

“SAFETY IN COUNSEL”

# *Heeding Prophets and Apostles*

Another way to bring the *Thee* into our marriage is by following God’s modern oracles. We have the privilege to live in a time when God speaks to us through living prophets and apostles; he gives us continual counsel and commandments through them. President M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “It is no small thing to have a prophet of God in our midst. Great and wonderful are the blessings that come into our lives as we listen to the word of the Lord given to us through him.”<sup>i</sup>

This chapter will first look at the doctrine of prophets to help us understand the seriousness with which we must heed their counsel in our lives and marriages. God the Father gives prophets and apostles special keys and authority to represent Him here on earth. Understanding how He does this and why He does this is important in bringing God into our marriage. We will then look at specific counsel that modern-day prophets

and apostles have given relative to marriage to help it thrive and be successful.

### *The Doctrine of Prophets*

Since the days of Adam, the Lord has established a pattern and plan to direct His work here on the earth. He has called special, faithful men throughout the ages to be prophets by communicating with them and giving them authority and keys to direct His work.<sup>2</sup> This pattern was also followed in this final dispensation with the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith. As a young boy, he went to a grove of trees to inquire of the Lord which church he should join. In answer to that humble question, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to him. Throughout the rest of his life, Joseph was continually visited by angels and even Christ Himself. During several of these visits, Heavenly Father sent angels to physically confer priesthood keys and authority upon Joseph. Joseph, in turn, conferred these keys and authority upon other men who were called as Apostles. This pattern continues within the Church today.

The prophets serve as a liaison between God the Father and His children, leading us and giving us what we need in our daily lives. In the Book of Mormon, Nephi gave a thorough discourse to his rebellious brothers, Laman and Lemuel, on the role of prophets. He taught his brothers using the familiar story of Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egyptian slavery. Nephi explained to his brothers that the slavery of the children of Israel could not have ended without a decision by the people to listen to the Lord through His prophet, Moses. He outlined the miracles God performed on their behalf through His prophet: He split the waters of the Red Sea so the children of Israel could escape (1 Nephi 17:23–26), He fed them with manna (verse 28), He blessed them with water after Moses split a rock (verse 29), and He blessed them with guidance in the wilderness (verse 30).



DEL PARSON, *The First Vision*, COURTESY OF INTELLECTUAL RESERVE, INC.

We see here that everything of importance to the children of Israel was provided by the living prophet: deliverance, food, water, and guidance through the desert. When the people were righteous and followed the prophet, they were blessed; when they were not righteous, they failed to prosper. This example illustrates how God uses His divinely called prophet to do His work among His children. This is true in our day as well.

The doctrine of prophets teaches us that we cannot separate ourselves from the prophets without also separating ourselves from Heavenly Father and Christ. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38 explains, “What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, *it is the same*”

(emphasis added). Some members of the Church have struggled to accept specific counsel from the prophets and instead of humbly seeking confirmation from the Lord, they have sought to resolve their disagreeable feelings by shifting away from Church leadership to focus exclusively on their relationship with Christ. This strategy may provide temporary soothing, but at some point this stance will whittle away at their testimony and faith and likely lead to apostasy. The Lord warned of this when He declared that “the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, *shall be cut off from among the people*” (D&C 1:14; emphasis added).

There may be times when what a prophet speaks is a challenge to follow. In these circumstances, the Lord requires our faith, which will lead us to be humble and seek confirmation. The Book of Mormon is full of stories that contrast those who meekly follow the prophet and are blessed, and those who rebel and fall. Take for example the story of the prophet Lehi and his family when he left his riches and property back in Jerusalem. Naturally, everyone was a bit shocked and upset by the declarations of their prophet-father. Laman and Lemuel murmured and simply did nothing to seek spiritual understanding. This failure to be humble and faithfully seek the Spirit’s witness contributed to even greater hardening of their hearts, as they later became angry and murderous. By contrast, Nephi chose to be meek and teachable. “And it came to pass that I, Nephi, . . . having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore, I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers” (1 Nephi 2:16).

In this story, Nephi illustrates for us the spiritual work we must do to receive confirmation of prophetic counsel and admonition. Elder Harold B. Lee stated: “It is not alone sufficient for

us as Latter-day Saints to follow our leaders and to accept their counsel, but we have the greater obligation to gain for ourselves the unshakable testimony of the divine appointment of these men and the witness that what they have told us is the will of our Heavenly Father.”<sup>3</sup>

### *Prophets and Apostles are Seers*

In addition to serving as liaisons between God and the people for their present needs, the prophets and apostles have also been called of God to serve as seers: “A seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed . . . ; therefore he becometh a great benefit to his fellow beings” (Mosiah 8:17–18).

