

Activity Description:

Invite youth and their parents with a wedding invitation

Decorate the room like it is a reception

Put temple pictures--both inside and outside shots--on the walls

Have youth fill out their folders during the mini-lessons

Mini lessons given: about 5-6 minutes long

Lesson one:

Lesson two:

Lesson three:

Lesson four:

Lesson five:

Songs: "I Love to see the Temple"

“The Temple Reminds Me”

Ideas for handouts:

White handkerchiefs

folder with printout (see next file)

A picture of the temple in a frame

Have cake, mints, nuts, and punch for dessert

Great punch: 1 can Strawberry (or other) juice concentrate, several scoops of vanilla ice cream, 4 liters of lemon-lime pop

Outline for Celestial Marriage fireside

**Pass out “My Celestial Marriage” folders
(see separate attachment)**

GOSPEL TRUTH

Marriage is designed of the Lord to allow men and women to create strong, happy homes for themselves and their posterity. All young people should plan and prepare for eternal marriage early in life so they can enjoy the blessings of this sacred covenant.

Ideas for Lessons

Lesson 1: Deciding Who and Where to Marry

encourage the youth to write down everything discussed in this area of their folders

- What happens to the surface of a still pond when you cast a pebble into it? (It ripples.)

Point out to the youth that many of the decisions they make in their lives will have an effect similar to the effect of the pebble on the water. The effects of these decisions will continue on and on, touching other people's lives besides their own.

- What are some of these decisions? After discussion, read the following quotation:

“Probably the most consequential event in your lives takes place when you are united in marriage. It will have a far reaching effect upon your future. Like the ripples caused by a pebble cast upon a placid pool, the decision you make in regard to where, with whom, and by whom this event will take place will affect not only you, but the lives of many others, especially your children.” (El Ray L. Christiansen, in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, p. 34; see also *Ensign*, May 1974, p. 25.)

- Why is temple marriage so important?
- How will it affect your life now and in the future?

Discuss how deciding early in your life that you want a temple marriage could help you

make many correct decisions in the future.

Lesson 2: Blessings of Eternal Marriage

encourage the youth to write down everything discussed in this area of their folders

To help the youth understand the blessings of eternal marriage, have them compare temple marriage and civil marriage.

To do this, you could write questions like the following on a chalkboard or on wordstrips. You could have two columns under the questions, one labeled “Temple Marriage” and one labeled “Civil Marriage.” Have the youth answer each question for both a temple and a civil marriage and put their answers in the appropriate column.

- What preparation is needed?
- Where will this marriage take place?
- Who performs the ceremony?
- How long will the marriage last?
- What will the people married in this way be doing throughout eternity?
- What will happen to the family after this life?

Compare the answers on each side of the chart.

Discuss the meaning of the statement, “Temple marriages make better marriages.”

Lesson 3: Preparing for Eternal Marriage

encourage the youth to write down everything discussed in this area of their folders

To help the youth understand that they must obey the specified law before they can receive any blessing, point out an important accomplishment of the youth such as graduation from school or college, a special award in Scouting, or ability to play a musical instrument. Ask the youth the following questions:

- Why did you want this accomplishment?
- What plans did you make to get it?
- What did you do to get it?

Display a picture of a temple and a sealing room. Discuss how obtaining the blessings of eternal marriage is similar in principle to obtaining anything worthwhile. We must desire it and plan and work for it. Emphasize that eternal marriage is far more precious and worth working for than almost anything else we do in life. Read the following statement of President Spencer W. Kimball on the doctrine of eternal marriage:

“Marriage by civil officers or local leaders is ‘til death do you part,’ and terminates with death. Only celestial marriage extends beyond the grave. ...

“There is no bias nor prejudice in this doctrine. It is a matter of following a certain program to reach a definite goal. If you fail in following a program, you fail in attaining the goal. Even in college work, if you never registered properly, never attended your classes, never did the things which are required by the college, you would never receive your degree. Certainly you cannot expect the eternal program to be less exacting.” (“The Importance of Celestial Marriage,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1979, pp. 4–5.)

Discuss specific ways in which the youth could prepare for an eternal marriage.

List of some For the Strength of the Youth standards (Do the things that will make them worthy to receive a temple recommend—pay tithing, support Church leaders, keep the Word of Wisdom.)

(pass out individual pictures for each youth

“I want to be married in the temple” printed beside the picture.)

Lesson 4: Intelligent Dating

encourage the youth to write down everything discussed in this area of their folders

Discuss with your youth some reasons for dating, and make a list of the reasons. They may include learning to get along with others, becoming better acquainted with other young people, spending leisure time in a fun way, learning about the person you might be considering marrying, and finding someone to marry.

