



## Family: The Sweetest Union for Time and for Eternity

*“The sweetest union and happiness pervaded our house. No jar nor discord disturbed our peace, and tranquility reigned in our midst.” (Lucy Mack Smith)*

### From the Life of Joseph Smith

**B**y 1843, although the Nauvoo Temple was not yet finished, the Prophet had announced the doctrine of salvation for the dead, and he had administered the temple endowment to a group of faithful Saints. But an important part of the sacred work of temples had yet to be put in place. On May 16, 1843, the Prophet traveled from Nauvoo to Ramus, Illinois, where he stayed at the home of his close friend Benjamin F. Johnson. That evening, he taught Brother and Sister Johnson and a few close friends about the “new and everlasting covenant of marriage.” He explained that this covenant was the “order of the priesthood” necessary to obtain the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. (See D&C 131:1–4.) He also taught that unless a man and a woman enter into the covenant of eternal marriage, “they will cease to increase when they die; that is, they will not have any children after the resurrection.” Those who do enter into this covenant and remain faithful “will continue to increase and have children in the celestial glory.”<sup>1</sup>

Two months later, on July 12, 1843, in the upstairs office of his Red Brick Store, the Prophet dictated to William Clayton a revelation about the doctrine of eternal marriage (see D&C 132). The Prophet had known and taught this doctrine for some time before. In this revelation, the Lord declared that if a husband and wife are not sealed by the power of the holy priesthood, “they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity” (see D&C



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132:15–18). To receive exaltation, husbands and wives must be sealed by priesthood power and then remain faithful to their covenants:

“Verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; . . . it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

“Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory” (D&C 132:19–21).

For Elder Parley P. Pratt of the Quorum of the Twelve, a knowledge of this doctrine deepened his love for his family: “It was Joseph Smith who taught me how to prize the endearing relationships of father and mother, husband and wife; of brother and sister, son and daughter. It was from him that I learned that the wife of my bosom might be secured to me for time and all eternity; and that the refined sympathies and affections which endeared us to each other emanated from the fountain of divine eternal love. It was from him that I learned that we might cultivate these affections, and grow and increase in the same to all eternity; while the result of our endless union would be an offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, or the sands of the sea shore. . . . I had loved before, but I knew not why. But now I loved—with a pureness—an intensity of elevated, exalted feeling, which would lift my soul from the transitory things of this groveling sphere and expand it as the ocean. . . . In short, I could now love with the spirit and with the understanding also.”<sup>2</sup>

## Teachings of Joseph Smith

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### Husbands and wives honor each other by showing love, kindness, and affection.

“Marriage [is] an institution of heaven, instituted in the garden of Eden.”<sup>3</sup>

“It is the duty of a husband to love, cherish, and nourish his wife, and cleave unto her and none else [see D&C 42:22]; he ought to honor her as himself, and he ought to regard her feelings with tenderness, for she is his flesh, and his bone, designed to be an help unto him, both in temporal, and spiritual things; one into whose bosom he can pour all his complaints without reserve, who is willing (being designed) to take part of his burden, to soothe and encourage his feelings by her gentle voice.

“It is the place of the man, to stand at the head of his family, . . . not to rule over his wife as a tyrant, neither as one who is fearful or jealous that his wife will get out of her place, and prevent him from exercising his authority. It is his duty to be a man of God (for a man of God is a man of wisdom,) ready at all times to obtain from the scriptures, the revelations, and from on high, such instructions as are necessary for the edification, and salvation of his household.”<sup>4</sup>

*At a meeting of Relief Society sisters, Joseph Smith said:* “You need not be teasing your husbands because of their deeds, but let the weight of your innocence, kindness and affection be felt, which is more mighty than a millstone hung about the neck; not war, not jangle [quarreling], not contradiction, or dispute, but meekness, love, purity—these are the things that should magnify you in the eyes of all good men. . . .

“. . . When a man is borne down with trouble, when he is perplexed with care and difficulty, if he can meet a smile instead of an argument or a murmur—if he can meet with mildness, it will calm down his soul and soothe his feelings; when the mind is going to despair, it needs a solace of affection and kindness. . . . When you go home, never give a cross or unkind word to your husbands, but let kindness, charity and love crown your works henceforward.”<sup>5</sup>

*Eliza R. Snow reported:* “[The Prophet Joseph Smith] exhorted the sisters always to concentrate their faith and prayers for, and place confidence in their husbands, whom God has appointed for them to honor.”<sup>6</sup>

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**Children honor their parents by expressing gratitude to them and cherishing them throughout their lives.**

