We’ll Ascend Together

As covenant-keeping women and men, we need to lift each other and help each other become the people the Lord would have us become.

I am painfully aware that the topics of fatherhood, motherhood, and marriage can be troubling for many. I know that some Church members feel that their homes will never reach what they perceive to be the ideal. Many are hurting because of neglect, abuse, addictions, and incorrect traditions and culture. I do not condone the actions of men or women who have willfully or even ignorantly caused pain, anguish, and despair in their homes. But today I am speaking of something else.

I am convinced that a husband is never more attractive to his wife than when he is serving in his God-given roles as a worthy priesthood holder—most important in the home. I love and believe these words from President Packer to worthy husbands and fathers:

“...the power of the priesthood directly from the Lord to protect your home. There will be times when all that stands as a shield between your family and the adversary's mischief will be that power.”

Spiritual Leaders and Teachers in the Home

Earlier this year I attended the funeral of an extraordinary ordinary man—my husband’s uncle Don. One of Uncle Don’s sons shared an experience he had as a small child, shortly after his parents had purchased their first home. Because there were five small children to feed and clothe, there was not enough money to fence the yard. Taking seriously one of his divine roles as the protector of his family, Uncle Don drove a few small wooden stakes into the ground, took some string, and tied the string from stake to stake all around the yard. He then called his children to him. He showed them the stakes and string and explained to them that if they would stay on the promises that my life and the lives of my children will “be well in his keeping.” It is clear to me that Craig is the fulfillment of that promise. Borrowing from the words of Mark Twain, I say that “life without [Craig] would not be life.”

I love him, heart and soul!
inside of that makeshift fence, they would be safe.

One day the visiting teachers watched in disbelief as they approached the house and saw five little children standing obediently at the edge of the string, looking longingly at a ball that had bounced beyond their boundaries and out into the street. One little child ran to get their daddy, who, in response, ran and retrieved the ball.

Later in the funeral, the oldest son tearfully expressed that all he had ever hoped in this life was to be like his beloved father.

President Ezra Taft Benson said: “Oh, husbands and fathers in Israel, you can do so much for the salvation and exaltation of your families! . . . Remember your sacred calling as a father in Israel—your most important calling in time and eternity—a calling from which you will never be released.”

“You must help create a home where the Spirit of the Lord can abide.”

How applicable those prophetic words are today.

It must be difficult, at best, for covenant men to live in a world that not only demeans their divine roles and responsibilities but also sends false messages about what it means to be a “real man.” One false message is “It’s all about me.” On the other end of the scale is the degrading and mocking message that husbands and fathers are no longer needed. I plead with you not to listen to Satan’s lies! He has forfeited that sacred privilege of ever becoming a husband or father. Because he is jealous of those who have the sacred roles he will never fill, he is intent on making “all men . . . miserable like unto himself!”

Lifting and Helping in Our Complementary Roles

Brothers and sisters, we need each other! As covenant-keeping women and men, we need to lift each other and help each other become the people the Lord would have us become. And we need to work together to lift the rising generation and help them reach their divine potential as heirs of eternal life. We could do as Elder Robert D. Hales and his wife, Mary, have done and follow the proverb “Thee lift me and I’ll lift thee, and we’ll ascend together.”

We know from the scriptures that “it is not good that . . . man should be alone.” That is why our Heavenly Father made “an help meet for him.” The phrase help meet means “a helper suited to, worthy of, or corresponding to him.” For example, our two hands are similar to each other but not exactly the same. In fact, they are exact opposites, but they complement each other and are suited to each other. Working together, they are stronger.

In a chapter about families, the Church handbook contains this statement: “The nature of male and female spirits is such that they complete each other.” Please note that it does not say “compete with each other” but “complete each other”! We are here to help, lift, and rejoice with each other as we try to become our very best selves.

Sister Barbara B. Smith wisely taught, “There is so much more of happiness to be had when we can rejoice in another's successes and not just in our own.” When we seek to “complete” rather than “compete,” it is so much easier to cheer each other on!

When I was a young mother of several small children, at the end of days filled with diapering, dish washing, and disciplining, no one sang more emphatically the Primary song “I’m so glad when daddy comes home.” I’m sad to admit, however, I was not always cheerful when Craig seemed to bounce through the door after a hard day of work. He always greeted each of us with a hug and kiss and turned many difficult and sometimes disastrous days into delightful daddy times. I wish I had been a little less preoccupied with
the endless list of to-dos still to be
done and had more wisely focused,
like he did, on things that mattered
most. I would have stopped more often
and enjoyed sacred family time and
would have thanked him more often
for blessing our lives!