Explain that Church leaders have told us that young people should wait until they are sixteen years of age to start dating. However, many young people are not ready or do not have the opportunity to date until some years later. This should not cause unnecessary worry or concern to parents or young people. Sooner or later, most everyone will have the opportunity to date.

- Which of the reasons for dating that you have listed would apply to young people between the ages of sixteen and nineteen?
- Which reasons would apply to those over nineteen?

Discuss what kinds of activities would best help people in each age group to accomplish their reasons for dating.

Point out that it has been said that you marry those you date. Since every member of the Church should be planning on a temple marriage, have your youth decide on their own dating standards. Use *The For the Strength of the Youth* pamphlet. These standards may include ideas such as dating only members of the Church, dressing modestly, never necking, and staying active in the Church. After your youth has decided on the standards they wish to maintain, encourage the youth to write them in their journals where they can be referred to often.

Discuss dating standards:

10 Commandments of Dating

1. Thou shalt not date until age sixteen.
2. Thou shalt only date faithful Latter-day Saints.
3. Thou shalt attend activities that are wholesome.
4. Thou shalt look for opportunities to go on double or group dates.
5. Thou shalt dress modestly and be an example in thought, speech, action, and

appearance.

6. Thou shalt avoid dark places, parked cars or empty homes, and all other environments that might cause temptation.
7. Thou shalt not participate in kissing and hugging sessions.
8. Thou shalt arrive home on time and not keep late hours.
9. Thou shalt discuss thy dating activities with your parents.
10. Thou shalt keep thyself clean and worthy to enter the temple.

"No unclean thing can enter into his kingdom . . ." 3 Nephi 27:19

Lesson 5: Preparing to Become an Eternal Companion

encourage the youth to write down everything discussed in this area of their folders

Explain that being married in the temple does not guarantee that a couple will have a happy life together. A happy marriage requires preparation before the ceremony and work and commitment afterwards.

Discuss with your youth some of the responsibilities that come to a man and to a woman when they are married.

- How could you prepare yourself before marriage for these responsibilities?

Think about and list some of the personal characteristics a person should bring to marriage, such as unconditional love, unselfishness, willingness to work, ability to take responsibility and be dependable, willingness to sacrifice. Discuss each of these characteristics and some reasons why they are necessary to a happy marriage.

- What could you do before marriage to develop these characteristics?

Suggest to your youth that each person choose a specific characteristic to work on. For example, in order to develop an attitude of sacrifice which allows you to be more concerned for another's happiness than for your own, perhaps you could try to put certain needs of the family or friend before your own. This will help you to better understand the kind of sacrifice that is necessary in an eternal marriage.

Bridal Dress Guidelines for Temple Sealing

The sealing for time and eternity of a man and a woman in the holy temple is a joyous occasion. In order to maintain the peace and sanctity of the event, Church leaders, which include stake presidents, bishops, and presidents of the Relief Society or Young Women, have a responsibility to counsel with those who are to be sealed regarding guidelines for temple bridal dresses. Understanding the guidelines before sewing or buying a temple bridal dress prevents the distress of bringing an inappropriate dress to the temple for the sealing ceremony.

Brides should also be aware that beautiful and tasteful bridal dresses are available in many of the temples for use during temple ordinances and sealings. Here are guidelines for brides who choose to bring their own dresses to the temple (adapted from "Brides' Dresses for Temple Marriages," *Bulletin*, 1992, no. 1, p. 2):

- Brides' dresses are to be white. Dresses are to be below the knee in length but do not have to be full length; pants or pantsuits are not permitted.
- Dresses should be modest in design and fabric and free of elaborate ornamentation.
- Sheer fabrics should be lined.
- A high or modestly scooped neckline and long sleeves are required.
- If the dress has a train, the train is to be removed while in the temple.

Marriage in the Lord's Way

Why Should You Marry in the Temple?

1. Because God said so. I don't mean to be disrespectful, but I don't know any other way to say it. It seems to me that the Lord has said in about as many ways as it can be said that there is only one way—His way. I don't know that those who would like to be Saints of God need any reason other than that.
2. Because being sealed in the temple is the only way you can begin to qualify to:
 - a. Have your marriage continue forever.
 - b. Have your youth, stretching in both directions from you, joined together in a family organization forever.
 - c. Have the opportunity of eternal increase.
 - d. Have the opportunity one day to become like our Heavenly Father.
3. Because there are special blessings for which you qualify by having your marriage solemnized in the temple. These blessings flow out of your obedience and will continue to come as you continue to be obedient to your covenants.
4. Because it tells you a lot about your wife, with whom you're going to be spending the rest of this life and all of eternity:
 - a. She believes as you do and has the same spiritual goals you have.
 - b. She has been obedient to the commandments of God and hence qualifies to be allowed to enter the house of the Lord.
 - c. She is willing to make commitments to God, to you, and to herself that will lead to eternal life.
5. Because it serves as a great self-assessment for you as to your individual worthiness and commitment.

