

“THE FAMILY IS CENTRAL TO THE CREATOR’S PLAN”

LESSON

1

Purpose To emphasize the eternal importance of the family and to help participants know what they need to do to receive the full benefit of the Marriage and Family Relations course.

Preparation

1. Review the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual). Look for ways to apply these principles in your preparation to teach.
2. Read the lesson’s bold headings, which outline the doctrines and principles in the lesson. As part of your preparation, ponder these doctrines and principles throughout the week, seeking the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. Prayerfully study “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” found on page viii in this manual and page iv in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*.
4. Obtain a copy of the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide* (36357) for each participant. You should receive these copies from the Sunday School presidency, the ward clerk, or the assistant ward clerk assigned to materials.
5. In advance, ask one or two participants to prepare to talk briefly about how they felt when they were married in the temple. Also ask them to prepare to talk about the joy and blessings they receive in this life because they have been sealed to their spouse for eternity. Seek the guidance of the Spirit as you decide whom you should ask to fulfill this assignment.
6. Before class, write on the chalkboard the following quotation (from *Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], 255):

The most important of the Lord’s work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes.

*President Harold B. Lee
11th President of the Church*

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

Latter-day prophets proclaim the eternal importance of marriage and the family.

Share the following true story:

A man seemed to have lost everything in a disastrous flood. He wept, not for the loss of his worldly goods, but because he could not locate his beloved wife and four children. There was a very real possibility that they had drowned. Soon the word came that they were alive and waiting for him at a nearby emergency facility. What a joyous moment when that family was brought together again!

As they rejoiced, the man said, “I have my family again, and although I stand without one earthly possession left to my name, I feel like a millionaire” (quoted by Robert L. Simpson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 11–12; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 11).

Briefly share your convictions and testimony about marriage and the family. As appropriate, share your feelings about your own family. Then read the following statement by Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“The center core of the Church is not the stake [center]; it is not the chapel. . . . The most sacred place on earth may not be the temple, necessarily. The chapel, the stake [center], and the temple are sacred as they contribute to the building of the most sacred institution in the Church—the home—and to the blessing of the most sacred relationships in the Church, the family” (*That All May Be Edified* [1982], 234–35).

Give each participant a copy of the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Have participants turn to page iv. Explain that in 1995, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued a proclamation to all the world concerning marriage and the family. Many of the doctrines and principles taught in the proclamation will be discussed during this course. Read the proclamation with participants, inviting different participants to read each paragraph aloud.

- What are some of the doctrines and principles taught in the proclamation on the family? (Consider listing participants' answers on the chalkboard.) Why does the world need this counsel and warning?

President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of the Church, explained: “Why do we have this proclamation on the family now? Because the family is under attack. All across the world families are falling apart. The place to begin to improve society is in the home. Children do, for the most part, what they are taught. We are trying to make the world better by making the family stronger” (“Inspirational Thoughts,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 5).

- How have you and your family been strengthened by following the counsel in this proclamation?

Eternal marriage can bring joy and great blessings in this life and throughout eternity.

Emphasize that eternal marriage is central to Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness. It allows families to find true joy in this life and to continue and progress throughout eternity.

- What blessings can we receive in this life when we have been married for eternity?

Invite the assigned participants to talk briefly about how they felt when they were married in the temple and about the joy and blessings they receive in this life because they have been sealed to their spouse for eternity (see “Preparation,” item 5).

Consider sharing one or more of the following statements:

President James E. Faust of the First Presidency taught: “Many covenants are indispensable to happiness here and hereafter. Among the most important are

the marriage covenants made between husband and wife. From these covenants flow the greatest joys of life" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 19; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 17).

Elder Boyd K. Packer said that "romance, love, marriage, and parenthood" are "the purest, most beautiful and appealing experiences of life" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 28; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 21).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles expressed: "The sweet companionship of eternal marriage is one of the greatest blessings God has granted to His children. Certainly, the many years I have shared with my beautiful companion have brought me the deepest joys of my life. From the beginning of time, marital companionship of husband and wife has been fundamental to our Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness. Our lives are touched for good, and we are both edified and ennobled as we savor the sweet blessings of association with dear members of the family" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 42; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 32).

In his first address to the general Church membership as President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: "To my beloved wife of fifty-eight years later this month, I express appreciation. . . . How grateful I am for this precious woman who has walked at my side through sunshine and storm. We do not stand as tall as we once did. But there has been no shrinkage in our love one for another" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 93; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 70).

Explain that many people believe that marriage and family life are only mortal experiences. But as members of the Church, we know that a worthy couple can enter the temple and, through a sacred priesthood ordinance, be sealed together as husband and wife for eternity. When a man and woman are married in this way, an eternal family unit begins.

- What eternal blessings are promised to married couples who are sealed by the power of the priesthood and then remain faithful to their covenants? (Read Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4; 132:19–24, 30–31 with participants. The following list includes some answers, which could be written on the chalkboard.)
 - a. They will be exalted in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (D&C 131:1–3; 132:20–24).
 - b. They will be together "in time, and through all eternity" (D&C 132:19). Their children may also be part of their eternal family. (Explain that the Holy Spirit of Promise, which is mentioned in D&C 132:19, is the Holy Ghost. According to our faithfulness, the Holy Ghost confirms that the priesthood ordinances we have received and the covenants we have made are acceptable to God.)
 - c. They will "inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers" (D&C 132:19).
 - d. They will continue to have seed, or spirit children, throughout eternity (D&C 132:19, 30–31; see also D&C 131:4).
- How does it help you to know that families can be eternal?

