

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Doctrine and Principles of Marriage

By Elder Kevin S. Hamilton

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For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and their families in Africa



Elder Hamilton

The Africa Southeast Area Presidency is pleased to introduce new materials for members of the Church and their families on the important subject of marriage and marriage traditions, particularly the tradition of bride price, or *lobola*. A new brochure and an accompanying 5-minute video are available to order through the area distribution centers as well as online at africase.lds.org/marriage-in-africa. It is our hope that these new materials will help members of the Church and their families deal with the sensitive subjects of marriage and bride price wherever there is a need. We encourage wards, priesthood quorums, and relief societies in every stake and district to use these materials to teach these important doctrines and principles of marriage.

Marriage: Part of God's Divine Plan

Since the beginning of time, marriage between a man and a woman has been part of God's plan for His children. Within the bonds of marriage, we find true happiness on earth and hope for eternal life in the world to come. Within marriage we are able to fulfill part of God's purpose for His children here on the earth.

There are elements in modern society that are leading us away from the truth that marriage is ordained of God. Church leaders reaffirm that God, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, has not changed His position on marriage. It remains a part of our purpose in life and a goal for our eternal lives. We are taught, "God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129). Outside of marriage, God's standard is chastity, or abstinence from all sexual relations.

Inside of marriage, God's standard is complete and total fidelity.

While Church leaders affirm that marriage is essential, they also recognize that there are many kinds of marriages in Africa, such as traditional, customary, and civil marriages. In 2012 Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued a letter to leaders and members of the Church in Africa to address the question of marriage:

"The Church has adopted as its standard in Africa for all ecclesiastical purposes (including baptism and temple ordinances) the acceptance of any monogamous marriage between one



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man and one woman, whether civil, religious, or customary/traditional, which is legal under the laws of the country in which that marriage was performed” (*Marriage Policy for the Continent of Africa*, Jan. 27, 2012).

Church leaders therefore teach that, as the requirement for all Church ordinances in Africa, marriage must be legal under the laws of the country where the marriage is performed.

- Marriage is part of God’s plan.
- God’s standard is chastity before marriage and fidelity after marriage.
- In Africa, before Church ordinances are performed, marriage must be legal under the laws of the country in which that marriage is performed.

A Challenge to Marriage in Africa

The practice of bride price, sometimes referred to as *lobola*, is one of the challenges to marriage in Africa. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, made this statement: “The consequences of [bride price] are manifold and lead to behavior unbecoming for a member of the Church of Jesus Christ. We urge our young people, our fathers and mothers, all our leaders and members of the Church to discontinue this practice. Our young people should follow the Lord’s pattern of marriage as practiced in the holy temple and not follow traditions that undermine God’s sacred plan. The Lord’s way is



Scriptures That Support Marriage

“For marriage is ordained of God unto man.” —Doctrine and Covenants 49:15

“Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.” —1 Corinthians 11:11

“Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God,” “The family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.” —“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”

“The Church teaches us to give up any personal or family traditions or practices that are contrary to the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ and to this gospel culture.” —Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “The Gospel Culture,” *Liahona*, Mar. 2012, 22.

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the real path to bring families together forever” (address given at a broadcast to all stakes in Africa, Nov. 23, 2014).

In some parts of Africa, the practice of *lobola* in recent years has become increasingly commercialized. This practice can hinder a couple’s ability to marry, impoverish the newly married couple, and delay childbearing. Unreasonable *lobola* demands that delay marriage can lead to serious moral transgressions, which cause pain and sorrow. Members should do all that they can to encourage marriage and the formation of families. Supporting families in this way will bless grandparents, parents, and children.

- The First Presidency of the Church has asked that Church members discontinue bride price, or *lobola*.
- The Lord’s pattern is marriage in the temple.
- Families should do all they can to support the marriages of their children.

