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Surviving the honeymoon and Beyond
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SURVIVING THE HONEYMOON AND BEYOND

Nice to be with you today, our topic is surviving the honeymoon and beyond. I suppose that as latter-day saints we see a temple marriage as the crowning ordinance of the gospel. It's something that we anticipate a great deal, and I hope that marriage is a deeper and more profound experience than dating is, well it's supposed to be. My colleague, Dan Judd kinda likens this whole dating, courtship, marriage process to the creation, fall, and the atonement. He suggests that dating is the creation period when everything is the air is clear and pure, the water is pristine, the sky is blue, and everything looks good, besides God said it was good. And then we get married, which is the fall, somehow we find not only do we have weeds in the garden, but we have some things to work out together as a couple because marriage has a way of sort of bringing out your flaws and your strengths. So you have to figure out how to earn some bread, juggle your schedules and sometimes you kind of wish you could get back to the garden. You wish you could get back to being single, but you can't do that. So the only way that we can do this is to move ahead with the atonement, reconcile our differences and try to build the united couple. We have to work at marriage to make it a great great experience.

So, marriage kind of puts a little more sober face on us. At least it should. And it was President Kimball who said it this way. He said "Two people coming from different backgrounds" and you know, just being male female is different enough, "soon learn after the ceremony is performed that stark reality must be faced. No longer a life of fantasy or make believe. We have to come out of the clouds and put our feet on the ground. Responsibility must be assumed, new duties must be accepted. And of course some personal freedoms have to be relinquished. And many adjustments, unselfish adjustments must be made." And then he said something I think all of us quickly come to know after we get married. He says "One comes to realize soon after marriage that the spouse has weaknesses not previously revealed or discovered. The virtues which were constantly magnified during courtship now grow relatively smaller, and the weaknesses which seemed so tiny and insignificant during courtship now grow to sizable proportions. So the hour has come for understanding hearts, for self appraisal, for good common sense, reasoning and planning, and now of course our real personalities show up.

Today I want to talk to you about one of the most important and interesting areas of making adjustments in marriage and that has to do with marital intimacy. It seems to cause a lot of problems, not just for young marriage, but for older marriage as well. It was President Kimball who said "If you study divorces as we've had to do in the church, you will find there are one, two, three, four reasons. Generally sex is the first. They did not get along sexually. Now, they may not say that in the court, they may not tell that to the attorneys, but that is the reasons." And then he gave a little sermon, he said "husband and wife are authorized, in fact, they are commanded to have proper sex when they are married for time and eternity." Now it doesn't mean we need to go to great extremes. It doesn't mean that a woman is a servant of her husband; it doesn't mean that any man has a right to demand sex anytime that he might want it. But it ought to be a general program between the two so that they understand it and both are happy about it. Now what he really meant was, that out of it, what he saw as the big four: money, sex, uh in-laws, and children, that sex was the one issue that creates the most difficulties and uh can poison a

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marriage and cause a couple to want a divorce. And of course once a couple begins to struggle in their intimacy, when they begin to have some challenges in that area, then of course a question whether they should have married and these problems can cause some difficulties.

I learned this years ago in working with couples that the sexual part of marriage is a very compelling and important issue. You know, we marry with the idea that we're going to share finances and we are going to share housekeeping and responsibilities and educational goals, and we are going to be parents together. But, we also sort of understand we're going to share our physical beings, our feminine and masculine traits in a way that is unique and special in a marriage relationship. Most of us I think in our premarital innocence, from all the movies we saw, kind of thought marital intimacy would be the icing on the marital cake. Those actors seem to make this look so enjoyable.

One of the phony messages that I think gets sent today is that you solve problems in marriage by sleeping together. I mean what problem could possibly come along to disturb the serenity of your days as long as you can sleep together. And the theme is the same for most movies. Two main stars don't like each other to start it out. Maybe he ran over her cat or something. But you know before that movie is over that they are going to end up sharing their physical side of their relationship. And of course very few are married these days. When you get married, you realize it doesn't work that way. It works just the opposite. Sexual relations are reflection of the quality of the marriage. And what spouse wants to sleep in the same bed and much less share their very intimate self with a companion who is ornery and grumpy and critical and nasty and cantankerous. So, when we get upset with each other and when we get our feelings hurt and when we're insensitive to each others needs and feelings. We don't feel like being very sexual. We don't really feel like being very involved in this sacred time together. And then you get one partner not as interested in intimacy as the other. And things can begin to spiral downward. And then marital relations become not a healthy part of the marriage, but it becomes a battleground, it becomes a barren wasteland, instead of the divine linking that the Lord intended it to be, and to be an important part of the marriage, and the marriage enrichment part. So, people begin to wonder whether or not they should have married each other.

