

The Proclamation on the Family: For Every One of Us

By Deena King

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When I first heard President Gordon B. Hinckley read "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" to the sisters of the Relief Society, I knew without a doubt it was inspired. But as an unmarried woman, I did not feel it applied to me personally.

When I sat down and studied the proclamation, however, my attitude changed. I now realize that every paragraph has something to say (or can easily be adapted) not only to me but to everyone, no matter what his or her season of life.

Briefly, here are some of the ways I feel the proclamation can be applied to any Church member, young or old, married or unmarried, empty nest or full.

First, the proclamation bolsters self-worth by reminding us that "all human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God" and that "each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny." Nothing in that statement is exclusive. It does not say, "You are beloved only if you are a parent" or "You are beloved only if you are married." It tells us that *all* human beings are loved. In addition, it reaffirms that Heavenly Father wants what is best for us. What tremendous blessings!

Second, the proclamation offers valuable guidelines for everyday living. It explains the plan of salvation and the principle of chastity. It states, "Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ." But wait—what does "family life" have to do with those who do not have families of their own?

As Church members we have been taught that one of the main purposes of the family is to perfect us as individuals. Each of us needs to be perfected, whether or not we are in a traditional family. And many of the same principles that govern family life also guide our relationships at work, at church, and in our neighborhood, as well as in our extended family. Happiness in these relationships is indeed "most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ." As outlined in the proclamation, these teachings include "faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities." Incorporating these ideals into our lives, no matter what our family situation may be, will help each of us to "realize [our] divine destiny as [heirs] of eternal life."

Third, the proclamation upholds the significance of temple blessings. It states, "Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God." The proclamation reminds us that we as individuals must be worthy before we can return to God's presence. While a sealing to a spouse may not be available to all of us at present, the endowment is available to *all* who are worthy. How wonderful it is that many of us can attend the temple now and be continually reminded of the blessings we have, the covenants we have made, and the possibilities that lie ahead.

Fourth, for me personally the statements in the proclamation regarding marriage are bittersweet. The proclamation says, “Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God” and “Marriage ... is essential to His eternal plan.” For those of us who have not yet found our eternal companions, thinking about marriage can be discouraging sometimes. However, President Hinckley once counseled: “*Do not give up hope. And do not give up trying. But do give up being obsessed with it*” (“A Conversation with Single Adults,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1997, 60; emphasis in original). Because of the frustrations we frequently face in our search for a righteous partner, the temptation to give up is often great. Nevertheless the proclamation directs us to always remember that a marriage and family of our own are to be worthy goals in our lives.

Finally, the proclamation calls upon “responsible citizens ... everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.” There are many ways we can promote the family, whether through Church, community, or the other organizations, and we do not have to be in a traditional family to do so. All Church members, regardless of marital status or family circumstance, can follow the counsel given in the proclamation by actively sustaining the family in every way possible.

So, then, what does “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” offer those of us who are not members of a traditional family? Plenty! This is a document that can comfort and guide us now and for the rest of our lives. Since that September evening in 1995 when I sat in a crowded, dark chapel in Los Altos, California, and heard it for the first time, I have learned that the proclamation on the family is for me. It is for everyone!

Gospel topics: family, single members

Let's Talk about It

Most Ensign articles can be used for family home evening discussions. The following questions are for that purpose or for personal reflection:

1. How does the proclamation on the family apply to my personal situation?
2. In what ways can single Church members help strengthen the family?
3. How does the proclamation affirm my value as an individual, regardless of my age or family circumstance?

[photos] Clockwise: Photography by Michael Schoenfeld, Jed Clark, Craig Dimond, John Luke, Jerry Garns