Promised Blessings

Church leaders encourage members to keep traditions that are in harmony with the gospel of Jesus Christ and to abandon traditions that lead them away from God’s plan for His children. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “When it comes to giving up false traditions and cultures, we . . . appeal to our older members to put

away traditions and cultural or tribal practices that lead them away from the path of growth and progress. We ask all to climb to the higher ground of the gospel culture” (“The Gospel Culture,” *Liahona*, Mar. 2012, 23).

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and people of faith everywhere have a moral responsibility to promote strong families and enduring marriages. We should do all we can to encourage and help

young adults to marry in a timely fashion. Families of the bride and groom should work together to ensure the blessings of heaven for their children and future grandchildren. Members of the Church should seek to protect the marriage interests of their children and not delegate the duty to uncles, aunts, or grandparents.

God’s promises are sure—as we follow His commandments, we are blessed. The greatest joys and blessings

He can give His children will be provided to those who adopt and follow the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ, especially as it concerns the holy and sacred ordinance of marriage.

- We are asked to abandon traditions that lead us away from God's plan.
- Members of the Church have a responsibility to promote family and marriage ■



God's promises are sure—as we follow His commandments, we are blessed.

LOCAL PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

Working through Spiritual and Temporal Well-being Positively

By **Jadmaire N. Ndivo**

Stake President of the Africa Nairobi Kenya Stake

Gardening is widely practiced in our communities where about 76 per cent of our population live in the rural areas and mostly use processed and unprocessed garden produce for their daily meals. This livelihood requires determination and hard work.

In some parts of the country, oxen are used to plough the fields to make the soil ready for planting. Signs, words, and pricks are used to instruct the oxen on what is required. Patience is a prerequisite when you train the oxen. For example, you can't use the word "com" at the middle of a plough

line because the ox will turn instead of ploughing to the end of the line. Neither can you use the words "ooh" and "halt" when you want the ox to continue pulling the plough to the end of the line. When you prick the ox, it means better work is required, otherwise the driver will use a whip to compel the ox to do what is required.

For this reason, God declared "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19).

Because of these hardships, we want to keep on learning new ways of doing things. Adam learned to till the ground after he was driven out of the Garden of Eden. Work is a blessing from God, however hard it is. The principle of work was implemented immediately after the Fall, and in the process we are exposed to learning new ways of doing work more efficiently. The reason behind this is because the ground was no longer going to bear good fruit but "thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field" (Genesis 3:18).

President
Jadmaire N. Ndivo



There was going to be pain in giving birth to our children and toil in bringing them up. This was necessary in preparation for the plan of salvation. When hard times come, our countenances change and we quickly start to justify how circumstances are unfair. This affects our ability to lift ourselves. A renowned author stated, “Whether you reach success or failure in life has little to do with your circumstances; it has much more to do with your attitude . . . with your faithful courage . . . with your choices! You see, non-achievers blame their circumstances; winners rise above their circumstances. Some concentrate on the blank wall that boxes them in; winners always look for a way to get under it, over it, around it, or through it” (Nido Qubein, *Attitude: The Remarkable Power of Optimism*, 5).

In the pursuit to remain God’s preferred people, the children of Israel observed and kept statutes, made and renewed covenants with God that there was no other God besides Him who should be worshipped. We observe the Sabbath and worship in the temple. We partake of the sacrament, the most repeated ordinance of the gospel in our lives, to remember and follow the example of the Savior.

We make covenants with God in our temples to show our desire to live with Him eternally. We cannot do this unless we know the importance of the Restoration of the priesthood in our dispensation. “But



LEAVING THE GARDEN, BY JOSEPH BRICKEY

ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Latter-day Saints are a chosen generation, a peculiar people because of the continued adherence to covenants and laws of the gospel. The power of the priesthood and temple ordinances define our destiny if we remain faithful and obedient to the “pricks and signs” of the gospel.

The biggest enemy that we are fighting in this dispensation of time is spiritual and temporal self-reliance. The devil is using this enemy to define direction for those who are feeble in spirit. “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41). Our Father in Heaven is generous and provides in His own way. He will provide for those who ask with real intent and will bless those who don’t get answers to their prayers to continue being steadfast in their faith.