President Kimball's earlier statement that I quoted was a major reason for writing between husband and wife. This is an important part of marriage, and it can either be a blessing or it can be a curse. I think happily married people find this to be a great source of therapy in their lives. Unhappily married people find it difficult. They find it something they don't like to negotiate, and I think especially wives. The Lord designed marital intimacy as a way for couples to renew their feelings of love, their commitment to marriage, and to their mutual goals and as a way to strengthen their love for each other in a very sacred and profound embrace.

In fact, most of you are familiar with Elder Holland's classic address here at the Y, where he referred to marital intimacy as a sacrament. Now I'm not sure if you and I have thought through what that means. And maybe we ought to just take a look at that.

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We take the sacrament on the Sabbath to remind us of our baptismal covenant. When we committed the first time to except a whole gospel program, where we became a member of the church, where we received the Holy Ghost, we committed ourselves to be faithful disciples of the Lord. So baptism puts us on the path to exaltation and the sacrament reminds us of that commitment. Marital relations as a sacrament then becomes a profound way by which a married couple renews their marriage commitments as they join together physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As they share their very souls with each other. Intimacy reminds us that to succeed as a couple that we have to be one. That we promised Heavenly Father at the time of our temple marriage that we would give ourselves to each other in a very sacred and special and covenantal way that reminds us that we can be eternal companions. Here is the way Elder Holland actually said it, "Sexual intimacy is also a union between otherwise ordinary infallible humans uniting for a rare and special moment with God himself. And all the powers by which he gives life in this wide universe of ours. In this latter sense, human intimacy is a sacrament, a very special kind of symbol."

Well as I say for some intimacy is the highlight of their marriage relationship, but for many it is not a good experience. It can be very disappointing to individuals who had such high expectations and maybe thought that this was going to be one of the highs of their marriage and it is turning out not to be. One of the problems with marital intimacy is that it can be an area where selfishness is disguised in the cloak of marital obligations, or marital rights. Husbands or wives can selfishly try to meet their own physical needs without much concern for the interest and pleasure and enjoyment of their sweetheart. Wives especially I think find it difficult to give themselves to husbands who only treat them nicely and kindly when they are physically accessible. And when a wife has a baby for example, or find certain times of the month inappropriate for intimacy, her husband may not be very sensitive or concerned with her well fair. And I hear this all the time from young wives. I think the only reason my husband is for sexual relations. He treats me really nicely when we are intimate, but as soon as that is over, he is back to his ornery self.

Well what wife wants to feel used or feel unappreciated and a wife wants her husband to care as much about her and her happiness and her satisfaction as he does about her own. So here is the way one wife put it. She said "some men don't seem to notice something is wrong in the marriage, until it affects the quality or quantity of sexual relations in the marriage." They nag and blame their wives about the lack of sex, yet they totally ignore everything else that truly matters to her. A focus on the symptoms instead of the disease," she said. "Your statement in class that sexual fulfillment begins with the quality of life in the non sexual areas of marriage is really true. I have noticed that sexual intimacy with my husband has become more enjoyable for me as our relationship is healed and become more happy. My husband's attempt to pressure and nag and blame me for more sex or for the lack of sex was fruitless. Now my sexual pleasure and my husbands efforts to please has increased as well and without everything going well in the other areas of the marriage, sexual intimacy is lacking in some major ways for me. I have learned that as the total relationship improves for both of us, so does the sexual part. Your statement that a husband needs to exercise self control and restraint and charity in being

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sensitive to his wife's needs, desires, and interests, boy that is news to me. Wow I never heard that angle before, all I ever heard in the past was the nagging voice of a partner saying to his wife that she should have sex with him, to be charitable and fulfill his needs and desires. It's refreshing to hear that maybe the partner pushing for sex when the other partner has little interest at the time should be the one who should exercise some control and restraint and charity. My spouse and I, this lady goes on, discussed what situations hinder sexual satisfaction and a lack of desire for intimacy and that was helpful. For example, I have a hard time getting into the mood if I have a lot on my mind of what I need to do or if I don't feel very sexy or good about my body, or if I am tired. I thought it was interesting on the other, my husband could never think of a time he wouldn't be intimate."

