



Marriage—An Eternal Partnership

“Life’s greatest partnership is in marriage—that relationship which has lasting and eternal significance.”

From the Life of Howard W. Hunter

When Howard W. Hunter was 20 years old, he met Claire Jeffs at a Church dance in Los Angeles, California, while she was on a date with one of his friends. After the dance, a few of the young adults went wading in the ocean surf. Howard lost his tie, and Claire volunteered to walk along the beach with him to help find it. Howard later said, “The next time we went out, I took Claire, and [my friend] went with someone else.”¹

The following year they began dating seriously, and on a spring evening nearly three years after they met, Howard took Claire to a beautiful overlook above the ocean. “We [watched] the waves roll in from the Pacific and break over the rocks in the light of a full moon,” he wrote. That night Howard proposed marriage, and Claire accepted. “We talked about our plans,” he said, “[and] made many decisions that night and some strong resolutions regarding our lives.”²

Howard and Claire were married in the Salt Lake Temple on June 10, 1931. During the next 52 years, their love deepened as they raised their sons, served in the Church, and faced their challenges with faith.

Their happiness as a couple was evident to their family. Robert Hunter, their oldest grandson, said: “When I think of Grandpa Hunter, I think more than anything of an example of a loving husband. . . . You could really sense a loving bond between the two of them.”³



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President Hunter's love for his wife was especially apparent as he cared for her during the last decade of her life, when she struggled with serious health problems. When Claire passed away on October 9, 1983, it was "a crushing blow" to President Hunter.⁴ He wrote that when he arrived home on the day she died, "the house seemed cold, and as I walked about, everything reminded me of her."⁵

After nearly seven years alone, President Hunter married Inis Stanton in April 1990. President Gordon B. Hinckley performed the ceremony in the Salt Lake Temple. Inis was a source of great comfort and strength to President Hunter during his service as President of the Quorum of the Twelve and President of the Church. She accompanied him on many of his travels to meet with the Saints all over the world.

Elder James E. Faust of the Quorum of the Twelve spoke of the blessing Inis was to President Hunter: "After [Claire's] passing, it was a lonely time for several years until he married Inis. Together they have shared so many happy memories and experiences." Then, addressing Sister Hunter, he said, "We are grateful beyond expression to you, Inis, for your companionship and your loving and devoted care of him. You brought a sparkle to his eye and joy to him in the crowning years of his life and his ministry."⁶

Teachings of Howard W. Hunter

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Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and is intended to be eternal.

The Lord has defined marriage for us. He said, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh" (Matthew 19:5).⁷

Life's greatest partnership is in marriage—that relationship which has lasting and eternal significance.⁸

With a knowledge of the plan of salvation as a foundation, a man who holds the priesthood looks upon marriage as a sacred privilege and obligation. It is not good for man nor for woman to be alone. Man is not complete without woman. Neither can fill the measure of their creation without the other (see 1 Cor. 11:11; Moses 3:18).

Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God (see D&C 49:15–17). Only through the new and everlasting covenant of marriage can they realize the fulness of eternal blessings (see D&C 131:1–4; 132:15–19).⁹

Marriage is often referred to as a partnership with God. This is not just a figure of speech. If this partnership remains strong and active, the man and woman will love each other as they love God, and there will come into their home a sweetness and affection that will bring eternal success.¹⁰

The first marriage was performed by the Lord. It was an eternal marriage because there was no such thing as time when that ceremony took place. The ceremony was performed for a couple not then subject to death; thus, under the circumstances the relationship would never be terminated. After the fall, our first parents were driven from the Garden. They were then subject to death, but resurrection was promised to them. At no time was it said that their eternal marriage should come to an end.¹¹

In the temple we receive the highest ordinance available to men and women, the sealing of husbands and wives together for eternity. We hope our young people will settle for nothing less than a temple marriage.¹²

Just as baptism is a commandment of the Lord, so is temple marriage. As baptism is essential to admittance to the Church, so temple marriage is essential to our exaltation in the presence of God. It is part of our destiny. We cannot fulfill our ultimate aims without it. Do not be satisfied with anything less.