Point out that there are many faithful Latter-day Saints who, through no fault of their own, do not have the opportunity to receive the blessings of eternal marriage

in this life. Emphasize that the Lord has promised that all faithful Saints will eventually receive these blessings. If you feel it is necessary to help participants understand this principle, read the following statement by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“We know that many worthy and wonderful Latter-day Saints currently lack the ideal opportunities and essential requirements for their progress. Singleness, childlessness, death, and divorce frustrate ideals and postpone the fulfillment of promised blessings. In addition, some women who desire to be full-time mothers and homemakers have been literally compelled to enter the full-time workforce. But these frustrations are only temporary. The Lord has promised that in the eternities no blessing will be denied his sons and daughters who keep the commandments, are true to their covenants, and desire what is right.

“Many of the most important deprivations of mortality will be set right in the Millennium, which is the time for fulfilling all that is incomplete in the great plan of happiness for all of our Father’s worthy children. We know that will be true of temple ordinances. I believe it will also be true of family relationships and experiences” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 101; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 75).

To address the circumstances of individual participants, it may be helpful to read one or both of the statements in “Additional Resource Material” on page 8.

The Marriage and Family Relations course is designed to help us find joy in our family relationships.

Invite a participant to read the following statement aloud:

President Harold B. Lee, the 11th President of the Church, said, “The most important of the Lord’s work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes” (*Stand Ye in Holy Places*, 255).

- In what ways would the world be different if everyone lived according to this simple declaration?

Explain that this course is designed to help us strengthen marriages and families and find joy in our family relationships. The lessons are based on doctrines and principles taught in the scriptures and by latter-day prophets.

Point out that by choosing to participate in this course, members have demonstrated a desire to strengthen their families. There are three things they must do to receive the full benefit of this course:

1. Participate in class.

Point out that all who participate in the course can learn from each other, regardless of their experience with marriage or raising children. Invite participants to testify of the truths they discuss and to share experiences that relate appropriately to the lessons.

2. Use the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*.

Have participants open their copies of the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*. Point out that for each lesson, the guide contains “Ideas for Application,” which are suggestions to help participants apply the doctrines and principles they have learned. In addition, each lesson is

accompanied by one or two articles by General Authorities of the Church. After each lesson, participants should complete at least one of the suggested activities and study each article. Married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles together.

Refer to pages 3–7 in the study guide. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in "Ideas for Application" and (2) studying the article "For Time and All Eternity," by Elder Boyd K. Packer.

Encourage participants to bring their study guides to class for each lesson.

3. Strive to live according to the doctrines and principles in the lessons.

Emphasize that it is not enough to merely learn the gospel. For the gospel to be effective in our lives, we must live what we learn. President Harold B. Lee stated, "We never really know anything of the teachings of the gospel until we have experienced the blessings that come from living each principle" (*Stand Ye in Holy Places*, 215).

Our homes can be "a bit of heaven" as we build "upon the rock of our Redeemer."

Emphasize that in today's world, the home is one of the only places where we can find peace. Then read the following statement by President Thomas S. Monson of the First Presidency:

"If we really try, our home can be a bit of heaven here on earth. The thoughts we think, the deeds we do, the lives we live influence not only the success of our earthly journey; they mark the way to our eternal goals" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 80–81; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 69).

- In what ways can home be "a bit of heaven"?

After participants have responded to this question, share your own convictions about how home can be a bit of heaven. As appropriate, share one or two personal experiences as part of your testimony.

Share the following statement by President Spencer W. Kimball, the 12th President of the Church:

"Many of the social restraints which in the past have helped to reinforce and to shore up the family are dissolving and disappearing. The time will come when only those who believe deeply and actively in the family will be able to preserve their families in the midst of the gathering evil around us" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 3; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 4).

Read Helaman 5:12 with participants. Then read the following statement by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

"If you build your homes on the foundation rock of our Redeemer and the gospel, they can be sanctuaries where your families can be sheltered from the raging storms of life" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 88; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 71).

- What does it mean to you to build your home "on the foundation rock of our Redeemer"? What are some specific things families will do if they have Christ-centered homes?

Emphasize that this course discusses principles to help strengthen marriages and families. We should apply these principles so we can draw nearer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in our homes. We must never lose sight of the Savior's infinite Atonement, which makes it possible for us to dwell with our families forever.

Conclusion

Express your enthusiasm about this course, and let participants know what they can expect from you as the teacher. For example, you could assure them that you will prepare yourself spiritually to teach and that you will join them in applying the principles in each lesson and using the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Encourage those you teach to make a commitment to participate in class, use the study guide, and apply the doctrines and principles they learn.

As prompted by the Spirit, testify of the great importance of the family. Express gratitude for the knowledge that your family can be eternal.

Additional

Resource Material

Statements to address the needs of those who are not in traditional family situations

To address the circumstances of participants who are not in traditional family situations, read one or both of the following statements:

President Ezra Taft Benson, the 13th President of the Church, told the single sisters of the Church: "We see you as a vital part of the mainstream body of the Church. We pray that the emphasis we naturally place on families will not make you feel less needed or less valuable to the Lord or to His Church. The sacred bonds of Church membership go far beyond marital status, age, or present circumstance. Your individual worth as a daughter of God transcends all" ("To the Single Adult Sisters of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 96).

President Joseph Fielding Smith, the 10th President of the Church, taught: "If a man or a woman who has been sealed in the temple for time and eternity should sin and lose the right to receive the exaltation in the celestial kingdom, he or she could not retard the progress of the injured companion who had been faithful. Everyone will be judged according to his [own] works, and there would be no justice in condemning the innocent for the sins of the guilty" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:177).