The Lord declared, “It is my purpose to provide for my saints, . . . but it must needs be done in mine own way” (D&C 104:15–16). The First Presidency declared in the introduction of the *My Path to Self-Reliance* workbook, “We invite you to diligently study and apply these principles and teach them to your family members. As you do so, your life will be blessed. You will learn how to act on your path toward greater self-reliance. You will be blessed with greater hope, peace, and progress.



LDS.ORG NEWSROOM FOR SOUTH AFRICA

African saints working in gardens



“Please be assured that you are a child of our Father in Heaven. He loves you and will never forsake you. He knows you and is ready to extend to you the spiritual and temporal blessings of self-reliance.”

The devil may sneak in when there is disbelief and conflict in our faith and less energy in our endeavors. Cain rose against his brother, Abel, when he learned that God had shown favor to Abel because of his offerings unto to the Lord. “And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?”

“If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him” (Genesis 4:6, 7).

Faith and courage will deliver those who believe and who take the first

steps to be delivered. It took courage for a woman who had suffered for many years to be healed. “And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment:

“For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

“But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour” (Matthew 9:20–22).

Our living prophet, Thomas S. Monson, is guiding us in the will of the Lord. His defined direction and wish is to see Zion established in our hearts. I have faith in the counsel he gives us and I testify of this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

LOCAL NEWS

Turning Lemons into Lemonade

By Phemelo Molefe, Johannesburg South Africa

Five years ago misfortune hit Wendy Malpage and her family when an investment didn't go as it was supposed to. Thankfully, an old lemonade recipe would come to the rescue.

After her family had battled through a period of severe financial difficulty, Wendy made a decision to move forward and become self-reliant once again. She told her husband, Simon, that their family needed to do all they could to avoid ever finding themselves in a situation of financial insecurity again.

Having made that decision, Wendy prayed to Heavenly Father, asking Him to guide her toward something she could start up that could help alleviate their financial struggles. It was then that an old recipe came to mind.

For years Wendy had made a lemonade for her guests—something



which was especially popular with the kids. One day when she and her husband were chatting, he remarked that her lemonade was good enough to be bottled and sold. That's when the idea for Wendy's Lemonade was sparked, but first she had to prove the idea through prayer and pondering. The more she prayed and pondered, the more it became clear that this was the right thing for her to do.

With a confirmation from Heavenly Father, Wendy began selling her lemonade at a small craft market. The lemonade was an immediate hit.

Wendy began to employ one lady part-time, and together they made a ready-to-drink lemonade. Armed with this new variant of her product, Wendy approached a nearby school in Johannesburg, and soon the school was asking her for more and more of the drink.

With time, distribution expanded to more schools. The manufacturing process had expanded so much that Wendy and the team of single mothers

who now worked with her moved into her garage. Things would only get busier as she began to introduce her lemonade to different retailers. Getting the product onto the shelves of established supermarkets in South Africa was not an easy process, but through trial and error she made it.

Today Wendy's Lemonade enjoys even more demand, and her range includes a cordial, a ready-made drink, and a new pink lemonade. Wendy plans to further expand her product offering. The business is expanding and will soon need to be housed in a bigger premises.

"I knew that my business would be a success from the beginning, simply because I felt Heavenly Father's approval," says Wendy. Today she is still confident that with heaven's help her business will grow from strength to strength. "When Heavenly Father has given you an answer to your prayers, you can do it all," she says.

Wendy feels that her experience has valuable lessons for each one of us. In the quest for self-reliance, she stresses just how critical it is to save money where possible. Her formula for financial success is to set aside 10% of their income for tithing and another 10% for saving. And the principle of generosity rings true as well. "The more you give, the more you will receive," she says. "That is how you take the lemons life gives you and turn them into lemonade." ■

Marriage and Family: Meant to Bring Us Happiness, or Rather Make Us Holy?