What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

As your leaders, we call upon members of the Church everywhere to put family first and to identify specific ways to strengthen their individual families.

M. Russell Ballard, “What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 41
Several of the Brethren and I recently visited a few of the refugee centers in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas where devastated and displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina were staying as they began to try to put their lives back together. Their stories and situations are tragic and poignant in many ways, but in all that I heard, what touched me the most was the crying out for family: “Where is my mother?” “I can’t find my son.” “I’ve lost a sister.” These were hungry, frightened people who had lost everything and needed food, medical attention, and help of all kinds, but what they wanted and needed most was their families.

Crisis or transition of any kind reminds us of what matters most. In the routine of life, we often take our families—our parents and children and siblings—for granted. But in times of danger and need and change, there is no question that what we care about most is our families! It will be even more so when we leave this life and enter into the spirit world. Surely the first people we will seek to find there will be father, mother, spouse, children, and siblings.

I believe the mission statement for mortality might be “to build an eternal family.” Here on this earth we strive to become part of extended families with the ability to create and form our own part of those families. That is one of the reasons our Heavenly Father sent us here. Not everyone will find a companion and have a family in mortality, but everyone, regardless of individual circumstances, is a precious member of God’s family. Brothers and sisters, this year marks the 10th anniversary of the proclamation to the

world on the family, which was issued by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1995 (see “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). It was then and is now a clarion call to protect and strengthen families and a stern warning in a world where declining values and misplaced priorities threaten to destroy society by undermining its basic unit.

The proclamation is a prophetic document, not only because it was issued by prophets but because it was ahead of its time. It warns against many of the very things that have threatened and undermined families during the last decade and calls for the priority and the emphasis families need if they are to survive in an environment that seems ever more toxic to traditional marriage and to parent-child relationships.

The proclamation’s clear and simple language stands in stark contrast to the confused and convoluted notions of a society that cannot even agree on a definition of family, let alone supply the help and support parents and families need. You are familiar with such words from the proclamation as these:

- “Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God.”
- “Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”
- “Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children.”
- “Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity.”
- “The disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.”

And the last words of the proclamation express the simple truth that the family is “the fundamental unit of society.”

Today I call upon members of the Church and on committed parents, grandparents, and extended family members everywhere to hold fast to this great proclamation, to make it a banner not unlike General Moroni’s “title of liberty,” and to commit ourselves to live by its precepts. As we are all part of a family, the proclamation applies to everyone.

Public opinion surveys indicate that people everywhere in the world generally consider the family as the highest priority; yet in recent years the broader culture seems to ignore or misdefine the family. Consider some of the changes of the past decade:

- Many larger national and international institutions that used to support and strengthen families now try to supplant and even sabotage the very families they were created to serve.
- In the name of “tolerance,” the definition of family has been expanded beyond recognition to the point that “family” can be any individuals of any gender who live together with or without commitment or children or attention to consequence.
- Rampant materialism and selfishness delude many into thinking that families, and especially children, are a burden and a financial millstone that will hold them back rather than a sacred privilege that will teach them to become more like God.

And yet most parents throughout the world continue to know both the importance and the joy that are attached to natural families. Friends of mine who just returned from speaking to families and parents on several continents reported to me that the hopes and concerns of parents are remarkably similar throughout the earth.

In India a concerned Hindu mother said, “All I want is to be a bigger influence on my

children than the media and the peer group.” And a Buddhist mother in Malaysia said, “I’d like my boys to be able to operate in the world, but I don’t want them to be of the world.” Parents from all different cultures and faiths are saying and feeling the same things we are as parents in the Church.

The world needs to know what the proclamation teaches, because the family is the basic unit of society, of the economy, of our culture, and of our government. And as Latter-day Saints know, the family will also be the basic unit in the celestial kingdom.

In the Church, our belief in the overriding importance of families is rooted in restored doctrine. We know of the sanctity of families in both directions of our eternal existence. We know that before this life we lived with our Heavenly Father as part of His family, and we know that family relationships can endure beyond death.

If we live and act upon this knowledge, we will attract the world to us. Parents who place a high priority on their families will gravitate to the Church because it offers the family structure, values, doctrine, and eternal perspective that they seek and cannot find elsewhere.