So it was out of complaints by wives I suppose that President Hunter spoke to the men of the church in a priesthood meeting and said, "brethren, keep yourselves above any domineering or unworthy behavior and the tender intimate relationship between husband and wife. Because marriage is ordained of God, the intimate relationship between husbands and wives is good and honorable in the eyes of God. He's commanded that they be one flesh and that they multiply and replenish the earth. You are to love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. Tenderness and respect, never selfishness must be the guiding principles in the intimate relationship between husband and wife. Each partner must be considerate and sensitive to the others needs and desires. Any domineering, indecent, or uncontrolled behavior in the intimate relationship between husband and wife is condemned by the Lord." Elder Scott gave similar council, "Within the marriage, the stimulation of those emotions can either be used one as an end unto itself, in other words selfishness, or two to allow a couple to draw closer in ones to the beautiful appropriate expression of these feelings between husband and wife." And then the council "specifically there are times brethren, when you need to restrain those feelings, and there are times when you need to allow their full expression."

So, marital intimacy can be a wonderful expression of our love, and our caring for each other, or it can have a negative impact depending on our attitude and how we treat each other. And maybe that's why I love President Hinckley's simple statement, you can read all the books on marriage, and you will never come to a more simple yet profound statement as this. "A happy marriage is not so much a matter of romance, not that romance is not important, as it is an anxious concern for the welfare and comfort of your spouse." I like that anxious concern for the comfort, the welfare and comfort of your spouse. I think it is when we have that anxious concern that marital relations are at their finest hour.

One of my marriage students said, "In our society, we place so much emphasis on a potential partner's sex appeal that we neglect or remember that after the honeymoon that we will actually have to live together and have basic conversation. I don't remember what I used to imagine marriage to be. I probably thought it was all about passionate kisses and candle light dinners. I mean what single person doesn't. However after almost three years of marital bliss, reality has set in. Yes, romance and affection are part of the package, but that is not what I love most about my husband. I love that we can carry on an intelligent

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conversation. That he'll do the dishes without being asked, that we can disagree without fighting. That he gets the baby to sleep every night. I am so grateful I like my husband. When all is said and done, it's the day to day living that a couple needs to be able to do successfully. I would say that my marriage is 95% companionship, just enjoying being together, and 5% passionate kisses and candlelight dinners. And it varies from time to time too. The best marriage advice I ever heard was to marry your best friend. Oh, how true."

Well, marriage is a profound commitment that we are going to learn from each other how to be sweethearts, how to be lovers. You know, we have never done this before. In the premortal life, we were single adults. We weren't married there. So this life is our first time to ever marry, to ever be able to use our bodies to create life, to express love to each other, to be intimate, in a very sacred way. And not only intimacy and most everything else in marriage is new to us, so we need to be humble students and teachers. Good teachers in marriage, cause we have to learn from each other. Successful marriage is gonna require some patience, gonna require maturity that often we don't have in the early months of our marriages.

I wanted to share with you a statement by Elder Packer, years ago. It kind of puts this into perspective. He said "some time ago, there came to my office a couple to meet an appointment that had been arranged by their stake president. They were in their early 30's, they had four children, they'd married in the temple, they were fairly active in the church. They had wrestled endlessly with some very difficult problems, had wept a great deal, had experienced a great deal of counseling and finally decided to get a divorce. Well, there was not third party involved, there was no moral transgression, life in their home was just filled with such problems, that it became a literal and living hell for them. They could stand it no longer, and had decided that as bad as divorce is, as disappointing this failure would be that either of them was better alone than going on as they were." They wanted to get back to the garden. "So I invited the wife to tell me about the problem. As soon as she began to speak, the husband snapped at her, 'why don't you tell him the truth! You'd even lie to a general authority. Why don't you tell it the way it is.' So I invited him to be quiet and listen while she has her say. He in turn was invited to speak. He had not completed a sentence before she and her icy bitterness accused him of being the cause of all the trouble. Then I had to invite her to listen if she would. Well, they concluded, and I was going to ask a question. But I thought the evidence was clear and so I said to them. Both of you came from broken homes didn't you. And they nodded their heads. Tell me about it, I asked. So each told me the unhappiness and heartbreak of seeing their parents separate and divorce when they were little, the husband was about 7 as I recall, his wife was about 9 when their families had broken up. Everything they had believed in and trusted, everything by way of security had fallen apart before them. And my heart was touched for them. I thought that there was a certain innocence about them. Somehow here they were entangled and bitters and unhappiness and misery, they didn't know how they got there, they didn't have any idea how they were going to escape. Here was happening to them, their parents had broken up and divorced. They were suffering the misery of domestic disorder, now their innocent children, third generation were to be visited with the same penalties. So almost by accident, I ask a question of her. I said, well