You wouldn't accept a worldly form of baptism, would you? God has his mode of baptism—by immersion by one who holds the authority. Then would you accept a worldly form of marriage? He has his mode of marriage also: It is temple marriage.¹³

I pray that the Lord will bless us that we may realize the reason for our existence and what we must do to find our way to exaltation and eternal life. Part of the eternal plan is the marriage we hold sacred. If we are willing to comply, the ordinances become permanent forever. What a glorious thing it is to have this understanding and to have revealed to us these truths.¹⁴

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**When deciding whom to marry, be patient, have faith,
and stay worthy of receiving divine assistance.**

I think the greatest decision you must make . . . is the decision that's going to shape your life for eternity, and that is your marriage. I'm sure that you would agree with me that this is going to be far more important than anything else you do in life, because your work and your profession or whatever you're going to do is not nearly as important as eternal values. . . . [The decision about marriage is] going to affect you through eternity; it's going to affect you while you live here upon the earth too.¹⁵

Do not . . . rush into a relationship without proper forethought and inspiration. Prayerfully seek the Lord's guidance on this matter. Stay worthy of receiving that divine assistance.¹⁶

Many of you . . . worry about courtship, marriage, and starting a family. You probably will not find the name of your future spouse in Nephi's vision or the book of Revelation; you probably will not be told it by an angel or even by your bishop. Some things you must work out for yourself. Have faith and be obedient, and blessings will come. Try to be patient. Try not to let what you don't have blind you to that which you do have. If you worry too much about marriage, it can canker the very possibility of it. Live fully and faithfully as one person before having undue anxiety about living as two.¹⁷

While waiting for promised blessings, one should not mark time, for to fail to move forward is to some degree a retrogression. Be anxiously engaged in good causes, including your own development.¹⁸

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**No blessing will be denied to worthy
individuals who are not married.**

This is the church of Jesus Christ, not the church of marrieds or singles or any other group or individual. The gospel we preach is the gospel of Jesus Christ, which encompasses all the saving ordinances and covenants necessary to save and exalt every individual who is willing to accept Christ and keep the commandments that he and our Father in Heaven have given.¹⁹



“While waiting for promised blessings, . . . be anxiously engaged in good causes, including your own development.”

No blessing, including that of eternal marriage and an eternal family, will be denied to any worthy individual. While it may take somewhat longer—perhaps even beyond this mortal life—for some to achieve this blessing, it will not be denied. . . .

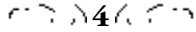
Now, may I offer a few words of counsel and love.

To you who are *unmarried men*: Don’t put off marriage because you are not in a perfect career and financial position. . . . Remember that as a priesthood bearer you have the obligation to take the lead in seeking eternal companionship.

To you *unmarried women*: The promises of the prophets of God have always been that the Lord is mindful of you; if you are faithful, *all* blessings will be yours. To be without marriage and a family in this life is but a temporary condition, and eternity is a long time. President Benson has reminded us that “time is numbered only to man. God has your eternal perspective in mind.” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1988, p. 97.) Fill your lives with worthwhile, meaningful activities.

To you who have experienced *divorce*: Don’t let disappointment or a sense of failure color your perception of marriage or of life.

Do not lose faith in marriage or allow bitterness to canker your soul and destroy you or those you love or have loved.²⁰



**Successful marriage requires our best efforts
to live the principles of the gospel.**

[Marriage] . . . is a learned behavior. Our conscious effort, not instinct, determines the success. The motivating force stems from kindness, true affection, and consideration for each other's happiness and welfare.

Prior to marriage we looked at life from our own point of view, but after stepping over that threshold, we began to consider it from another's viewpoint also. There is a necessity to make sacrifices and adjustments as manifestations of reassurance and love.

