

STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES THROUGH FAITH AND PRAYER

LESSON

6

Purpose To help participants understand and work to receive the blessings that come when married couples exercise faith in Jesus Christ and pray together.

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.

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

Husbands and wives should work together to increase their faith in Jesus Christ.

Share the following story related by President James E. Faust of the First Presidency:

“Elder Orin Voorheis . . . is a big, handsome, splendid young man who served in the Argentina Buenos Aires South Mission. One night, about 11 months into his mission, some armed robbers accosted Elder Voorheis and his companion. In a senseless act of violence, one of them shot Elder Voorheis in the head. . . .

“Elder Voorheis is still almost completely paralyzed and unable to speak, but he has a wonderful spirit and can respond to questions with hand movements. He still wears his missionary badge. His parents do not ask, ‘Why did this happen to our noble son, who was serving at the call of the Master?’ No one has a certain answer except perhaps in circumstances where higher purposes are served. We must walk by faith” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 73; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 59–60).

Read Hebrews 11:1 and Alma 32:21 with participants. Point out that the Joseph Smith Translation of Hebrews 11:1, found in footnote 1*b*, says that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for.”

- According to these verses, what is the definition of faith?
- What are some situations that require married couples to “walk by faith,” as President Faust said?

Consider asking participants to share examples from their lives. Answers may include bad health, childlessness, aging, children with disabilities, death of loved ones, financial problems, wayward children, and natural disasters. Point out that challenges can come into our lives even when we are striving to live righteously.

Read Moroni 7:32–33 with participants. Emphasize that our faith must be centered in Jesus Christ. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that when we exercise faith in Jesus Christ, we are strengthened to face challenges:

“The Lord will give relief with divine power when you seek deliverance in humility and *faith in Jesus Christ*. . . . No one can help you without faith and effort on your part. Your personal growth requires that. Don’t look for a life virtually free from discomfort, pain, pressure, challenge, or grief, for those are the tools a loving Father uses to stimulate our personal growth and understanding. As the scriptures repeatedly affirm, you will be helped as you exercise *faith in Jesus Christ*. That faith is demonstrated by a willingness to trust His promises given through His prophets and in His scriptures” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 8).

Point out that husbands and wives must work together to center their lives on the Savior. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said:

“You want capability, safety, and security . . . in married life and eternity? Be a true disciple of Jesus. Be a genuine, committed, word-and-deed Latter-day Saint. Believe that your faith has *everything* to do with your romance, because it does. . . . Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, is the only lamp by which you can successfully see the path of love and happiness for you *and* for your sweetheart” (“*How Do I Love Thee?*” [Brigham Young University devotional address, 15 Feb. 2000], 6).

- How can increased faith in the Savior help married couples strengthen their relationship with one another? (Answers may include those listed below.)
 - a. They become more Christlike in their treatment of each other. They become more loving, helpful, gentle, patient, and willing to listen to one another.
 - b. They become more humble and willing to repent and follow the Savior’s teachings. The more willing each spouse is to repent and become like the Savior, the more harmonious the marriage will be.
- In what ways can married couples work together to increase their faith in the Savior? (Invite participants to share experiences that have strengthened their faith in the Savior. In addition to asking for participants’ responses, consider sharing the principles listed below.)
 - a. Obey the laws and ordinances of the gospel. (Share the following statement made by Bishop Robert D. Hales while he was serving as Presiding Bishop: “Obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel is essential to obtain faith in the Lord Jesus Christ” [in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 52; or *Ensign*, May 1990, 39].)
 - b. Study the scriptures together. (Read Helaman 15:7–8 with participants.)
 - c. Trust in the Lord. (Read Proverbs 3:5–6 with participants. Point out that as couples face challenges, they can determine to seek the Lord’s help with greater fervor, making their faith a more integral part of their daily lives.)

Husbands and wives are blessed when they pray together.

- What blessings can come when a husband and wife regularly kneel together in prayer? (Encourage participants to share experiences that appropriately

relate to this question. In addition, read the following quotation and one or both of the following examples.)

While serving in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley counseled:

“I know of no single practice that will have a more salutary effect upon your lives than the practice of kneeling together as you begin and close each day. Somehow the little storms that seem to afflict every marriage are dissipated when, kneeling before the Lord, you thank him for one another, in the presence of one another, and then together invoke his blessings upon your lives, your home, your loved ones, and your dreams.

“God then will be your partner, and your daily conversations with him will bring peace into your hearts and a joy into your lives that can come from no other source. Your companionship will sweeten through the years; your love will strengthen. Your appreciation for one another will grow” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 83; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 72).

One husband said that his wife’s prayers help inspire him to be a better husband and father. When he kneels beside his wife in prayer, holding her hand, he listens to her plead with Heavenly Father about the concerns that are in her heart. His love for her increases because he knows that her heart is pure and her motives are genuine. He knows that when she speaks to Heavenly Father, she truly wants nothing more than to serve Him in righteousness.

In another family, the husband suffered from a long-term physical disability. Every evening before he and his wife went to bed, they thanked Heavenly Father for their blessings and sought His guidance in raising their four children on a meager income. Years later, when the husband was able to go back to work, they were asked how they had been able to manage during the difficult times. They testified that working together and praying together made the difference. Their sincere prayers had been answered with many blessings, including the hope they received through the comforting influence of the Spirit.

- How can praying together help husbands and wives resolve difficulties in their relationship? (As participants discuss this question, point out that when husbands and wives feel contention between each other, they sometimes stop praying together. However, praying together is a powerful tool to help them overcome such challenges.)

President Thomas S. Monson of the First Presidency told of the day he and his wife, Frances, were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple. Benjamin Bowring, the man who performed the ceremony, gave them the following counsel: “May I offer you newlyweds a formula which will ensure that any disagreement you may have will last no longer than one day? Every night kneel by the side of your bed. One night, Brother Monson, you offer the prayer, aloud, on bended knee. The next night you, Sister Monson, offer the prayer, aloud, on bended knee. I can then assure you that any misunderstanding that develops during the day will vanish as you pray. You simply can’t pray together and retain any but the best of feelings toward one another” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 81; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 70).

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “If, as husband and wife, you are having serious misunderstandings or if you feel

some strain or tension building up in your marriage, you should humbly get on your knees together and ask God our Father, with a sincere heart and real intent, to lift the darkness that is over your relationship, that you may receive the needed light, see your errors, repent of your wrongs, forgive each other, and receive each unto yourselves as you did in the beginning. I solemnly assure you that God lives and will answer your humble pleas” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 17; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 14).

Ask participants who are married to silently evaluate their efforts to pray with their spouse. Emphasize that in homes where there is only one parent, fervent personal prayer brings the blessings of God into the home.

Conclusion

Emphasize that when husbands and wives work together to exercise faith in Jesus Christ and to pray, they find greater happiness, unity, and ability to face their challenges.

As prompted by the Spirit, testify of the truths discussed during the lesson.

Refer to pages 21–24 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s 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) reading the article “Finding Joy in Life,” by Elder Richard G. Scott. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

Remind participants to bring their study guides to class for the next lesson.