*For several days in October 1835, the Prophet made daily visits to his gravely ill father, attending to him “with great anxiety.” The Prophet’s journal records:* “Waited on my father again, who was very sick. In secret prayer in the morning, the Lord said, ‘My servant, thy father shall live.’ I waited on him all this day with my heart raised to God in the name of Jesus Christ, that He would restore him to health, that I might be blessed with his company and advice, esteeming it one of the greatest earthly blessings to be blessed with the society of parents, whose mature years and experience render them capable of administering the most wholesome advice. At evening Brother David Whitmer came in. We called on the Lord in mighty prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, and laid our hands on him, and rebuked the disease. And God heard and answered our prayers—to the great joy and satisfaction of our souls. Our aged father arose and dressed himself, shouted, and praised the Lord.”<sup>7</sup>

“Blessed is my mother, for her soul is ever filled with benevolence and philanthropy; and notwithstanding her age, yet she shall receive strength, and shall be comforted in the midst of her house, and she shall have eternal life. And blessed is my father, for the hand of the Lord shall be over him, for he shall see the affliction of his children pass away; and when his head is fully ripe, he shall behold himself as an olive tree, whose branches are bowed down with much fruit; he shall also possess a mansion on high.”<sup>8</sup>

“I have remembered scenes of my childhood. I have thought of my father who is dead. . . . He was of noble stature and possessed a high, and holy, and exalted, and virtuous mind. His soul soared above all those mean and groveling principles that are so congenial to the human heart. I now say that he never did a



*Joseph Smith was raised in a family in which parents and children loved and respected one another. This painting shows the Smith family being reunited with their father in 1816 after he had preceded them in their move to Palmyra, New York.*

mean act, that might be said was ungenerous in his life, to my knowledge. I love my father and his memory; and the memory of his noble deeds rests with ponderous weight upon my mind, and many of his kind and parental words to me are written on the tablet of my heart.

“Sacred to me are the thoughts which I cherish of the history of his life, that have rolled through my mind, and have been implanted there by my own observation, since I was born. Sacred to me is his dust, and the spot where he is laid. Sacred to me is

the tomb I have made to encircle o'er his head. Let the memory of my father eternally live. . . . May the God that I love look down from above and save me from my enemies here, and take me by the hand that on Mount Zion I may stand, and with my father crown me eternally there.

“Words and language are inadequate to express the gratitude that I owe to God for having given me so honorable a parentage.

“My mother also is one of the noblest and the best of all women. May God grant to prolong her days and mine, that we may live to enjoy each other’s society long.”<sup>9</sup>

“When we reflect with what care, and with what unremitting diligence our parents have striven to watch over us, and how many hours of sorrow and anxiety they have spent, over our cradles and bed-sides, in times of sickness, how careful we ought to be of their feelings in their old age! It cannot be a source of sweet reflection to us, to say or do anything that will bring their gray hairs down with sorrow to the grave.”<sup>10</sup>

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**Love among brothers and sisters can be  
sweet and enduring.**

*Of two of his brothers, both of whom had died as young men, the Prophet wrote: “Alvin, my oldest brother—I remember well the pangs of sorrow that swelled my youthful bosom and almost burst my tender heart when he died. He was the oldest and the noblest of my father’s family. He was one of the noblest of the sons of men. . . . In him there was no guile. He lived without spot from the time he was a child. . . . He was one of the soberest of men, and when he died the angel of the Lord visited him in his last moments. . . .*

*“My brother Don Carlos Smith . . . also was a noble boy; I never knew any fault in him; I never saw the first immoral act, or the first irreligious or ignoble disposition in the child from the time that he was born till the time of his death. He was a lovely, a good-natured, a kind-hearted and a virtuous and a faithful, upright child; and where his soul goes, let mine go also.”<sup>11</sup>*

*Joseph Smith wrote the following in a letter to his older brother Hyrum: “My Dearly Beloved Brother Hyrum, I have had*

much concern about you, but I always remember you in my prayers, calling upon God to keep you safe in spite of men or devils. . . . God protect you.”<sup>12</sup>

*Of Hyrum, the Prophet wrote:* “I could pray in my heart that all my brethren were like unto my beloved brother Hyrum, who possesses the mildness of a lamb, and the integrity of a Job, and in short, the meekness and humility of Christ; and I love him with that love that is stronger than death.”<sup>13</sup>

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**Parents who love, support, and pray for their children bring immeasurable blessings into their children’s lives.**

*After his visit to the Hill Cumorah in September 1823, Joseph Smith related his experience to his family and then continued to share his experiences with them. The Prophet’s mother recorded:* “Every evening we gathered our children together. I think that we presented the most peculiar aspect of any family that ever lived upon the earth, all seated in a circle, father, mother, sons, and daughters listening in breathless anxiety to the religious teachings of a boy [seventeen] years of age. . . .