It is often said that being happily and successfully married is generally not so much a matter of marrying the right person as it is *being the right person*. Statistics showing the high rate of divorce might indicate unwise choices of partners. If they had married other persons, the particular problem might have been eliminated, but surely another problem would have been in its place. A wise choice of a partner is a large contribution to a successful marriage, yet the conscious effort to do one's part fully is the greatest element contributing to success.²¹

While it is true that worthy couples will obtain exaltation in the celestial kingdom, each man and woman sealed in an eternal relationship must be individually worthy of that blessing.

An eternal marriage will be composed of a worthy man and a worthy woman, both of whom have been individually baptized with water and with the Spirit; who have individually gone to the temple to receive their own endowments; who have individually pledged their fidelity to God and to their partner in the marriage covenant; and who have individually kept their covenants, doing all that God expected of them.²²

Living the principles of the gospel makes a happy marriage. . . . When two people can live the principles of the gospel, marriage can be sweet and it can be happy.²³

Husbands and wives should work together to strengthen the bonds of marriage.

Charity and patience with imperfections

Most partners have imperfections. . . . Richard L. Evans once said, “Perhaps any of us could get along with perfect people, but our task is to get along with imperfect people” [*Richard Evans’ Quote Book* (1971), 165]. We understand in marriage that we are not dealing with perfect people; we are seeking perfection and we are traveling the course in which we hope to find perfection, but we must have understanding, give our best, and make life beautiful. . . .

. . . The Bible tells us: “Charity suffereth long, and is kind” (see 1 Corinthians 13:4). That kind of love, the kind that is not taken lightly, not terminated at pleasure and thrown away like disposable plastic, but which faces all of life’s little difficulties hand in hand entwining the souls, is the ultimate expression of human happiness.²⁴

Oneness of heart

Surely the happiest marriages are those where your hurt is my hurt, my pain is your pain, my victory, your victory, my concerns, your concerns. The oneness of heart, of soul, of flesh seems to be more of a challenge than ever before in the world in which the question seems to be: “What is there in this for me?” Far too many marriage partners have become merely an ornament on the sleeve rather than a part of the heart.²⁵

Fidelity in thought, word, and deed

A man who holds the priesthood shows perfect moral fidelity to his wife and gives her no reason to doubt his faithfulness. A husband is to love his wife with all his heart and cleave unto her and none else (see D&C 42:22–26). President Spencer W. Kimball explained:

“The words *none else* eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes pre-eminent in the life of the husband or wife and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969, p. 250).



When husband and wife “love each other as they love God, . . . there will come into their home a sweetness and affection that will bring eternal success.”

The Lord forbids and his church condemns any and every intimate relationship outside of marriage. Infidelity on the part of a man breaks the heart of his wife and loses her confidence and the confidence of his children (see Jacob 2:35).

Be faithful in your marriage covenants in thought, word, and deed. Pornography, flirtations, and unwholesome fantasies erode one’s character and strike at the foundation of a happy marriage. Unity and trust within a marriage are thereby destroyed. One who does not control his thoughts and thus commits adultery in his heart, if he does not repent, shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear (see D&C 42:23; 63:16).²⁶

Tenderness and respect in intimacy

Keep yourselves above any domineering or unworthy behavior in the tender, intimate relationship between husband and wife. Because marriage is ordained of God, the intimate relationship between husbands and wives is good and honorable in the eyes of God. He has commanded that they be one flesh and that they multiply and replenish the earth (see Moses 2:28; 3:24). You are to

love your wife as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it (see Eph. 5:25–31).

Tenderness and respect—never selfishness—must be the guiding principles in the intimate relationship between husband and wife. Each partner must be considerate and sensitive to the other's needs and desires. Any domineering, indecent, or uncontrolled behavior in the intimate relationship between husband and wife is condemned by the Lord.