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'what is it that you want of him?' For the first time she became a woman. She started to cry, her face softened, she seemed more like a little girl and she said 'all I want is for him to treat me like Bro. Somebody treats his wife. That's all I want.' Now you know what she'd seen, they would come to church, they were attending church fighting, bickering, miserable, complaining, and then in would come brother and sister somebody. Their little family, couple in love, helping each other nudging one another when their children did something cute. And somehow she knew that whatever that was, she did not have it in her marriage and that is what she wanted. I asked him what he wanted of her, and he said 'all I want is for her to be a good wife.' Now here comes the punch line. Where would she learn to be a good wife? In school? In a book? Imagine it? She never lived in a home where her husband showed the proper respect to her husband, or love for her husband, or where there was a feeling of warmth and love. And how would he ever know how treat a wife like Brother So and so treated his. Imagine it? Dream it up? What, what could he read that in? He had been deprived by the misfortunes of his parents and now is paying the price and his little children, I remind you that their generation were suffering the same penalties." And then he says "it has been interesting to me that many couples who come for help some of them have grown children, haven't the vaguest idea about some of the very basic considerations in the husband and wife relationship. Some women long married, have no idea it seems about how a man is put together and what his needs are and how he can be lifted and inspired and encouraged. Many men though they've lived with a woman for years don't seem to have the faintest idea about what a woman needs and how she could be inspired to be made perfect."

Well, some of us come from difficult backgrounds and marriage exposes, doesn't it, the real us. Marriage is really life in closed quarters. And it brings out the flaws as well as strengths that were not so obvious when we were dating. Cause then we didn't even know what to look for. It is kind of like you women that made a laurel list of all the attributes of your future husband and after marriage you realize your list was a little unrealistic, and seldom does somebody come riding up on a white horse.

Over the years I have asked married couples to share their experiences in three areas. How well their parents prepared them for marital intimacy? Based on that preparation at home how did the honeymoon experience turn out? And since the honeymoon how have you made adjustments and what is the state of your relationship at the present time? Now I am going to share some of these statements, quotes for you. I think rather than preach to you, I'd like you to listen and see what principles they, they share.

How well parents prepared them for intimacy well, we can sum that up quickly, most parents do not prepare for marital intimacy. One student wrote "I was sure that my dad would talk to me about intimacy before we ran off on our honeymoon, but nothing was said until the night of my reception. As we were cleaning up, he said to me son let's go for walk. So we walked down to the corner and back. His entire lesson was, you know all the things that I've told you over the years to not to do with women while you are dating and courting them, well tonight you start doing them. That was it. That was his sex education lesson."

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Here is another one. Marital intimacy is something that is rarely talked about among members of the church. It was somewhat strange to go from hush hush about marital intimacy to talking about it. I think that we need to teach our young adults in a sacred and respectful way to help them realize its importance and value in marriage. Growing up nobody ever talked about intimacy except we can't do it until you are married, that was it. That was the entire message. I mean, give me a break. Once we are taught that intimacy is a sacred aspect of marriage we ought to teach our children. I found that I, I was scared for our wedding night. I was given your book and I learned so much. I felt as though it would be ok," and I like this phrase. "Instead of feeling like a deer in the headlights, I wish more people would teach and talk about marital intimacy instead of acting like it is a crime. I found that as my wedding day got closer, I would think more about that night and what was going to happen. I tried to prepare myself physically and mentally and emotionally. I didn't want to be one of those people that you hear about that feel as though they had committed a sin after their first time. I knew it was sacred and ordained of God, that those who were legally and lawfully married, thank goodness my new in-laws talked to us a few times about marriage in general and they added a few insights about what would happen that night which really helped. That's the way I grew up, nobody talked about it. I wished they would have."