In today’s world there are many dangers particularly targeting our marriages. These seers are called to serve as watchmen on the tower to warn us of these dangers. In ancient civilizations, watchtowers were vital to implementing a military’s defensive strategy. With watchtowers in place, watchmen could see their enemy’s movements and provide timely alerts for the inhabitants of their city so they could prepare for battle. Captain Moroni used this strategy to protect his people. He had towers built and then put “places of security” atop the towers. This approach allowed them to elude the stones and arrows of the Lamanites as well as be prepared to mount an offense against enemies if they came near the city walls (Alma 50:4–5).

President M. Russell Ballard explained:

Often in the scriptures the Lord speaks of watchmen on the towers and of watchtowers themselves (see, for example, D&C 101:12, 43–60). A watchtower is generally raised so that someone can climb to the top and see a greater distance. In this way they are alerted to the danger or threat much sooner than they would otherwise be.

The same principle holds true in our lives. We can raise watchtowers which help us deal with threats before they actually descend upon us.<sup>4</sup>



A MAN STANDING IN A STONE WATCHTOWER OVERLOOKING A VALLEY.  
PHOTO BY JAMES ILIFF JEFFERY.

In 1833 the Lord gave a parable to the Saints in Missouri concerning the redemption of Zion which included striking imagery about the importance of establishing a watchtower for protection: “The watchman upon the tower would have seen the enemy *while he was yet afar off* and then ye could have made ready and kept the enemy from breaking down the hedge thereof and saved my vineyard from the hands of the destroyer” (D&C 101:54; emphasis added). Using watchtowers to see the enemy while he is *yet afar off* takes away one of Satan’s most important strategies—the element of surprise. Satan delights in ambush, taking us out before we realize what happened. Consequently, the Lord has provided us with watchmen (our Church leaders, particularly the prophets and apostles) on the watchtower (the Church’s structure and organization).

The watchmen receive relevant and timely alerts about Satan’s current and future plans of attack. Their warnings come often, especially during general conference. Elder Bruce R. McConkie

explained, “In their capacity as elders, prophets, ambassadors, and ministers, the Lord’s agents are *watchmen* upon the tower. Their obligation is to raise the warning voice so that the sheepfold of Israel shall stand secure from the dangers and evils of the world.”<sup>5</sup>

One of the great challenges in today’s culture and society is to become aware of and expose Satan’s subtle and unseen ways of deception. He often masks destructive influences or lifestyles and makes them look not only innocent but even desirable (see the discussion on commitment and culture in chapter 2).

In modern warfare, the watchtowers and watchmen of old have been replaced by high-tech satellites that lie in orbit above the earth. These satellites are able to see what we as mortals upon the ground are unable to see.

**RICHARD:** *I once watched a PBS program called Earth from Space, produced by NOVA. The program explained how hundreds of satellites that circle the earth expose unseen events that transpire on the earth. The video posed the question “How can a dust storm in the Sahara Desert in Africa affect the Amazon in South America?” In an amazing display seen only by satellites, mineral-rich dust particles are swept up into the jet stream during daily dust storms in the Sahara Desert. These microscopic particles then make a two-thousand-mile journey across the Atlantic Ocean and are deposited onto the rainforests of the Amazon, thus providing them with nutrient-rich fertilizer. Scientists have known for many years that the soil in the Amazon itself has been leached and has not been able to produce its own fertilized soil, but they did not know how it continued to grow plants. Satellites have revealed the mystery. Nutrients from the other side of the world are miraculously deposited like clockwork into the Amazon to feed it. This unseen process is now seen by way of these marvelous satellites.*

*I began to ponder this idea of the unseen, relative to prophets serving as our satellites. Just as there are unseen forces in the physical environment, there are many unseen events and influences in our spiritual or moral environment; they occur all around us and we remain unaware of their presence. Yet the prophets and apostles see. They are our satellites, here to discern for us that which we cannot discern for ourselves. They see the big picture and are closer to the heavens than we are.*



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LIKE SATELLITES, PROPHETS HELP US SEE THE BIG PICTURE.