“We were convinced that God was about to bring to light something that we might stay our minds upon, something that we could get a more definite idea of than anything which had been taught us heretofore, and we rejoiced in it with exceeding great joy. The sweetest union and happiness pervaded our house. No jar nor discord disturbed our peace, and tranquility reigned in our midst.”<sup>14</sup>

*Near the end of the march of Zion’s Camp, in June 1834, Joseph and Hyrum Smith, among many others, were afflicted with cholera. Their mother recounted the following about their experience:* “Hyrum and Joseph’s . . . joy at meeting us again in health was exceeding great, above measure, because of the perils which they had escaped during their absence. They sat down, one on each side of me, Joseph holding one of my hands and Hyrum the other, and they related the following: . . .

“The disease instantly fastened itself upon us, and in a few minutes we were in awful distress. We made mute signals to each other and left the house for the purpose of going into some



*“Every evening we gathered our children together,” Lucy Mack Smith recalled, “father, mother, sons, and daughters listening in breathless anxiety to the religious teachings of a boy [seventeen] years of age.”*

secluded place to join in prayer that God would deliver us from this awful influence. But before we could get a sufficient distance to be secure from interruption, we were scarcely able to stand upon our feet and we were greatly alarmed, fearing that we should die in this western wilderness so far from our families, without even the privilege of blessing our children or of giving them one word of parting counsel. Hyrum cried out, “Joseph, what shall we do? Must we be cut off from the face of the earth by this horrid curse?” “Let us,” said [Joseph], “get down upon our knees and pray to God to remove the cramp and other

distress and restore us to health, that we may return to our families.” We did so but without receiving any benefit, but still grew worse. . . .

“ ‘We soon came to the resolution of appealing again to God for mercy and not to rise from our knees until one or the other got a testimony that we should be healed. . . . We prayed some time, first one and then the other, and soon perceived that the cramp began to loose its hold. And in a short time afterwards, Hyrum sprang to his feet and exclaimed, “Joseph, we shall return, for I have seen an open vision in which I saw Mother on her knees under an apple tree praying for us, and she is even now asking in tears for God to spare our lives that she may behold us again in the flesh. And the Spirit testifies to me that her prayers and ours shall be heard.” And from that moment we were healed and went on our way rejoicing.’

“ ‘Oh, my Mother,’ said Joseph, ‘how often have your prayers been a means of assisting us when the shadows of death encompassed us.’ ”<sup>15</sup>

*The love of Lucy Mack Smith for her sons is illustrated by her account of the Prophet and his brother Hyrum being taken as prisoners from Far West, Missouri, in November 1838, to Independence and then Richmond, Missouri, where they would be imprisoned. The family feared that Joseph and Hyrum would be killed: “When the news came to us that our sons were to be taken away, the messenger told us that if we ever saw our sons again alive, we would have to go to them, as they were in the wagon to be driven away and would be gone in a few minutes. My husband was then too ill to be able to go, but I and Lucy [a daughter] started alone, for we were the only well ones of the family.*

“When we came within about 400 yards of the wagon, we could go no farther because of the men with which they were surrounded. ‘I am the mother of the Prophet,’ I cried, ‘and is there not a gentleman here who will assist me through this crowd to that wagon that I may take a last look at my children and speak to them once more before they die?’ One individual volunteered to make a pathway through the army, and we went

on through the midst of swords, muskets, pistols, and bayonets, threatened with death at every step, until at last we arrived there. The man who accompanied me spoke to Hyrum, who sat in front, and told him his mother was there and wished him to reach his hand to her. He did so, but I was not permitted to see them, for the cover of the wagon was made of very heavy cloth and tied closely down in front and nailed fast at the sides. . . .

“Our friend then conducted us to the hinder part of the wagon, where Joseph was, and spoke to him, saying, ‘Mr. Smith, your mother and sister are here and wish to shake hands with you.’ Joseph crowded his hand through between the wagon and cover where it was nailed down to the end board. We caught hold of his hand, but he did not speak to us. I could not bear to leave him without hearing his voice. ‘Oh, Joseph,’ said I, ‘do speak to your poor mother once more. I cannot go until I hear you speak.’

“ ‘God bless you, Mother,’ he said, and then a cry was raised and the wagon dashed off, tearing my son from us just as Lucy was pressing his hand to her to bestow upon it a sister’s last kiss, for we knew that they were sentenced to be shot.

