things of this world; we can sacrifice eternal riches—dollars for copper cents, so to speak.”²

Overcoming Fear

I can honestly say that in my generation and among my siblings and friends, when the opportunity to marry the right person came, the challenges—both economic and otherwise—of continued education became secondary to the all-important decision to marry the right person. Many of you young adults have already made that decision and are moving forward with your lives, not having all the conveniences, toys, and games that you might otherwise have. But you are moving forward in an eternal plan and under a divine pattern that fulfills the eternal destiny this Church offers for all members.

Family Relationships

It is my personal experience that the ultimate lasting relationships in life are associated with family more than with friends. How quickly your closest high school friends, who for a season you could not live without, seem to diminish and be lost as you move forward in life. At the time, they were important and needed. But most become lost in our mobile society.

Even in colleges and universities we find our close friendships and associations become less frequent as

we move into permanent employment and begin to establish our families.

The most important and lasting of all relationships, I believe, is in the family. This family is the extension of your parents and grandparents, your siblings, and your children yet to be born.

Family

If there were any way I could take you single adults from your current single estate and help you imagine what the future might be in an ideal marriage, I would attempt to do so.

Several months ago, Sister Tingey and I, who now have 4 children and 21 grandchildren, had a “granddaughter sleepover.”

On an agreed upon evening and preceded by an attractive announcement sent to each granddaughter, we had 5 of our granddaughters who live nearby over to our home. They are ages 6 to 14. They are the closest of friends and cousins.

We ate a wonderful meal prepared by Sister Tingey. Then the granddaughters did some crafts, once again prepared by Sister Tingey. Afterward we played their favorite games, and then they presented a little talent show for Grandma and Grandpa. In the course of the talent show, they sang several favorite Primary songs adapted to grandparents. You will remember these songs:

It’s always fun when grandpa comes,
When grandpa comes hooray!
He always says the kindest things,
And in the kindest way.
He has a wrinkly, twinkly smile;
He’s happy all the day.
It’s always fun for ev’ryone
When grandpa comes.³

They changed one line of the song and had great fun doing it. Instead of singing, “He’s happy all the day,” they sang, “And, yes, his hair is gray,” which I could not deny.

The second song they sang was:
I’m so glad when [grandpa] comes home,
Glad as I can be;
Clap my hands and shout for joy,
Then climb upon his knee,
Put my arms around his neck,
Hug him tight like this,

Pat his cheeks, then give him what?
A great big kiss.⁴

As they sang the latter song, I had five granddaughters on my lap, arms around my neck, patting my cheeks and giving me great big kisses.

This is what it’s all about. This is the gospel. This completely overshadows all physical possessions and toys and things that cost money. This is family. This is the gospel.

As the evening concluded, we watched a video together, had prayers, and slept. In the morning we enjoyed a breakfast together and more fun and games, and then I took them home. As we left the house and drove to their homes, they said, “Grandma, Grandpa, this is the *best* time we have ever had together. When can we do it again?”

Unless you can understand what your future holds with respect to these types of relationships, it will be difficult for you to make wise and good decisions affecting your future. Family is everything. It completely overshadows all other relationships and decisions.

Not All Will Marry

Now I am realistic to know that not all will marry in this life. The Lord’s plan provides for that. The wonderful story of Ruth in the Old Testament is a sweet, sweet story of a sister who lost her husband and who devoted her life to her mother-in-law, Naomi, rather than pursue her own individual goals. Ruth was single, but she remained devoted to family and to God. Ruth’s response to her mother-in-law when Naomi encouraged her to move forward with her life is a great faith-promoting testimony of what some sisters and some brethren will endure.

“And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” (Ruth 1:16).

As you will remember, later in life Ruth met Boaz, and they were married and became a link in the chain of the ancestry of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

In conclusion, following personal prayer and fasting I have shared with you tonight several matters that are of great concern to the leaders of the Church. I

have spoken plainly. I trust I have offended no one. I have spoken with the knowledge that you are the great promise and future of the Church. How we love you. How we honor you. How we trust you.

I have encouraged you to always be active in the Church. Don't get lost. Establish yourself in a ward, be willing to serve in a calling, and share in the building up of the Church.

Honor your parents by seeking their counsel and being the type of person they pray you will be. Be accountable to one bishop. Participate in your priesthood quorums and Relief Society meetings. Enjoy the blessings of continually making covenants with your Heavenly Father.

I also encouraged you to prepare today for life tomorrow. Secure a quality education. Secure a skill that will permit you to enjoy good employment. Select your life's occupation, and work hard.

Be careful in the acquisition and use of money. Learn how to save for the future. Be careful that you do not "lay . . . up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt" (Matthew 6:19). True happiness does not come from the acquisition and possession of "toys" and "things."

Lastly, with the certitude of truth and personal conviction, I have shared with you the doctrine of the Church as it relates to a willingness to accept the responsibilities of marriage. I have not told you to get married. I have simply encouraged you to be willing to accept the responsibilities of marriage when that opportunity comes in your life.

I briefly discussed the doctrine of the Church and the many challenges which may delay marriage.

Ponder these thoughts in your own mind. Pray about them. Know that your Heavenly Father will bless you and will replace fear with faith if you call upon Him.

Family is the heart and soul of our gospel. Through family, we progress into the eternities. Whatever challenges arise in this life, they are all necessary and important if they lead to family in eternal marriage.

I humbly bear my witness and testimony to you that being sealed for time and all eternity in a temple of the Lord and living faithfully thereafter bring the ultimate joy and rejoicing that are the promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I bear this testimony and witness to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 292.
2. In Brian H. Stuy, comp., *Collected Discourses Delivered by President Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others*, 5 vols. (1987–92), 5:60.
3. "When Grandpa Comes," *Children's Songbook*, 201.
4. "Daddy's Homecoming," *Children's Songbook*, 210.