Elder Boyd K. Packer related a discussion between President Harold B. Lee and Elder Charles A. Callis of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in which Elder Callis asserted that as Church leaders they are able to “see clearly what is ahead.” He said that to “see clearly what is ahead and yet find members slow to respond or resistant to counsel or even rejecting the witness of the apostles and prophets brings deep sorrow.”<sup>6</sup>

We have many evidences of the future-focused vision of Church leaders. One example is their 1995 publication of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” This proclamation defines and establishes the preeminent and proper role of gender and the family in society and provides guiding principles of success for spouses, parents, and children. It teaches that “marriage between man and woman is essential to [God’s] eternal plan” and that “happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>7</sup> It also includes this very important declaration about marriage: “Suc-



cessful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.”<sup>8</sup>

This proclamation was sent to the world when there was yet relatively little organized societal opposition to the familial principles declared therein. Times have changed in the decades since. The truths of this document are not so clear to the world. As the world is in crisis and confusion relative to gender, the roles of men and women, and the family, *the Church is not!* Decades earlier modern prophets, as seers, were able to foresee our day and thoroughly prepare. For that, we are exceedingly grateful; we feel comfort knowing that we are in good hands. President M. Russell Ballard declared: “These are difficult times. Is there one clear, unpolluted, unbiased voice that we can always count on? Is there a voice that will always give us clear directions to find our way in today’s troubled world? The answer is yes. That voice is the voice of the living prophet and apostles.”<sup>9</sup> Like watchtowers and watchmen of old and like our modern-day satellites, the words of the living prophets expose these unseen tactics of the enemy, and, if we heed them, their counsel will protect us, our marriages, and our families.

## Reflections

*When my dear companion and I were married in 1974, we were both desirous to obey the commandment to “multiply and replenish the earth,” but after a few years of marriage we were not blessed with children. We met with a fertility specialist but were told there was no medical reason why we couldn’t have children. So after prayerful consideration we decided we should apply for adoption. A few years later we were finally blessed with a beautiful little baby boy. When we met with the social worker to pick up our new baby boy, he said, “The mother told me she saw you both in a dream, and knew you were to raise this sweet little boy.” At last we finally understood why this great blessing was held back for so many years, and even though it was initially difficult for us to understand the will of the Lord, over time it became clear why we had needed to wait for our family to come. We were so grateful for the blessing to raise this sweet son. Our marriage was strengthened through this trial, as we learned to trust in the Lord. Our prayers became less focused on our desires and more focused on accepting the Lord’s will for us.*

*Marriage Is Blessed When We Give Heed to the Prophets*

We are promised blessings for following the prophets. Doctrine and Covenants 124:25 promises us, “If my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place.” To this, President Boyd K. Packer added, “Remember this promise; hold on to it. It should be a great comfort to those struggling to keep a family together in a society increasingly indifferent to, and even hostile toward, those standards which are essential to a happy family.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, couples who commit themselves to following the living oracles of God will find added protection in their lives, family, and marriage.

To us this is very comforting doctrine; God is invested in helping us to focus our time and energy on principles and practices that truly make a difference and will bring success into our marriage. In a modern world that often gets caught up in pop culture or alternative fads, following the counsel of leaders is vital to help us avoid getting deceived by Satan and his trends in society that go counter to the commandments of God. It is also important to keep us from wasting precious resources—such as our time, energy, or money—on ideas or programs or causes that will not bear fruit (see John 15:16). President Boyd K. Packer taught:

The ministry of the prophets and apostles leads them ever and always to the home and the family. . . .

The ultimate purpose of all we teach is to unite parents and children in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage, linked to their generations, and assured of exaltation in the presence of our Heavenly Father.

He later continued: “The great plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8, 16) revealed to prophets is the plan for a happy family. It is the love story between husband and wife, parents and children, that renews itself through the ages.”<sup>11</sup>



JAMES JOHNSON, *Widow of Zarephath*. COURTESY OF INTELLECTUAL RESERVE, INC.

### *Prophetic Counsel May Challenge Us*

Although blessings come from following the prophets, sometimes giving heed to their counsel is not always easy. Sometimes the application becomes painful as that counsel pushes up against our own wants and desires.

We see in the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:10–13) the excruciating decisions that are sometimes required to follow a prophet of God, yet we also see the blessings that come as a result of doing so. Elijah called to the woman as she gathered sticks and asked her to bring him some water to

drink. As she left to get a container for the water, he also asked her to bring him some bread. She replied to him that she did not have any bread, but only some meal and oil. She then explained that she was currently gathering sticks in order to build a fire so that she and her son could cook what little meal and oil they had so they could then eat it and die. Elijah then said to her, “Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son” (verse 13).

In general conference, Sister Carol F. McConkie, first counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, implored us to think about this story: “Imagine for a moment the difficulty of what the prophet was asking a starving mother to do.” She then continued:

But Elijah also promised a blessing for obedience. . . .

In a world threatened by a famine of righteousness and spiritual starvation, we have been commanded to sustain the prophet. . . .

We heed prophetic word even when it may seem unreasonable, inconvenient, and uncomfortable. According to the world’s standards, following the prophet may be unpopular, politically incorrect, or socially unacceptable. But following the prophet is always right. . . .