Well, let me move to some adjustments after the honeymoon. I wanted you to hear a few of these statements. First a wife, "I feel that intimacy in a marriage is wonderful and sacred. I've thought a lot about it, the role that it plays in my own marriage. My husband and I have had to learn to talk about what works and what doesn't work. And it's required us to really risk our deepest feelings on this issue. We have been married now for almost 4 years and at first we had the normal adjustments, things just didn't go right for us sexually. We were really ignorant. But we were always loving to one another, we kept trying, we read a few books, we kept trying and we taught each other, we still do. My husband has decided that intimacy is great therapy. He hadn't uh, he told her before they got married he didn't think that's what intimacy was for. So now he is saying that he's finally thinks it is. Even though we struggled at first, I've really enjoyed it. I love expressing that closeness with my husbands, it cements our marriage together. We give each other a part of ourselves that no one else ever could. My favorite part is knowing that it is right. That Heavenly Father blesses us with joy and happiness when we do our best to serve each other. I am so grateful that we didn't have that burden of guilt, and unnecessary weight that come when intimacy indulged in marriage. Our intimacy gets better all the time. We are open with our feelings. We understand when just snuggling or kissing is much more meaningful than sex. My husband has always considered my needs and is never selfish. Heavenly Father has given us the greatest power there is, that which gives life. I know that intimacy is the way we bring spirits to the earth. I have no children of my own yet, but when I think of how miraculous it is that my body can produce another body that is a reflection of me and my husband I can hardly take it in. As Elder Holland says quote, 'I can make neither mountain or moonlight, not one drop of rain or a single rose, but I can create a life.' Each time my husband and I give ourselves to each other we are bound together in a way that no one else can unbind. We can bring a spirit child of our Father in Heaven to earth if he so grants. It's beautiful, it's overwhelming to me. If I didn't think of sex and intimacy in this way, I think it would be

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very unfulfilling. I would be physically gratified I suppose, but not emotionally and spiritually fulfilled. I don't think people realize that this is spiritual experience. And I am grateful for this gift from Heavenly Father and my wonderful husband who has come to understand intimacy in a loving, unselfish way."

One husband said "since our honeymoon, my wife and I have learned a lot about each other. I think that our greatest reason for our increased knowledge and satisfaction with intimacy is our willingness to discuss concerns openly. I remember being dissatisfied with the frequency of sexual relations during a period in our marriage." Now that is not an unusual complaint. "My wife and I discussed the issue often. We both tried to be more accommodating. I learned just how different we are in our needs. My wife often told me, cause I am a little slow in the head, that she needs to feel love before she can be in the mood. Now we both try to cater to the desires of the other to make intimacy more enjoyable. We love each other and I am so grateful for my wife. So, when you have a good teacher, you have a good sweetheart, and you can learn from each other.

Here is a wife. "Intimacy is an important part of our marriage. It brings great joy to the two of us; it draws us closer together, and allows us to fall in love all over again. It puts both of us in a better mood. We are always more happy and more relaxed after being together. Our frame of mind at this time is unselfishness. We both try to make it as enjoyable as possible for the other. I think that as long as we both think of it in this way, it will always bring us closer together. I think that both of us enjoy making the other person happy. I know my husband likes me to initiate intimate contact as much as I enjoy him initiating it, sometimes I am just tired, I don't really feel like it but I almost always make it a point to love him when he is in the mood. Again in goes back to being unselfish. There have only been a couple of times in our marriage when one of us has asked the other if we could wait."

Another wife, "intimacy has truly been a blessing in our marriage. One difference I have noticed is the way we become aroused. For my husband, I think that it is automatic. For me, most of the time it's a choice that I have to make. If I am in the mood, then I decide to become aroused. But, if I am tired or upset, I really have to try harder to get in the mood. I agree that intimacy is better for wives when her husband is sensitive to her needs, meaning that he helps in the kitchen, helps with the house work etc." I have a book in the office called "Sex begins in the kitchen." And it develops that theory. "If I could give any advice to newlyweds or soon to be newly weds, I would tell them to always be unselfish in the sexual part of marriage. Part of the role of being a husband and wife is to bring joy to your spouse. Sometimes you may not feel like it, but it's usually at those times that your spouse needs it most. Enjoy it, so that they will enjoy it too. Another thing that I think is critical to marital intimacy is sharing with each other what you like and what you don't like. If you don't tell them, you will never know. And how can they then become a better sweetheart.

