



Eternal Marriage

Chapter 38

Marriage Is Ordained of God

Marriage between a man and a woman is a vital part of God's plan. The Lord has said, "Whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man" (D&C 49:15). Since the beginning, marriage has been a law of the gospel. Marriages are intended to last forever, not just for our mortal lives.

Adam and Eve were married by God before there was any death in the world. They had an eternal marriage. They taught the law of eternal marriage to their children and their children's children. As the years passed, wickedness entered the hearts of the people and the authority to perform this sacred ordinance was taken from the earth. Through the Restoration of the gospel, eternal marriage has been restored to earth.

- Why is it important to know that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God?

Eternal Marriage Is Essential for Exaltation

- What is the Lord's doctrine of marriage, and how does it differ from the views of the world?

Many people in the world consider marriage to be only a social custom, a legal agreement between a man and a woman to live together. But to Latter-day Saints, marriage is much more. Our exaltation depends on marriage, along with other principles and ordinances, such as faith, repentance, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. We believe that marriage is the most sacred relationship that can exist between a man and a woman. This sacred relationship affects our happiness now and in the eternities.

Heavenly Father has given us the law of eternal marriage so we can become like Him. The Lord has said:

“In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

“And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

“And if he does not, he cannot obtain it” (D&C 131:1–3).

Eternal Marriage Must Be Performed by Proper Authority in the Temple

- Why must a marriage be performed by proper authority in the temple to be eternal?

An eternal marriage must be performed by one who holds the sealing power. The Lord promised, “If a man marry a wife by . . . the new and everlasting covenant . . . by him who is anointed, . . . and if [they] abide in [the Lord’s] covenant, . . . it . . . shall be of full force when they are out of the world” (D&C 132:19).

Not only must an eternal marriage be performed by the proper priesthood authority, but it must also be done in one of the holy temples of our Lord. The temple is the only place this holy ordinance can be performed.

In the temple, Latter-day Saint couples kneel at one of the sacred altars in the presence of their family and friends who have received the temple endowment. They make their marriage covenants before God. They are pronounced husband and wife for time and all eternity. This is done by one who holds the holy priesthood of God and has been given the authority to perform this sacred ordinance. He acts under the direction of the Lord and promises the couple the blessings of exaltation. He instructs them in the things they must do to receive these blessings. He reminds them that all blessings depend on obedience to the laws of God.

For teachers: All members, whether married or single, need to understand the doctrine of eternal marriage. However, you should be sensitive to the feelings of adults who are not married. As needed, help class members or family members know that all Heavenly Father’s children who are faithful to their covenants in this life will have the opportunity to receive all the blessings of the gospel in the eternities, including the opportunity to have an eternal family.

If we are married by any authority other than by the priesthood in a temple, the marriage is for this life only. After death, the marriage partners have no claim on each other or on their children. An eternal marriage gives us the opportunity to continue as families after this life.

Benefits of an Eternal Marriage

- What are the blessings of an eternal marriage in this life and in eternity?

As Latter-day Saints, we are living with an eternal perspective, not just for the moment. However, we can receive blessings in this life as a result of being married for eternity. Some of those blessings are as follows:

1. We know that our marriage can last forever. Death can part us from one another only temporarily. Nothing can part us forever except our own disobedience. This knowledge helps us work harder to have a happy, successful marriage.
2. We know that our family relationships can continue throughout eternity. This knowledge helps us be careful in teaching and training our children. It also helps us show them greater patience and love. As a result, we should have a happier home.
3. Because we have been married in God's ordained way, we are entitled to an outpouring of the Spirit on our marriage as we remain worthy.

Some of the blessings we can enjoy for eternity are as follows:

1. We can live in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom of God.
 2. We can be exalted as God is and receive a fulness of joy.
- How can an eternal perspective influence the way we feel about marriage and families?

We Must Prepare for an Eternal Marriage

- What can we do to help youth prepare for eternal marriage?
-

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all the decisions and has the most far-reaching effects, for it has to do not only with immediate happiness, but also with eternal joys. It affects not only the two people involved, but also their families and particularly their children and their children’s children down through the many generations. In selecting a companion for life and for eternity, certainly the most careful planning and thinking and praying and fasting should be done to be sure that of all the decisions, this one must not be wrong” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 193).

An eternal marriage should be the goal of every Latter-day Saint. This is true even for those already married by civil law. To prepare for an eternal marriage takes much thought and prayer. Only members of the Church who live righteously are permitted to enter the temple (see D&C 97:15–17). We do not suddenly decide one day that we want to be married in the temple, then enter the temple that day and get married. We must first meet certain requirements.

Before we can go to the temple, we must be active, worthy members of the Church for at least one year. Men must hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. We must be interviewed by the branch president or bishop. If he finds us worthy, he will give us a temple recommend. If we are not worthy, he will counsel with us and help us set goals to become worthy to go to the temple.

After we receive a recommend from our bishop or branch president, we must be interviewed by the stake president or the mission president. We are asked questions like the following in interviews for a temple recommend:

1. Do you have faith in and a testimony of God, the Eternal Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost? Do you have a firm testimony of the restored gospel?
 2. Do you sustain the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the prophet, seer, and revelator? Do you recognize him as the only person on earth authorized to exercise all priesthood keys?
 3. Do you live the law of chastity?
-

4. Are you a full-tithe payer?
5. Do you keep the Word of Wisdom?
6. Are you honest in your dealings with others?
7. Do you strive to keep the covenants you have made, to attend your sacrament and priesthood meetings, and to keep your life in harmony with the laws and commandments of the gospel?

When you ask for a temple recommend, you should remember that entering the temple is a sacred privilege. It is a serious act, not something to be taken lightly.

We must seek earnestly to obey every covenant that we make in the temple. The Lord has said that if we are true and faithful, we will enter into our exaltation. We will become like our Heavenly Father. (See D&C 132:19–20.) Temple marriage is worth any sacrifice. It is a way of obtaining eternal blessings beyond measure.

- What can we do to encourage young people to set a goal to be married in the temple? How can we help them prepare for this?

Additional Scriptures

- Genesis 1:26–28 (we should multiply and replenish the earth)
- Genesis 2:21–24 (the first marriage was performed by God)
- Matthew 19:3–8 (what God has joined)
- D&C 132 (the eternal nature of the marriage law)
- D&C 42:22–26 (marriage vows should be kept)
- Jacob 3:5–7 (husbands and wives should be true to each other)