The Lord honors and favors those who will heed prophetic direction. For the widow of Zarephath, obedience to Elijah saved her life and ultimately the life of her son.<sup>12</sup>

Following the prophet will indeed save our marriage and our family. As in this story, we have also felt the burden of faith as we have sought to follow the prophet when it has been difficult, yet we have also experienced the blessings.

*DEBRA: My example that follows involves my personal efforts to follow one particular piece of counsel that has been very difficult and painful for me over many years. The purpose of this story is to illustrate the sometimes-difficult and occasionally complex process of submitting our will to our Father by following His appointed servants.*

## HEEDING PROPHETS AND APOSTLES

*I spent eight long years working on what should have been a five-year PhD program. In that time I went through pregnancy illness, the delivery of two daughters, a divorce, dating as a single mother, and remarriage. I sacrificed in many areas to get my professional training and have the other experiences the Lord had inspired me to pursue, while personally caring for my daughters as much as possible during these difficult life circumstances.*

*The last year of my PhD training required a full-time internship, which mandated that my daughters spend a full day in daycare five times a week for a year. Just prior to the beginning of that internship, I was personally recruited to apply for what I felt would be my dream job postgraduation—a university teaching job for which I felt I had been groomed. I was so honored to be personally recruited that I bounded through the house, squealing with delight. It was at that time, one day in the summer of 2008, while Richard and I were doing couple scripture study, that we found a First Presidency Message by President Henry B. Eyring called “Safety in Counsel.” He clearly taught that the only sure path of safety in life is to humbly follow prophetic counsel even when it is difficult, without justification or rationalization.*

*President Eyring’s message took a generalized approach to discussing following prophetic counsel. Yet within his discussion he highlighted one example of specific prophetic counsel that has been given to the general body of the Church:*

*In our own time we have been warned with counsel on where to find safety from sin and from sorrow. One of the keys to recognizing those warnings is that they are repeated. For instance, more than once in general conferences, you have heard our prophet say that he would quote a preceding prophet and would therefore be a second witness and sometimes even a third. Each of us old enough to listen heard President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) give counsel on the importance of a mother in the home and then heard President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) quote him, and we have heard President Gordon B. Hinckley . . . quote them both.<sup>13</sup>*

*The only specific example of general prophetic counsel in the entire message was about the importance of mothers in the home. This stung me painfully, particularly because my instinct and desire was to think that since God had given me very*

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*“For me, the words of prophets taught by my Laurel teacher gave me a vision of what a covenant marriage relationship should look like. The words of the prophets gave me the faith and hope that I could prepare for and obtain a happy home. Consistently studying the teachings of the prophets, both ancient and modern, sustained me during the strenuous and often exhausting years of bearing, teaching, and nurturing seven children.”<sup>16</sup>*

*clear personal revelation about the need to obtain my professional training and had clearly helped me forge through very difficult personal circumstances in order to do so, I must somehow be exempt from the counsel. I wanted to believe that God had slated me to be an exception and that I was called to work professionally while my children were young. Yet President Eyring addressed the danger of seeking to make ourselves “an exception to the counsel.”<sup>14</sup>*

*Richard and I were profoundly struck by this message, and we pondered and discussed it at length together. Whereas I had received very clear, unmistakable, and powerful revelation that I was supposed to do the PhD, that personal revelation was not present in this circumstance. In the end, in a fiercely determined move to try to submit my will to the Lord’s and to follow His prophets, I chose not to apply for the job. It was a very painful decision.*

*As I worked in my required full-time internship that year, I learned two practical lessons that strengthened my faith that I had made the right choice to follow prophetic counsel and not apply for the postgraduation full-time teaching job. First, for our daughters’ sake I was glad I had not already committed to work full-time once the internship concluded. Working full-time was exceedingly difficult on our daughters, then preschool and kindergarten aged. Our younger daughter cried every time she was dropped off for daycare for the first eight months. Second, I found a great deal of satisfaction and fulfillment in my internship work in a university counseling center and decided that the previously offered job was not really my dream job.*

*Yet, in the years that have followed since, I have learned, and am continuing to learn, broader and deeper lessons about following the counsel of our leaders. I have come to*



*believe that instead of making a sacrifice to not work full-time outside of the home with small children, my choice has represented a wise and fruitful investment.*

*For example, God has supported me in finding other ways to contribute professionally and feel personally fulfilled with my contributions, such as in giving presentations, seeing private-practice therapy clients during my kids' preschool and school hours, and writing this book (as we discussed in chapter 9) without compromising my role as a stay-at-home mom. I have had fulfilling professional opportunities that I would not have had the time to pursue had I been engaged in full-time employment elsewhere.*