By James Chishinji, Zambia

Soon after I finished my mission in Ghana and returned to my hometown in Kawama, Zambia, I attended the tragic funeral service of a wonderful mother. This good woman was on her way to work to provide for her family when the front tire of the car in which she was a passenger burst. The car overturned and rolled, leaving six people dead and four others seriously injured. Neither the woman who died nor her family were members of the Church. As we waited for the service to begin, a scripture from Genesis came to my mind.

In that first book of the Bible, we learn that the Lord blessed man to have authority and dominion over all the creatures of the earth. That promise



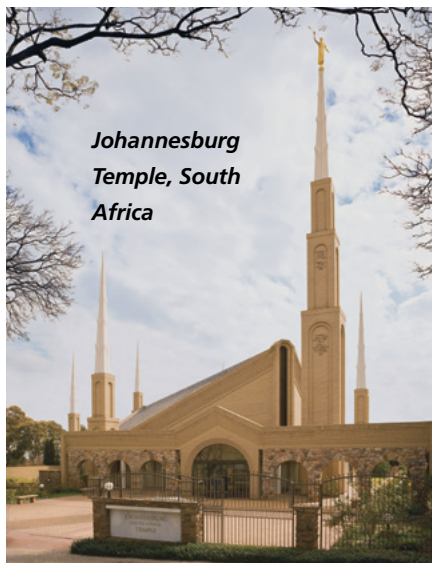
Elder James Chishinji from Zambia



Wendy Malpage, Randburg Ward, Johannesburg South Africa Stake

“The choices you make—mission, education, marriage, career, and service in the Church—will shape your eternal destiny”

(Robert D. Hales, “Meeting the Challenges of Today’s World,” Liahona, Nov. 2015, 44).



made me realize that the fulness of joy was truly meant for man. Why, then, did that joy seem so far away? Wasn't man supposed to enjoy the blessings of this life? Isn't marriage and family life a source of God's divine happiness for us?

Tears filled my cheeks as I thought to myself, “This woman was once like me. She had set goals to graduate from school, find a job, get married to a good man, and raise a loving family. But now she is gone, leaving behind a two-year-old child to grow up in the care of his father alone. Is this how life was really meant to be?”

I felt so discouraged that the idea of pursuing my own goal of marriage seemed pointless. But in that moment of heartache, I recalled one of my favorite teachings in Elder James E. Talmage's *Jesus the Christ*. He wrote: “In the resurrection there will be no marrying nor giving in marriage; for all questions of marital status must be settled before that time, under the authority of the Holy Priesthood, which holds the power to seal in marriage for both time and eternity” (548). This began to open my mind about the importance of family. It is not meant to be perfectly attained

in this life, but is rather there to offer us the opportunity to become more holy.

One who really desires to reap the full blessings of marriage makes sure they are married in accordance with the Lord's law. They are married by one who has the keys of the priesthood, have their marriage sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, and then abide in the covenant. That is when the fruits are harvested and they “inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers” (D&C 132:19), which promise was given to man in the beginning. My heart was then comforted as I looked at the woman lying in the casket and thought about the purpose of my life. Like the words of the hymn, we are all “sowing, daily sowing / Countless seeds of good and ill, . . .”

*. . . By a whisper sow we blessings;
By a breath we scatter strife.
In our words and thoughts and actions
Lie the seeds of death and life.*

Thou who knowest all our weakness,

*Leave us not to sow alone!
Bid thine angels guard the furrows
Where the precious grain is sown,
Till the fields are crown'd with glory,
Filled with mellow, ripened ears,
Filled with fruit of life eternal
From the seed we sowed in tears
(Hymns, no. 216).*

I have renewed my commitment to be married in the temple. As I prepare to do so, I now realize that it is not because I have found the perfect one or I because I want to reap the blessings of this life, but because I need to be more holy and worthy for the blessings the Lord has in store for me in the life to come. What a strengthening blessing this knowledge has been in my life. ■

EDITOR'S NOTE

Your local pages section is produced by members in your own area under the guidance of the Area Presidency so that it can address the needs and experiences of members where you live. The inclusion of the local pages in each issue depends on the availability of local content. We invite you to contribute your faith-promoting thoughts and experiences by contacting your local editor.

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