

Steve Duncan

Why Marriages Succeed or fail
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Women's Services

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WHY MARRIAGES SUCCEED OR FAIL

This following story was related by Brother Truman Madsen in his wonderful essay, book called "Four Essays on Love." "It was an anniversary banquet. A four generation family gathered to honor their silvery grandfather and his sweetheart. It seems to me that it was their 60th but as you will see it doesn't really matter which. This slight, hallowed woman sat very close, I thought, to her husband. He was an oak, 81, and his body has the measuring lines and circles of his long, hard pull. You would say that he was an ugly old fellow, except for the clearness of his eyes. He stood and made some comment about the flamboyant way love is advertised these days. Then he said 'When I was a boy, it used to thrill me just to touch Lucy's arm.' He turned, smiled into her lifted face and said most softly, 'and it still does.'"

Now brothers and sisters, most of us hearing this beautiful glorious story of a silvery couple married decades of marriage, probably wonder wouldn't it be wonderful to have a marriage relationship like that, how did they get there. Most persons now a days do not get married in order to divorce, but nevertheless divorces do occur in and out of the church in large numbers. President Kimball on this campus in 1967 gave a wonderful devotional address to students that I consider the general standard work of marital relationships in the church. He said "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." Now President Kimball is setting a fairly high standard for you and I as married couples and he is using language to describe what marriage can be that my understanding has not been quoted by any other prophet, seer, and revelator since that time. "More an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive."

I'd then like to focus today on talking about two conditions that lead to marital failure. And, then happily, some of the antidotes for those particular conditions so that you and I would have a better chance as married couples and individuals to reach this wonderful standard that has been set by a prophet of God.

First of all a story. Some years ago, Brother Bruce Hafen told a story in general conference where he said, talked about a young newly married girl talking to her mother, turning to her mother and saying "mother, I'm at the end of all my troubles." To which she sighed and replied, "Yes dear, but at which end." We occasionally hear the following that marriage is essentially to be a trouble free institution and then most couples when they get married would rather not have the experience of opposition in all things as Lehi describes. For instance. Joe J. Christiansen said this in conference. "Occasionally, we hear something like why we have been married for 50 years and we have never had a difference of opinion." If that is literally the case, then one of the partners is overly dominated by the other or as someone has once said is a stranger to the truth. Any intelligent couple, note intelligent couple, where does that place the rest of us who have no differences. Any intelligent couple will have differences of opinion. Our challenge is to be sure that we know how to resolve them. Then note this, that is part of making a good marriage better.

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I think what Elder Christiansen is teaching us here is that disagreement, difference; the experience of difference in marriage is actually not a bad thing. It can be a good thing. If we work it right it can be used to actually deepen the quality of the relationship that we have, which leads me to this principle. Disagreements crop up in even the best marriage. It is how differences are handled that is an important key to marital success or failure. Well, how do we use gospel principles and supported scholarship for handling the disagreements and conflicts that are a normal, natural part of marital life. Now I say differences, disagreements are. I do say though that conflict and arguments not necessarily are a normal part or even to be an expectant part of marriage. But if we know, but if we fail to use some skill and certainly the attitudes of our hearts in dealing with the disagreements and conflicts that are there part of just getting to know each other and being together as husband and wife. Then they can turn into ugly arguments, damaging contention that end up splitting marriages apart.

First of all, prevention is a key concept that I'd like to share. Prevention involves at least three things. One, charity the pure love of Christ. I was on an airplane with Dr. John Gottman. And he is a noted authority. Probably, arguably the leading relationship authority in the world. Now he and I had a conversation for three and a half hours on an airplane from Kansas City to Salt Lake. Great opportunity for me, but as we talked about what it is that makes marriages strong. Ultimately he said you know, more than skills we really need to teach people how to care for each other. And to me that speaks to have the heart of wanting to get a long. Having the heart that is imbedded in the pure love of Christ. Now the scriptures teach that that is the core trait, the lone star trait that we need in our personal lives, but I would also say in our marriages. And it's the pure love of Christ, meaning loving as Christ loved. Not just love itself, which is not the new commandment, but the new commandment is that it's the embodiment of Jesus and how he demonstrates that is the new commandment that he gives to us. The Joseph Smith translation for instance about when it talks about how charity covereth a multitude of sins. The prophet Joseph took the word preventeth and replaced that. Replaced the word, replaced the other word covereth with the word preventeth. Now you and I can think about how many sins we might be preventing if for instance we are bridling our anger that we might be filled with love. Or for being a little bit more tolerant with how the toothpaste is being squosen. And other minor matters in the matrix of an entire marriage relationship that really call for the pure love of Christ to prevent some of these discords from taking place in the first place.