*Through these experiences I have come to believe that God is giving me the most rewarding professional opportunities I could desire, which I never would have been able to create of my own accord. I believe God is making more of my career than I could have, because I was willing to submit to and follow Him. Additionally, our children know that Mom is there for them. They are securely attached, they are learning from me the values that we as parents espouse, and they have been afforded miraculous protections.*

*That difficult personal decision of 2008 has been retested many times since then. My desire to return to work in the university counseling center of my internship remained strong for many years. Whenever I heard of a job opening or I was directly asked if I was interested in applying, I grimaced with intense yearning and excitement and simultaneous pain and regret, knowing I needed to let it pass while I raised our children. I always called Richard on the phone with the painful announcement: "Guess what? The counseling center has an opening." I would wistfully talk about how much I wanted to be there and how happy I was when I was working there, and would ask if there would be any way we could work it out. Richard was always supportive and told me we would work it out if we needed to do so.*

*We had many of these discussions over the years; this script played out again and again and again. At the end of each discussion, I would submissively end with, "But I know it is not time yet." I would then go grab my well-worn, marked-up copy of President Eyring's article and read it repeatedly over the next few days to remind myself of what I was purposely seeking to do. In doing so, I always felt reinforced by the Spirit for my decision.*

## Reflections

Years ago I heard President Ezra Taft Benson [counsel] us to do all we could to get out of debt and stay out. He mentioned mortgages on houses. He said that it might not be possible, but it would be best if we could pay off all our mortgage debt.

I turned to my wife after the meeting and asked, “Do you think there is any way we could do that?” At first we couldn’t. And then by evening I thought of a property we had acquired in another state. For years we had tried to sell it without success.

... We placed a phone call Monday morning to the man in San Francisco who had our property listed to sell. I had called him a few weeks before, and he had said then, “We haven’t had anyone show interest in your property for years.”

But on the Monday after conference, I heard an answer that to this day strengthens my trust in God and His servants.

The man on the phone said, “I am surprised by your call. A man came in today inquiring whether he could buy your property.” In amazement I asked, “How much did he offer to pay?” It was a few dollars more than the amount of our mortgage.

... Our mortgage was paid off.<sup>18</sup>

President Eyring speaks of following counsel “when it is hard to do.”<sup>15</sup> This has been very hard doctrine for me, yet I have felt the blessings of obedience. I know that the Lord has accepted my offering. I testify that we have seen marital and family blessings and protections.

**RICHARD:** Debra’s commitment to put the counsel of the Lord’s prophets ahead of her own desires not only has blessed her professionally and blessed our children but has positively influenced our marriage. It has strengthened my confidence and trust in her, knowing that she has faith in God’s anointed servants, not only in word but in (sometimes painful) deed. Because I have the same love for and commitment to those who hold priesthood keys, her ongoing efforts to follow the prophet, even when tempted repeatedly to do otherwise, have generated a peace and assurance in me that has increased my desire to be close to her. I have felt greater trust and confidence in her spiritual promptings. I have also felt closer to her because of her diligence in nurturing and training our children in the home. It has reminded me that we are unified in how we want to raise our children, and that strengthens our general feelings of unity. These blessings have brought increased positive sentiment to our relationship, thus strengthening our marriage by increasing the loving bonds between us.

At times, submitting our will to God’s by being willing to follow prophetic counsel becomes an ongoing process of committing and recommit-



ting as we are tempted to move toward the world. We testify that as we submit in faith, we are blessed.

### *Prophetic Counsel on Marriage and Family*

Prophetic counsel regarding marriage has been presented throughout this book. Yet here we offer in a single presentation salient quotes from each of the prophets about the marriage relationship. This arrangement strikes us powerfully—there is no denying the continuous concern our Father in Heaven has for our marriages, as He prompts our prophets again and again throughout every age.

From the Prophet Joseph Smith, we learn of course the doctrine of eternal marriage, as revealed in D&C 132. The promise that a man and woman can be sealed together forever into the eternities is the most fundamental, yet glorious, doctrine of all. It is the doctrine of doctrines.