A husband. "A think the main counsel I would give to those getting married or recently married is that they should not expect intimacy to be easy at first. Be a little patient, it takes some time to understand the workings of each others body. And some

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days one or both of you may have to work a little harder in order to make the experience worth while. But intimacy is a wonderful experience; it brings joy to you and your wife when it is participated in properly. There are few things that bring greater strength to the marriage. So even though it may be difficult at first, keep trying and you won't regret it."

Well here's a wife. "I was very nervous for my wedding night to arrive and everybody knew it. We stayed at our reception a little longer than planned, and I wasn't anxious to leave at all. I was just fine with all the people that came to help us celebrate our marriage, but my husband was ready to go and everybody knew it. So off we finally went. Talk about nerves. I am so grateful for such a calm, patient husband who was willing to learn right along with me, at my speed. The guys part, quite easy to figure out, but the females can be a little difficult. But I had a great premarital exam and everything was fine, the doctor said so it was just a matter of feeling relaxed in front of my new husband. A little awkward for me, but we turned down the lights, I relaxed enough to forget my nervousness and just realized how amazing this truly was. I have never felt closer to my husband and to the Lord as I did that night. I am so grateful for marital intimacy, the opportunity it gives us as a couple to grow closer together. I can't wait until the opportunity to become a mother occurs as well. She may change her mind later on that one. What an absolute glorious plan the father has laid out for his children. I am so grateful for those adults in my life who weren't afraid to talk about the sacred nature of intimacy. I am grateful for my husband that we were married in the temple for time and eternity. I am so grateful for the wonderful act of intimacy that we are able to share together. It is such a strength to us."

Now you know if you've got a bunch of newly weds together they had funny stories about what happened about what happened to them. Here's one. She said "our honeymoon had a ruff start, after the reception we headed up to Salt Lake to stay in a hotel that night. I began a conversation in the car about what would potentially happen later that night if you know what I mean. I was really afraid, I mean here we had been best friends with very little open signs of affection, we never kissed heavily while dating and even putting my head on his shoulder made him a bit uncomfortable. And we're heading off to do something everybody expected us to do and I am scared to death. After all, aren't you supposed to be intimate on your honeymoon? Well, we got to the hotel after and interesting conversation in the car, things started to smooth out a little bit, it helped to talk about it together and be a little open about it. Ironically, as we are getting out of the car to get our stuff from the back seat, my husband locked his keys in the car. We stared at each other in disbelief and I started to laugh and he joined in. Of all things to happen on your wedding night, it happened to us. It was like 11:30 at night and our keys and our luggage are locked in the car. We had the girl at the front desk call a locksmith and 30 minutes later and 50 bucks later the car was open again." And then she reflects back, "our intimacy is so therapeutic. We've made some leaps and bounds and even a little steps of time in our intimacy. I love being married. I love learning new things about our relationship and being intimate together. I love it when we work through difficulties and trails and the stress and the hard weeks, days and hours. It's just fulfilling wonderful. It brings us closer to the Lord and closer to each other. So I look forward to future years together since I know there's so much more to learn about the beauty of our relationship."