“We succeeded in getting to the house again, although we were scarcely able to support ourselves. . . . For some time nothing was heard in the house but sighs and groans, as we did not then know but we had seen Joseph and Hyrum for the last time. But in the midst of my grief, I found consolation that surpassed all earthly comfort. I was filled with the Spirit of God and received the following by the gift of prophecy: ‘Let your heart be comforted concerning your children, for they shall not harm a hair of their heads.’ . . . ‘My children,’ said I, ‘do not cry any more. The mob will not kill them, for the Lord has signified to me that he will deliver them out of the hands of their enemies.’ This was a great comfort to us all, and we were not so much distressed afterwards as to their lives being taken.”<sup>16</sup>

## Suggestions for Study and Teaching

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Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages vii–xii.

- Review Elder Parley P. Pratt’s description of how a knowledge of the doctrine of eternal marriage blessed his life (page 481). In what ways can this doctrine influence the way we feel about our families? the way we treat one another at home?
- Read Joseph Smith’s counsel to husbands and wives (pages 482–83). Consider how some of this counsel applies to both women and men. Why is it important for both fathers and mothers to study the scriptures and receive revelations to guide the family? What are some things a man can do when he sees that his wife is “borne down with trouble”? Why do both husbands and wives need to avoid using “a cross or unkind word”?
- As an adult, the Prophet Joseph continued to enjoy being with his parents, to seek their advice, and to honor them (pages 483–85). Which of the Prophet’s statements about his parents particularly impress you? What examples have you seen of the enduring influence for good that parents can have on their children? Think about what you can do to better honor your parents.
- Review the Prophet’s statements about his brothers Alvin, Don Carlos, and Hyrum (pages 485–86). Why do you think the relationship between brothers and sisters can be so lasting and strong? What can parents do to encourage their sons and daughters to be good friends? What can brothers and sisters do to nurture their friendship with one another?
- Review Lucy Mack Smith’s recollection of her son Joseph teaching the family (page 486). What experiences can you share in which you have felt “union and happiness” with family members? What can parents learn from the experience Joseph and Hyrum had with being healed from cholera? (See pages 486–88.)

*Related Scriptures:* Exodus 20:12; 1 Corinthians 11:11; Ephesians 6:1–4; Mosiah 4:14–15; Moses 3:18, 21–24

## Notes

1. *History of the Church*, 5:391; from instructions given by Joseph Smith on May 16, 1843, in Ramus, Illinois; reported by William Clayton.
2. Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1938), pp. 297–98; paragraph divisions altered.
3. *History of the Church*, 2:320; from a Joseph Smith journal entry, Nov. 24, 1835, Kirtland, Ohio.
4. “On the Duty of Husband and Wife,” an editorial published in *Elders’ Journal*, Aug. 1838, p. 61; paragraph divisions altered; Joseph Smith was the editor of the periodical.
5. *History of the Church*, 4:605–7; spelling modernized; paragraph divisions altered; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Apr. 28, 1842, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Eliza R. Snow; see also appendix, page 562, item 3.
6. *History of the Church*, 4:604; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Apr. 28, 1842, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Eliza R. Snow; see also appendix, page 562, item 3.
7. *History of the Church*, 2:289; from Joseph Smith journal entries, Oct. 8 and 11, 1835, Kirtland, Ohio.
8. *History of the Church*, 1:466; paragraph divisions altered; from a Joseph Smith journal entry, Dec. 18, 1833, Kirtland, Ohio.
9. *History of the Church*, 5:125–26; from a Joseph Smith journal entry, Aug. 23, 1842, near Nauvoo, Illinois; this entry is incorrectly dated Aug. 22, 1842, in *History of the Church*.
10. *History of the Church*, 2:342; from a letter from Joseph Smith to William Smith, Dec. 18, 1835, Kirtland, Ohio.
11. *History of the Church*, 5:126–27; from a Joseph Smith journal entry, Aug. 23, 1842, near Nauvoo, Illinois; this entry is incorrectly dated Aug. 22, 1842, in *History of the Church*.
12. Letter from Joseph Smith to Hyrum Smith, Mar. 3, 1831, Kirtland, Ohio; Joseph Smith, Collection, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
13. *History of the Church*, 2:338; from a Joseph Smith journal entry, Dec. 18, 1835, Kirtland, Ohio.
14. Lucy Mack Smith, “The History of Lucy Smith, Mother of the Prophet,” 1844–45 manuscript, book 4, p. 1, Church Archives.
15. Lucy Mack Smith, “The History of Lucy Smith, Mother of the Prophet,” 1844–45 manuscript, book 13, pp. 12–14, Church Archives.
16. Lucy Mack Smith, “The History of Lucy Smith, Mother of the Prophet,” 1844–45 manuscript, book 16, pp. 3–6, Church Archives.