Joseph Smith has also taught:

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.<sup>17</sup>

President Brigham Young has testified:

[Eternal marriage] is without beginning of days or end of years. . . . We can tell some things with regard to it[;] it lays the foundation for worlds, for angels, and for the Gods[;] for intelligent beings to be crowned with glory, immortality, and eternal lives. In fact, it is the thread which runs from the beginning to the end of the holy Gospel of Salvation—of the Gospel of the Son of God; it is from eternity to eternity.<sup>19</sup>

## Reflections

*After about eleven years of marriage, I was serving on the high council. A member of the Seventy was visiting our stake to interview potential candidates for the new stake presidency, and because of my position I was interviewed. One question that he asked me was if I took my wife to the temple regularly. I told him that both of us attended the temple each month, but because of young children and babysitting, we had developed the practice of mostly attending the temple separately. He counseled me to attend the temple regularly with my wife, a practice that we implemented immediately. We now dedicate one night each month to attending the temple together. While our relationship has always been good, I noticed a sweetness that developed in our relationship that came from following this counsel. Our marriage has been blessed with a greater love for each other as we serve in the temple together. Communication lines remain strong, and the desire to serve and strengthen each other has grown.*

President John Taylor counseled:

Husbands, do you love your wives and treat them right, or do you think that you yourselves are some great moguls who have a right to crowd upon them? . . . You ought to treat them with all kindness, with mercy and long suffering, and not be harsh and bitter, or in any way desirous to display your authority. Then, you wives, treat your husbands right, and try to make them happy and comfortable. Endeavor to make your homes a little heaven, and try to cherish the good Spirit of God. . . . If you do, we will have peace in our bosoms, peace in our families, and peace in our surroundings.<sup>20</sup>

President Wilford Woodruff expressed his concern that

the blessing that God has revealed to us in the patriarchal order of marriage—being sealed for time and eternity—is not prized by us as it should be.” He also counseled, “We should prize our families, and the associations we have together, remembering that if we are faithful we shall inherit glory, immortality and eternal life, and this is the greatest of all the gifts of God to man [see D&C 14:7].<sup>21</sup>

President Lorenzo Snow taught:

Wives, be faithful to your husbands. I know you have to put up with many unpleasant things, and your husbands have to put up with some things as well. Doubtless you are sometimes tried by your husbands, on account perhaps of the ignorance of your husbands, or perchance at times because of your own

ignorance. . . . I do not say but that your husbands are bad—just as bad as you are, and probably some of them are worse; but, never mind: try to endure the unpleasantnesses which arise at times, and when you meet each other in the next life you will feel glad that you put up with those things. To the husbands, I say: Many of you do not value your wives as you should. . . . Be kind to them. When they go out to meeting, you carry the baby at least half the time. When it needs rocking, and you have not much to do, rock it. Be kind when sometimes you have to make a little sacrifice to do so; feel kind anyway, no matter what the sacrifice.<sup>22</sup>

President Joseph F. Smith explained:

The lawful union of man and woman [is] the means through which they may realize their highest and holiest aspirations. To the Latter-day Saints, marriage is not designed by our Heavenly Father to be merely an earthly union, but one that shall survive the vicissitudes of time, and endure for eternity, bestowing honor and joy in this world, glory and eternal lives in the worlds to come.<sup>23</sup>

The man and his wife who have perfect confidence in each other, and who determine to

## Reflections

*We learn from the prophets and in the temple that the Lord desires us “to build up my church, and to bring forth Zion” (D&C 39:13). During my first pregnancy, my husband was called to serve in a bishopric, the first of many succeeding calls to ward and stake leadership positions during the forty years we shared together before his death. He was away many evenings as the children were growing up, and I sometimes felt overwhelmed. But I knew that my husband and I had made covenants to help build the Lord’s kingdom, and my feelings were that He would help us build our little “family kingdom” if we helped Him build His. As I gave my husband to the Lord, He gave me things that I did not naturally possess to help me in my husband’s absence to meet the physical and emotional needs of the children. As a result, the blessings I received then as a mother and wife were commensurate with (and probably greater than) our covenant offerings of time spent in the Lord’s service—a truth that I treasure and wish I could share with every faithful young mother. Now that our children are grown, it’s even easier to see that great truth, as they show by their actions or choices their love of Heavenly Father, His gospel, and His Church. My heart is touched. The harvest is even more generous and abundant from our early plantings than we could have anticipated as the seeds were sown.*

## Reflections

*Individually, my wife and I have both always tried very hard to follow the prophet, so when we got married we made that a core value of our relationship. Either while we were dating or very early on in our marriage, we heard counsel from the brethren to date regularly. We enjoyed doing that before marriage, so it was an easy transition once we got married. Weekly dates, regardless of the number or ages of our children, have been a staple of our marriage and have served to keep the communication lines strong and healthy.*

follow the laws of God in their lives and fulfil the measure of their mission in the earth, would not be, and could never be, contented without the home. Their hearts, their feelings, their minds, their desires would naturally trend toward the building of a home and family and of a kingdom of their own; to the laying of the foundation of eternal increase and power, glory, exaltation and dominion, worlds without end.<sup>24</sup>