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"On June 20th we were married in Seattle temple, it was a beautiful ceremony I can't imagine a sweeter moment in my entire life. Following the temple we were having a big family dinner and then my husband and I were off, our reception was to be a few days later." Not a bad idea to do it that way. "The dinner was fun, but as everybody finished eating I started to get a little nervous. My husband kept leaning over and asking me when I thought it would be appropriate to leave. And I just shrugged my shoulders. Heck I was content to stay right where I was. Finally, after two and half hours we left for the bed and breakfast we'd be staying at. The drive there made me a nervous wreck. Fortunately my husband got lost and I gained an extra 45 minutes. By the time we reached our destination, my husband could tell how nervous I was and he was so great. We got inside our room and we knelt together and we prayed for the first time together as husband and wife, and then we read our patriarchal blessings together. Now I don't think I was thinking that when I got married. We read our patriarchal blessings together. Nobody ever tells you how awkward it is for the first time after twenty years of practicing abstinence. All those years its no, no, no, and suddenly its ok. Either of us was used to sleeping in the same bed with a member of the opposite sex. Well, we've been married now for a year and a half. Our intimacy has become a little more relaxed. We decided to start our family right away, so after our honeymoon get away in the Caribbean I stopped birth control. I was pregnant 4 months later. One thing I learned from being pregnant is that pregnancy puts a big damper on a couples intimacy the first and third trimesters. One time during my first trimester, immediately after intimacy I ran to the bathroom to throw up. Well that was a little disgusting. By the third trimester, my tummy was so big it was impossible to feel very sexy. I decided to pack away most of my regular clothes including lingerie cause it made me so depressed. Somebody ought to come up with maternity lingerie, so that 8 month pregnant women can at least try to feel sexy. After the birth of our baby, things have slowly returned to normal as far as our sex life is concerned. One thing that we have learned is that going to the temple regularly, watching general conference and regular scripture study and prayer really improves our sex life. It is during these times that we feel the closest to one another and want to be with each other. Books may tell a couple that trying different techniques is the key to having a better sex life, but for us it is the spiritual things. Since our honeymoon, my husband and I have enjoyed the intimate part of marriage. We've learned that usually my husband is in the mood more than I am, fairly common. However, if we do a little work, if we do a little work and are patient with each other then both of us are usually willing to meet each others need. It has been an enjoyable experience. Each time we are intimate, we are reminded of how much we love one another, and how much working at our marriage is really worth it."

Another one. "Our intimacy has evolved to be a beautiful part of our marriage as long as we incorporate the principles of the gospel. I think that every couple can testify of how beautiful intimacy is, when virtues of humility and true love and willingness are practiced. Likewise, every couple can testify of how pride and selfishness and greed can tear intimacy apart. I think those two sentences pretty much sum up eight months of my marriage. My counsel would always be to incorporate the principles of the gospel in your marriage, and intimacy will fall into place. There is nothing like feeling the joys of commitment, appreciation, love and devotion, and fulfillment through marital intimacy. I've come to appreciate the love of the Lord for creating these wonderful powers for us to

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experience, its value in my life has been tremendous. I could not devote myself fully to my wife if I didn't have intimacy. It lifts me up, it encourages me, it helps me know that I'm appreciated, it boosts my self-esteem, and it helps me just love being married."

Well, I suppose that uh we could say a lot about this topic, I have a few quotes, but um let me just share one more with you. "I love my wife with all my heart. She is my sweetheart, my best friend. When I have a problem, I don't talk to the bishop, I don't go to my home teacher, or my elders quorum, or my basketball buddies, or my parents, or my siblings, not even my in-laws. I talk to my best friend in the whole world, my sweetheart. When somebody says with regard to breaking up as to how they are just friends. My reply to that is well what were you before you just friends. My wife is my very best friend. Intimacy has progressed to the better since the first time. We've done a lot of teaching and learning. There aren't any difficulties or problems, but I've learned that a man is very interested in sex and a woman has other things in mind. I don't mean they don't like it, but they like talking and stuff. They like to be loved in many other ways other than just intimately. It could be something like doing dishes for her, or cleaning the house, or even doing the laundry without being asked. My wife loves a cheek and on the forehead. Our values have changed as well. The counsel I would give to men is control your emotions. Perhaps it's the difference between men and women, but I enjoy intimacy much more than my wife does. Not because she doesn't enjoy it, or doesn't like me, but it just seems to be the way it is. When your spouse says she's tired, doesn't feel like being involved, have respect and don't get upset. You don't want her to have intimacy to be intimate with you because she is afraid of you because of your temper. That defeats the whole purpose of it. It ought to be a joint thing between the two people.

Well, let me conclude. I think that you can see that marital intimacy plays an interesting, doesn't it, and important role in marriage. It's a special relationship that strengthens marriages as couples learn from each other how to be partners in a very sacred embrace, commanded by the lord when we are properly married. What a blessing marriage is, and what a special opportunity to enjoy each other in a sacred way that is reserved for marriage. Sadly, we live in a world that uh desecrates this sacred part of marriage. But I hope for you as latter-day saints that this will be a time of renewal, a time of growth, a time of appreciating each other, of sharing your very souls with each other, in a way that enriches your marriage and keeps both of you on the path to exaltation and, and uh helps you to be happy. My prayer would be that all of us, of particularly now as married couples would enjoy this sacred time together. Make it a special sacrament in our lives, to enrich and strengthen our marriage. That would be my desire for all of us. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.