Any man who abuses or demeans his wife physically or spiritually is guilty of grievous sin and in need of sincere and serious repentance. Differences should be worked out in love and kindness and with a spirit of mutual reconciliation. A man should always speak to his wife lovingly and kindly, treating her with the utmost respect. Marriage is like a tender flower . . . and must be nourished constantly with expressions of love and affection.²⁷

Attentive listening

Many problems could be quickly answered, and many difficult situations resolved, if we could understand that there are times when we need to listen. In school we learned the lesson when we listened, but failed when we refused to give attention. In marriage there is a complete lack of understanding unless we are willing to listen. . . . Of course, we need to talk, but we must listen to the other view in order to increase our understanding sufficiently to make an intelligent decision. A listening ear can oftentimes make the difference.²⁸

Selflessness

Friendships cannot endure if they are based on the sands of selfishness. Marriages do not endure when they have no ground except in physical attraction, and do not have the foundation of a deeper love and loyalty.²⁹

We hope you who are married will remember the feelings of love which led you to the altar in the house of the Lord. Our hearts are saddened as we learn of many whose love has grown cold or who through reasons of selfishness or transgression forget or

treat lightly the marriage covenants they made in the temple. We plead with husbands and wives to have love and respect for each other. Indeed, it would be our fondest hope that each family would be blessed with a mother and father who express love for each other, who are deferential to each other, and who work together to strengthen the bonds of marriage.³⁰

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Questions

- In section 1, President Hunter emphasizes that marriage is ordained of God and is intended to be eternal. How can knowing this affect your relationship with your spouse? What does it mean to you that marriage is “a partnership with God”? How can we help children and youth prepare to be married in the temple?
- What are your thoughts and impressions as you study President Hunter’s counsel about deciding whom to marry? (See section 2.)
- How can President Hunter’s promises and counsel in section 3 help persons who are not married? How can we apply President Hunter’s message that “this is the church of Jesus Christ, not the church of marrieds or singles”?
- What do you think President Hunter means by saying that marriage “is a learned behavior”? (See section 4.) When have you seen that living the principles of the gospel has brought happiness to a marriage? If you are married, consider what you might do to more fully manifest your love to your spouse.
- Ponder President Hunter’s counsel in section 5. How can spouses develop greater patience with each other’s imperfections? How can spouses develop greater “oneness of heart”? How can spouses show fidelity in marriage through thought, word, and deed?

Related Scriptures

Genesis 2:18, 21–24; Jacob 2:27, 31–33; 4 Nephi 1:11; D&C 42:22; Moses 3:19–24; see also “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129

Study Help

“Your gospel study is most effective when you are taught by the Holy Ghost. Always begin your gospel study by praying for the Holy Ghost to help you learn” (*Preach My Gospel* [2004], 18).

Notes

1. In Eleanor Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter* (1994), 72.
2. In Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter*, 79–80.
3. In Don L. Searle, “President Howard W. Hunter, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1986, 24–25.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Prophet Polished and Refined,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1995, 34.
5. In Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter*, 270; see also 264, 267, 269.
6. James E. Faust, “Howard W. Hunter: Man of God,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1995, 28.
7. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 137.
8. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 130.
9. “Being a Righteous Husband and Father,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 49.
10. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 130.
11. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 132.
12. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 130.
13. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 131–32.
14. “Divine Creation of Women” (address given at the Australia Area Conference, Adelaide, Australia, Nov. 30, 1979), 7, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
15. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 141–42.
16. “The Church Is for All People,” *Ensign*, June 1989, 77.
17. “Fear Not, Little Flock” (address given at Brigham Young University, Mar. 14, 1989), 4; speeches.byu.edu.
18. “The Church Is for All People,” 77.
19. “The Church Is for All People,” 76.
20. “The Church Is for All People,” 76–77.
21. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 129–30.
22. “The Church Is for All People,” 76.
23. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 137.
24. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 135–36.
25. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 137.
26. “Being a Righteous Husband and Father,” 50.
27. “Being a Righteous Husband and Father,” 51.
28. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 129.
29. In Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 12.
30. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 130–31.