We all have our weaknesses and failings. Sometimes the husband sees a failing in his wife, and he upbraids her with it. Sometimes the wife feels that her husband has not done just the right thing, and she upbraids him. What good does it do? Is not forgiveness better? Is not charity better? Is not love better? Isn't it better not to speak of faults, not to magnify weaknesses by iterating and reiterating them? Isn't that better? and will not the union that has been cemented between you and the birth of children and by the bond of the new and everlasting covenant, be more secure when you forget to mention weaknesses and faults one of another? Is it not better to drop them and say nothing about them—bury them and speak only of the good that you know and feel, one for another, and thus bury each other's faults and not magnify them; isn't that better?<sup>25</sup>

### President Heber J. Grant testified:

I believe that no worthy young Latter-day Saint man or woman should spare any reasonable effort to come to a house of the Lord to begin life together. The marriage vows taken in these hallowed places and the sacred covenants entered into for time and all eternity are [protection] against many of the temptations of life that tend to break homes and destroy happiness. . . .

The blessings and promises that come from beginning life together, for time and eternity, in a temple of the Lord, cannot be obtained in

any other way and worthy young Latter-day Saint men and women who so begin life together find that their eternal partnership under the everlasting covenant becomes the foundation upon which are built peace, happiness, virtue, love, and all of the other eternal verities of life, here and hereafter.<sup>26</sup>

President George Albert Smith implored:

Let us be examples of righteousness to our children, have our family prayers and ask the blessing upon the food. Let our children see that as husbands and wives we are affectionate with one another. While there is yet time take the opportunity as husbands and wives to bless each other with your love, with your kindness and your helpfulness in every way. Take opportunity while there is yet time to teach your sons and daughters how to live to be happy. . . . Let our homes be sanctuaries of peace and hope and love.<sup>27</sup>

President David O. McKay recommended the following:

I should like to urge *continued courtship*, and apply this to grown people. Too many couples have come to the altar of marriage looking upon the marriage ceremony as the end of courtship instead of the beginning of an eternal courtship. Let us not forget that during the burdens of home life—and they come—that tender words of appreciation, courteous acts are even more appreciated than during those sweet days and months of courtship. It is after the ceremony and during the trials that daily arise in the home that a word of “thank you,” or “pardon me,” “if you please,” on the part of husband or wife contributes to that love which brought you to the altar. It is well to keep in mind that love can be starved to death as literally as the body that receives no sustenance. Love feeds upon kindness and courtesy. It is significant that the first sentence of what is now known throughout the Christian world as the Psalm of Love, is, “Love suffereth long, and is kind.” [See I Corinthians 13:4.] The wedding ring gives no man the right to be cruel or inconsiderate, and no woman the right to be slovenly, cross, or disagreeable.<sup>28</sup>

President Joseph Fielding Smith preached:

If a man and his wife were earnestly and faithfully observing all the ordinances and principles of the gospel, there could not arise any cause for divorce. The joy and happiness pertaining to the marriage relationship would grow sweeter, and husband and wife would become more and more attached to each other as the days go by. Not



## Reflections

*President Hinckley taught, "I am satisfied that a happy marriage is not so much a matter of romance as it is an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one's companion."<sup>37</sup> I have taken this advice to heart. While I am not perfect, I do seek out ways to show my husband that I am anxiously concerned for his comfort and well-being. As I prepare meals, I take into account his likes and dislikes, and fix foods I think he will enjoy. I try to keep up on his laundry so that he has clean clothes as he is getting ready for work in the morning. I encourage him to pursue his hobbies and interests. But it is more than just attending to details. Truly caring about his comfort and well-being affects how I handle conflict. Instead of focusing on being right, I sincerely try to understand his point of view. I listen respectfully. I avoid using hurtful language. I apologize when I do say something that offends. And I have discovered that as I focus on caring for my husband, he reciprocates with equally caring actions.*

only would the husband love the wife and the wife the husband, but children born to them would live in an atmosphere of love and harmony. The love of each for the others would not be impaired, and moreover the love of all towards our Eternal Father and his Son Jesus Christ would be more firmly rooted in their souls.<sup>29</sup>

President Harold B. Lee taught:

If [young people] would resolve from the moment of their marriage, that from that time forth they would resolve and do everything in their power to please each other in things that are right, even to the sacrifice of their own pleasures, their own appetites, their own desires, the problem of adjustment in married life would take care of itself, and their home would indeed be a happy home. Great love is built on great sacrifice, and that home where the principle of sacrifice for the welfare of each other is daily expressed is that home where there abides a great love.<sup>30</sup>

President Spencer W. Kimball counseled:

A marriage may not always be even and incidentless, but it can be one of great peace. A couple may have poverty, illness, disappointment, failures, and even death in the family, but even these will not rob them of their peace. The marriage can be a successful one so long as selfishness does not enter in. Troubles and problems will draw parents

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together into unbreakable unions if there is total unselfishness there. . . .

