

# THE CHALLENGES ARE THE BLESSINGS

By Rachel Harrison

*What I thought were challenges of temple marriage turned out, instead, to be wonderful blessings.*

I was talking with a good friend about the blessings of being married in the temple. I jokingly said I could think of only a few blessings, but I could think of plenty of challenges. “Well,” she said, “maybe those *are* the blessings!”

I knew she was right.

Being sealed in the temple has blessed me with an eternal perspective on marriage and family. My temple covenants have been the “glasses” by which my husband and

I have always viewed the options before us, even as a young, newly married couple.

## **An Eternal Perspective**

We started our marriage with an eternal perspective, and we felt that meant we should not postpone or limit the children waiting to come to our family. My husband continued his tertiary (undergraduate) studies as our family grew. By the time he entered the workforce full-time, we had five children. I continued my studies part-time so I could care for our children at home. I look back fondly on those early years. They were awesome! We were in a little apartment with two children under 15 months, living on our meager student allowance and eating a lot of mince (hamburger).

I think of those early years as our pioneer years—we were crossing the “plains” of tertiary study, starting our family, and living on limited financial resources. I feel akin—but only to a small degree—to what one of the survivors of the Martin handcart company said of their journey: “Everyone of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we

became acquainted with him in our extremities.”<sup>1</sup>

In the eyes of the world, what we chose to do in those initial years of marriage did not make sense. Postponing my graduation to have children, living on one income, and sacrificing some luxuries may have seemed foolish. But the Lord told Isaiah:

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Sacrificing worldly goals to follow Heavenly Father’s will for our family has been a humbling blessing in our lives.

## **Facing Challenges Together**

We read in the Doctrine and Covenants that those who “are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice . . . are accepted of [the Lord].

“For I, the Lord, will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit” (D&C 97:8–9). Our five children are our precious fruit. They are

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undoubtedly our greatest blessings.

As the years have passed, my husband and I have faced many challenges in our married life, and in retrospect I can honestly say I am grateful for them. The Lord blesses us with trials to refine us as individuals and to help us turn to Him and to our companions.

Temple marriage is the supreme covenant of exaltation. When this covenant is kept, it leads to the highest degree in the celestial kingdom, or eternal life, meaning eternal increase (see D&C 131:1–4). Because of this great reward, we should expect a temple marriage to stretch us, to change our very natures.

Elder Bruce C. Hafen, emeritus member of the Seventy, said: “We may start off being married for comfort. But then problems come along. If we

try seriously to solve them, we may not always be comfortable, but we will grow. Then we will end up being married not simply for comfort but for joy.”<sup>2</sup> Solving our problems together has not always been comfortable, but it has indeed brought us joy.

### Hard Work and Joy

Being a mother is the hardest endeavor I have ever undertaken. Before having children, I thought motherhood would be mostly, if not always, joyful—interspersed with a moment or two of hard work. But I have come to understand that it is the other way around. Because of my eternal partnership with my husband, my parenthood and marriage have become a laboratory for becoming like Heavenly Father. The responsibility of parenthood in this life is

analogous to the work and purposes of our Heavenly Father, “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Being a wife and mother demands heavenly patience, strength, and love. Being a mother is helping me to become more like God in nature, desires, and possibilities.

Being sealed in the temple has blessed me in ways I had not expected. It is a source of strength to me and stability to my children. It is a welding link back to my ancestors and blesses them as I do their temple work. My temple marriage is worth every sacrifice, and I know it brings great blessings. ■

*The author lives in New Zealand.*

### NOTES

1. Francis Webster, in William R. Palmer, “Pioneers of Southern Utah,” *The Instructor*, May 1944, 217–18.
2. Bruce C. Hafen, *Covenant Hearts: Marriage and the Joy of Human Love* (2005), 13.