Our family-centered perspective should make Latter-day Saints strive to be the best parents in the world. It should give us enormous respect for our children, who truly are our spiritual siblings, and it should cause us to devote whatever time is necessary to strengthen our families. Indeed, nothing is more critically connected to happiness—both our own and that of our children—than how well we love and support one another within the family.

President Harold B. Lee spoke of the Church as a crucial “scaffolding” that helps build the individual and the family (see Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 107). The Church is the kingdom of God on earth, but in the kingdom of heaven, families will be both the source of our eternal progress and joy and the order of our Heavenly Father. As we are often reminded, we will be released one day from our Church callings; but if we are worthy, we will never be released from our family relationships.

Joseph F. Smith said: “There can be no genuine happiness separate and apart from the home, and every effort made to sanctify and preserve its influence is uplifting to those who toil and sacrifice for its establishment. Men and women often seek to substitute some other life for that of the home; they would make themselves believe that the home means restraint; that the highest liberty is the fullest opportunity to move about at will. There is no happiness without service, and there is no service greater than that which converts the home into a divine institution, and which promotes and preserves family life” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 382).

Now, one may ask, How do we protect and preserve and strengthen our homes and families in a world pulling so hard in opposite directions? Let me make three simple suggestions:

1. Be consistent in holding daily family prayer and weekly family home evenings. Both of these invite the Lord’s Spirit, which provides the help and power we need as parents and family leaders. The Church curriculum and magazines have many good ideas for family home evening. Also consider holding a family testimony meeting where parents and children can express their beliefs and feelings to each other in a private and personal setting.

2. Teach the gospel and basic values in your home. Establish a love for reading the scriptures together. Too many of our parents are abdicating this responsibility to the

Church. While seminary, auxiliaries, and priesthood quorums are important as a supplement to parental gospel instruction, the main responsibility rests in the home. You might want to choose one gospel subject or a family value and then watch for opportunities to teach it. Be wise and do not involve children or yourselves in so many activities out of the home that you are so busy that the Spirit of the Lord cannot be recognized or felt in giving you the promised guidance for yourself and your family.

3. Create meaningful family bonds that give your children an identity stronger than what they can find with their peer group or at school or anyplace else. This can be done through family traditions for birthdays, for holidays, for dinnertime, and for Sundays. It can also be done through family policies and rules with natural and well-understood consequences. Have a simple family economy where children have specific chores or household duties and receive praise or other rewards commensurate to how well they do. Teach them the importance of avoiding debt and of earning, saving, and wisely spending money. Help them learn responsibility for their own temporal and spiritual self-reliance. In today's world, where Satan's aggression against the family is so prevalent, parents must do all they can to fortify and defend their families. But their efforts may not be enough. Our most basic institution of family desperately needs help and support from the extended family and the public institutions that surround us. Brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandparents and cousins can make a powerful difference in the lives of children. Remember that the expression of love and encouragement from an extended family member will often provide the right influence and help a child at a critical time. The Church itself will continue to be the first and foremost institution—the “scaffolding,” as it were—to help build strong families. I can assure you that those who lead the Church have great concern about the well-being of your families, and thus you will see increasing efforts to prioritize and to focus on family needs. But as your leaders, we call upon members of the Church everywhere to put family first and to identify specific ways to strengthen their individual families.

Further, we call upon all public institutions to examine themselves and to do less that might harm families and more that will help them.

We call upon the media to offer more that promotes traditional family values and is uplifting and supportive of families and less that popularizes immorality and materialism.

We call upon government and political leaders to put the needs of children and parents first and to think in terms of family impact in all legislation and policy making.

We call upon Internet providers and Web site creators to become more responsible regarding their potential for influence and to adopt the conscious objective of protecting children from violence, pornography, filth, and sleaze.

We call upon educational entities to teach universal values and family and parenting skills, supporting parents in their responsibility to raise children to become the leaders of families in generations yet to come.

We call upon our own Church members to reach out in love to neighbors and friends of other faiths and include them in the use of the many resources the Church has to help families. Our communities and neighborhoods will be safer and stronger as people of all faiths work together to strengthen families.

It is important to remember that all larger units of society depend on the smallest and most fundamental unit, the family. No matter who or what we are, we help ourselves when we help families.

Brothers and sisters, as we hold up like a banner the proclamation to the world on the family and as we live and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will fulfill the measure of our creation here on earth. We will find peace and happiness here and in the world to come. We should not need a hurricane or other crisis to remind us of what matters most. The gospel and the Lord's plan of happiness and salvation should remind us. What matters most is what lasts longest, and our families are for eternity. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.