Love is like a flower, and, like the body, it needs constant feeding. The mortal body would soon be emaciated and die if there were not frequent feedings. The tender flower would wither and die without food and water. And so love, also, cannot be expected to last forever unless it is continually fed with portions of love, the manifestation of esteem and admiration, the expressions of gratitude, and the consideration of unselfishness.

Total unselfishness is sure to accomplish another factor in successful marriage. If one is forever seeking the interests, comforts, and happiness of the other, the love found in courtship and cemented in marriage will grow into mighty proportions. Many couples permit their marriages to become stale and their love to grow cold like old bread or worn-out jokes or cold gravy. Certainly the foods most vital for love are consideration, kindness, thoughtfulness, concern, expressions of affection, embraces of appreciation, admiration, pride, companionship, confidence, faith, partnership, equality, and interdependence.<sup>31</sup>

Ezra Taft Benson emphasized the importance of serving our spouse:

The secret of a happy marriage is to serve God and each other. The goal of marriage is unity and oneness, as well as self-development. Paradoxically, the more we serve one another, the greater is our spiritual and emotional growth.<sup>32</sup>

President Howard W. Hunter cautioned, “Tenderness and respect—never selfishness—must be the guiding principles in the intimate relationship between husband and wife.”<sup>33</sup>

President Gordon B. Hinckley taught, “If you will make your first concern the comfort, the well-being, and the happiness of your companion, sublimating any personal concern to that loftier goal, you will be happy, and your marriage will go on through eternity.”<sup>34</sup> He also indicated that “marriage, in its truest sense, is a partnership of equals, with neither exercising dominion over the other, but, rather, with each encouraging and assisting the other in whatever responsibilities and aspirations he or she might have.”<sup>35</sup>

He also counseled, “Be loyal in your family relationships. . . . I have long felt that the greatest factor in a happy marriage is an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one’s companion. In most cases selfishness is the leading factor that causes argument, separation, divorce, and broken hearts.”<sup>36</sup>

President Thomas S. Monson gave this counsel to a body of priesthood holders:

If you choose wisely and if you are committed to the success of your marriage, there is nothing in this life which will bring you greater happiness. . . .

Choose a companion carefully and prayerfully; and when you are married, be fiercely loyal one to another. Priceless advice comes from a small framed plaque I once saw in the home of an uncle and aunt. It read, “Choose your love; love your choice.” There is great wisdom in those few words. Commitment in marriage is absolutely essential.

Your wife is your equal. In marriage neither partner is superior nor inferior to the other. You walk side by side as a son and a daughter of God. She is not to be demeaned or insulted but should be respected and loved.<sup>38</sup>

President Russell M. Nelson declared:

Marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other human relationship. Yet some married couples fall short of their full potential. They let their romance become rusty, take each other for granted, allow other interests or clouds of neglect to obscure the vision of what their marriage really could be. Marriages would be happier if nurtured more carefully. . . .

When you as husband and wife recognize the divine design in your union—when you feel deeply that God has brought you to each other—your vision will be expanded and your understanding enhanced.<sup>39</sup>

We feel a great sense of peace and security as we seek to follow the words of these prophets. The themes here, as echoed throughout the chapters of this book, focus on expressing loving kindness, being selfless, forgiving, sharing time and purpose, expressing gratitude, and the like.



### Conclusion

Prophets have been provided to us from a loving Heavenly Father. They have been called with authority from God to speak His word and guide us in our present circumstances. These prophets and apostles are also seers—watchmen upon the tower, or satellites—to warn us in advance of approaching dangers. Following the words of the modern prophets will save our marriages and allow them to thrive. We must be meek and teachable, always ready to hear and heed their words. Those words, no matter how easy or hard for us to follow, will in the end offer us great blessings, including protection and peace.

President Eyring gave a deeply thoughtful and inspired analogy as a witness to this principle:

Sometimes we will receive counsel that we cannot understand or that seems not to apply to us, even after careful prayer and thought. Don't discard the counsel, but hold it close. If someone you trusted handed you what appeared to be nothing more than sand with the promise that it contained gold, you might wisely hold it in your hand awhile, shaking it gently. Every time I have done that with counsel from a prophet, after a time the gold flakes have begun to appear, and I have been grateful.<sup>40</sup>

We testify that God has sent prophets to protect marriage, because the gospel plan is a marriage plan. The words of the prophets and apostles will promote thriving within the interpersonal context of our marriages and provide protection from outside (extramarital) worldly influences. As we live and apply the words and warnings of the prophets, the gold flakes will appear and we will realize we are indeed rich beyond measure.

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