Let Us Oft Speak Kind Words
to Each Other

Not long ago, a faithful sister in the
Church shared with me a deep concern
she had been praying about for some
time. Her concern was for some of the
sisters in her ward. She told me how
it hurt her heart to observe that they
sometimes spoke disrespectfully to
their husbands and about their hus-

bands, even in front of their children.

Sisters and brothers, how often do
we intentionally “speak kind words to
each other”?  

We might test ourselves by asking a
few questions. With a little adaptation,
these questions can apply to most of
us, whether we are married or single,
whatever our home situation might be.

1. When was the last time I sincerely
praised my companion, either alone
or in the presence of our children?

2. When was the last time I thanked,
expressed love for, or earnestly
pleaded in faith for him or her in
prayer?

3. When was the last time I stopped
myself from saying something I
knew could be hurtful?

4. When was the last time I apologized
and humbly asked for forgiveness—
without adding the words “but if
only you had” or “but if only you
hadn’t”?

5. When was the last time I chose to
be happy rather than demanding
to be “right”?

Now, if any of these questions lead
you to squirm or feel a tinge of guilt,
remember that Elder David A. Bednar
has taught that “guilt is to our spirit
what pain is to our body—a warning
of danger and a protection from addi-
tional damage.”

I invite each of us to heed Elder
Jeffrey R. Holland’s heartfelt plea:
“Brothers and sisters, in this long eter-
nal quest to be more like our Savior,
may we try to be ‘perfect’ men and
women in at least this one way now—
by offending not in word, or more
positively put, by speaking with a new
tongue, the tongue of angels.”

As I have prepared for this opportu-
nity today, the Spirit has taught me, and
I have committed to speak words of
kindness more often to my cherished
companion and about him, to lift the
men in my family and express gratitude
for the ways they fulfill their divine and
complementary roles. And I have com-
mitted to follow the proverb “Thee lift
me and I’ll lift thee, and we’ll ascend
together.”

Will you join me in seeking the help
of the Holy Ghost to teach us how
we can better lift each other in our
complementary roles as covenant sons
and daughters of our loving heavenly parents?

I know that through the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and our faith in Him, we can do it. I pray we will put our trust in Him to help us help each other live happily and eternally as we ascend together, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES
5. Mark Twain, Eve’s Diary (1905), 107.
8. 2 Nephi 2:27.
12. See Bruce K. Satterfield, “The Family under Siege: The Role of Man and Woman” (presentation given at Ricks College Education Week, June 7, 2001), 4; emp.byui.edu/SATTERFIELD/B/PDF/RoleManWoman2.pdf.
17. David A. Bednar, “We Believe in Being Chaste,” Ensign or Liahona, May 2013, 44.

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ubjects for general conference talks are assigned—not by mortal authority but by the impressions of the Spirit. Many subjects would address the mortal concerns we all share. But just as Jesus did not teach how to overcome the mortal challenges or political oppression of His day, He usually inspires His modern servants to speak about what we must do to reform our personal lives to prepare us to return to our heavenly home.

On this Easter weekend I have felt impressed to talk about the precious and timeless teachings in one of the parables of Jesus.

The parable of the sower is one of a small number of parables reported in all three of the synoptic Gospels. It is also one of an even smaller group of parables Jesus explained to His disciples. The seed that was sown was “the word of the kingdom” (Matthew 13:19), “the word” (Mark 4:14), or “the word of God” (Luke 8:11)—the teachings of the Master and His servants.

The different soils on which the seeds fell represent different ways in which mortals receive and follow these teachings. Thus the seeds that “fell by the way side” (Mark 4:4) have not reached mortal soil where they might possibly grow. They are like teachings that fall upon a heart hardened or unprepared. I will say nothing more of these. My message concerns those of us who have committed to be followers of Christ. What do we do with the Savior’s teachings as we live our lives?

The parable of the sower warns us of circumstances and attitudes that can keep anyone who has received the seed of the gospel message from bringing forth a goodly harvest.

I. Stony Ground, No Root

Some seed “fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away” (Mark 4:5–6).

Jesus explained that this describes those “who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness,” but because they “have no root in themselves, . . . when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake,