

## Engaging Gospel Doctrine (Episode 87.2)

### LESSON 10 (STUDY NOTES)

#### [Birthright Blessings: Marriage in the Covenant](#)

Hook	It would not be an overstatement to say that the primary focus of an LDS upbringing points towards a temple marriage and family. But what difference does a temple marriage really make? And what are the principles of successful marriage and parenting?
Goal	Class members should understand the relationship between a temple marriage and a successful marriage, and feel informed, empowered, and motivated to apply the principles of healthy relationships to their lives.
Overview	(see below)
Conclusion	

#### I. Sunday School

- a. Point out the connections and distance between these stories and the “get married in the temple” theme of the lesson manual
- b. Lessons learned from the Biblical narratives (we had a continuous section of the OT assigned this lesson, yay!)
  - i. Ideas of marrying within your culture in the reading
  - ii. Other comments on the people and events
- c. Importance/benefits of preparing to be married in the temple (make personal comments about the idea of being born in the covenant and sealed in the temple)
- d. Quotes about temple marriage
- e. Principles of healthy marriage and parenting
- f. Conclusion

#### II. Scholarship (Comment on the changed names, as a review, the sections are I.

- Faithful, Sunday School focused; II. Academic (literary, historical, contextual); III. Theological, ethical, any “challenging” that needs to be done)
- a. Explain the marriage customs in the reading
  - b. Endogamy in Israelite/Jewish culture (focus on Ezra 9-10)

- c. Touch on historical endogamy (keeping power and privilege and property in the family, keeping cultural distinctiveness, idea of “purity”)

### III. Study Notes

- a. Return to the reading
- b. Discussion of problematic quotes (Nelson, Kimball)
- c. What difference does temple marriage actually make? What does “born in the covenant” mean?
- d. Endogamy in Mormonism <http://janariess.religionnews.com/2013/05/07/why-mormons-have-the-lowest-rates-of-interfaith-marriage/>
- e. Ups and downs of sealing policies (look back at resources about law of adoption etc)
- f. Hopeful developments <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/blogsfaithblog/57531159-180/temple-lds-mormon-policy.html.csp>
- g. Preparing ourselves and those around us for healthy relationships
- h. Conclusion

### **Part II notes:**

#### Oxford Bible Commentary

\*Note how much more material we have about Abraham and Jacob than Isaac, which means the editor likely had access to fewer traditions about Isaac

\*The repeated stories about the younger brother triumphing over the older likely stems from Judah, the “underdog”, surviving longer than the more powerful, resource-rich northern kingdom of Israel

\*As with the story of Cain and Abel, the conflict between Jacob and Esau may reflect an older story representing the conflict between a hunter-gatherer and settled way of life (Note Isaac is the first patriarch to grow crops)

\*The conflict between Jacob and Esau represents the later conflict between Judah and Edom (projection of later national stereotypes onto stories of founding figures)

Edom sounds like Adom (red in Hebrew), which is why Esau's hair is red. Also, "hairy" in Hebrew (sa'ir) sounds like Edom's mountain, Seir. In these stories we can see echoes of both when Israel first conquered Edom (in the time of David) and when Edom reestablished its independence (by the end of Solomon's reign). Our narratives reflect knowledge of both historical situations. Thus one layer of tradition was written when Israel felt elated, the "younger sibling" overcoming powerful nations, and then predictions that Esau (Edom) would then reestablish independence (27:40). Anyway, just a little window into how Biblical scholarship works. (This from Kugel, How to Read the Bible)

\*Note the two accounts of why Isaac leaves his home: To escape Esau's anger (27:41-45) and to find and appropriate wife (27:46-28:5).

\*Notes on the "Jacob's ladder" dream. Almost certainly a Canaanite sanctuary to the God El, reinterpreted as a sanctuary to the God of Israel (Yahweh) because it became such an important place of worship

The stories of Jacob and Laban originally described the relationships between Israel and the Arameans.

### **Ezra 9:1-4; 10:10-19**

After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, "The people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. <sup>2</sup>For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons. Thus the holy seed has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands, and in this faithlessness the officials and leaders have led the way." <sup>3</sup>When I heard this, I tore my garment and my mantle, and pulled hair from my head and beard, and sat appalled. <sup>4</sup>Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice.

<sup>10</sup>Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have trespassed and married foreign women, and so increased the guilt of Israel. <sup>11</sup>Now make confession to the LORD the God of your ancestors, and do his will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives." <sup>12</sup>Then all the assembly answered with a loud voice, "It is so; we must do as you have said. <sup>13</sup>But the people are many, and it is a time of heavy rain; we cannot stand in the open. Nor is this a task for one day or for two, for many of us have transgressed in this matter. <sup>14</sup>Let our officials represent the whole assembly, and let all in our towns who have taken foreign wives come at appointed times, and with them the elders and judges of every town, until the fierce wrath of our God on this account is averted from us."

<sup>15</sup>Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levites supported them. <sup>16</sup>Then the returned exiles did so. Ezra the priest selected men, heads of families, according to their families, each of them designated by name. On the first day of the tenth month they sat down to examine the matter. <sup>17</sup>By the first day of the first month they had come to the end of all the men who had married foreign women. <sup>18</sup>There were found of the descendants of the priests who had married foreign women...<sup>19</sup>They pledged themselves to send away their wives, and their guilt offering was a ram of the flock for their guilt.

Resources (Make strongly the point that Mormonism in common is not enough; marriage in the temple is not enough (bring up story of Katrina's friend who did "the right thing" and married a member, and after 10 years doesn't feel she has much in common (reword?))

## General Authority Quotes

Marvin J. Ashton

<http://scriptures.byu.edu/gettalk.php?ID=2167>

Here's a quote from Elder Ashton in 1972:

"Have you arrived when you go to the temple? Is temple marriage your destination? Over the years, I have heard hundreds of my young associates say, 'I want to make the temple. A temple marriage is my goal.'

To qualify one's self to go to the temple is a lofty ambition, a worthy achievement. We need to remind ourselves of its eternal purposes. However, we have not arrived when we share the blessings of the temple. Oftentimes there are real dangers in our lives when we allow lofty ideals and goals, such as temple marriage, to become an end instead of a means. All of our priorities must be properly placed within the framework of eternity if we are to avoid the stagnations of arriving.

I think it was Louis J. Halle who said, 'To snatch the passing moment and examine it for signs of eternity is the noblest of occupations.' To gain exaltation after celestial marriage, continued devotion and righteousness are required. It is a continuing process, not a state of arrival."

Marion D. Hanks <http://scriptures.byu.edu/gettalk.php?ID=4038>

But a marriage designed to last forever will be a good marriage, growing and gracious. Sometimes the distinctive elements of temple marriage are thought of as being exclusive in duration and authority. Of course, everyone who comes to the temple to be married understands that the ceremony is performed by God's authority for time and eternity. But the remarkable revealed ceremony at the altar in a temple contemplates much more than this. The quality of the relationship thus established is of highest importance. Wonderful promises are sealed upon a man and woman in temple marriage, and the realization of the promised blessings is related directly to their understanding and keeping the solemn commitments they make to each other and the Lord.

Married people should be best friends; no relationship on earth needs friendship as much as marriage.

Friendship in a marriage is so important. It blows away the chaff and takes the kernel, rejoices in the uniqueness of the other, listens patiently, gives generously, forgives freely. Friendship will motivate one to cross the room one day and say, "I'm sorry; I didn't mean that." It will not pretend perfection nor demand it. It will not insist that both respond exactly the same in every thought and feeling, but it will bring to the union honesty, integrity. There will be repentance and [forgiveness](#) in every marriage—every good marriage—and respect and trust.

And all these and other elements we are not able to mention eloquently declare that such a union doesn't just happen.

So the need becomes clear for careful, thoughtful preparation, selection, and courtship. No one should be unwise enough to count on an across-the-crowded-room romanticized live-happily-ever-after marriage

made without proper thoughtfulness, preparation, and prayer. Marriage is an everyday and every-way relationship in which honesty and character and shared convictions and objectives and views about finances and family and life-style are more important than moonlight and music and an attractive profile.

It is simple to see, isn't it, that the kind of marriage we're talking about doesn't just happen? The foundation is laid in the House of the Lord. The marriage is pronounced by authority of God. And then it is fashioned by two who are wholesome, prepared emotionally and practically, and who are honest. It requires being ready to go to a temple, being mature enough to make promises and keep them and to receive holy promises and qualify for them.

### **Part III: Deeply problematic and even harmful**

President Kimball <http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=706> (1976, but still there on the website. Also used in manuals... a friend confirmed they "used this all the time at BYU")

I have warned the youth against the many hazards of interfaith marriage, and with all the power I possessed, I warned young people to avoid the sorrows and disillusionments which come from marrying out of the Church and the unhappy situations which almost invariably result when a believer marries an unbelieving spouse. I pointed out the demands of the Church upon its members in time, energy, and funds; the deepness of the spiritual ties which tighten after marriage and as the family comes; the antagonisms which naturally follow such mismatching; the fact that these and many other reasons argue eloquently for marriage within the Church, where husband and wife have common backgrounds, common ideals and standards, common beliefs, hopes, and objectives, and, above all, where marriage may be eternalized through righteous entry into the holy temple.

We are grateful that this one survey reveals that about 90 percent of the temple marriages hold fast. Because of this, we recommend that people marry those who are of the same racial background generally, and of somewhat the same economic and social and educational background (some of those are not an absolute necessity, but preferred), and above all, the same religious background, without question. In spite of the most favorable matings, the evil one still takes a monumental toll and is the cause for many broken homes and frustrated lives.

While marriage is difficult, and discordant and frustrated marriages are common, yet real, lasting happiness is possible, and marriage can be more an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive. This is within the reach of every couple, every person. "Soul mates" are fiction and an illusion; and while every young man and young woman will seek with all diligence and prayerfulness to find a mate with whom life can be most compatible and beautiful, yet it is certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage if both are willing to pay the price.

The formula is simple; the ingredients are few, though there are many amplifications of each.

First, there must be the proper approach toward marriage, which contemplates the selection of a spouse who reaches as nearly as possible the pinnacle of perfection in all the matters which are of importance to the individuals. And then those two parties must come to the altar in the temple realizing that they must work hard toward this successful joint living.

Second, there must be a great unselfishness, forgetting self and directing all of the family life and all pertaining thereunto to the good of the family, subjugating self.

Third, there must be continued courting and expressions of affection, kindness, and consideration to keep love alive and growing.

Fourth, there must be a complete living of the commandments of the Lord as defined in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

With these ingredients properly mixed and continually kept functioning, it is quite impossible for unhappiness to come, misunderstandings to continue, or breaks to occur. Divorce attorneys would need to transfer to other fields and divorce courts would be padlocked.

Elder Nelson <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1995/04/children-of-the-covenant?lang=eng&query=born+in+the+covenant>

Rewards for obedience to the commandments are almost beyond mortal comprehension. Here, children of the covenant become a strain of sin-resistant souls.