Another recommendation for prevention that I share, I'd like to share is couple councils. In the church we talk about family council. Over and over again and what do we do there, fight right? Well, yes, sometimes but ideally the brethren want us to talk. Solve problems together, get everybody's opinion on certain matters. Couple councils or executive councils or however you choose to call them are also a very useful opportunity to sit down and to share, to talk about our problems that we might nip them while they are still in the bud. Elder Simpson recommended this notion of pillow talk. Taking time at the end of the day for instance, just to converse about our relationship. Also that opportunity to say "you know dear, I'm really sorry. I was a lunkhead today. I was so insensitive to your feelings." Those opportunities taken often keep the problems small

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and manageable keeping them from becoming volcanic eruptions. Now, what we do have issues that we need to deal with. Now we need to calm ourself first. Even before we are calming ourself, we need to take stalk that we are not going to be using some destructive interaction patterns to bring up certain issues. One of these particular distructive interaction patterns is what I call, or what John Gottman calls a harsh start up.

We may notice that the garbage has not been taken out for the third time this week, and it belongs to our spouse that particular responsibility. And maybe we may really want to announce it to that spouse. And by the way not only am I upset about it but you always forget about this. By using different kinds of destructive interaction patterns which John Gottman calls and labels criticism, contempt or defensiveness. Well, you do this too, well so I don't take out the garbage, but you never do the dishes. Or stonewalling where we simply refuse to talk about the issues that are arising between us. Checking ourselves first to make sure that we are not using those kinds of patterns and then to get calm before we actually bring the issue up. When we do bring up the issue, it is important that we bring it up calmly, softly, remembering what the Lord said through prophets. By the soft answer turns away wrath using "I" statements to convey good will, to convey my responsibility this is my feeling, I am owning this feeling to be clear to be polite, to be appreciative and not to store things up.

Remember the Doctrine and Covenants in section 121 verse 43 talks about reproving betimes, betimes meaning without delay, with sharpness, which means clarity and openness and not how hard you hit the person or how hard you scream at the person. And then this notion when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, suggesting that divine permission is needed when we bring issues as well. Gottman recommends to use that soften start up the really follows this scriptural pattern. Expressing you know sweetheart. I really want us to manage our money better, sometimes we spend in my view willy nilly and I think we need to kind of get our credit card debt under wraps. You know, 40,000 dollars on of credit card debt is a little much, I think. What do you think brothers and sisters? But expressing that desire that to really at the heart and at our heart we make things right and make things good again if we are having some challenges. Listening and validating when we have issues is another important element. It involves skill, but it also involves the attitude of our heart.

The Savior of the world I believe is the model listener. Uh, at least as he has revealed in scripture in 3rd Nephi chapter 17, to me there is a wonderful example that shows how we should listen to one another and verse one of that particular chapter, he announces that he needs to leave and then he pauses. The scripture reports that he looked again on the multitude. And this is the second or third time when the scripture says again. So he's looking, he's preserving his audience. And then he says, after he beholds that they are in tears. Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you. And then what does he say. Oh, I've got to go, like I said in verse one I gotta leave and you know my palm pilot beeper is going off and you know I really don't have time for this. That is not what our Savior, our God, our King does. Have ye any that are sick? Bring them hither. He says that I perceive that ye desire that I should show unto those things those things that I showed unto your brethren in Jerusalem. I see that your faith is sufficient

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that I might heal you. And then what follows is one of the most glorious scriptural scenes, when he blesses each person which the last verse of that chapter. Over 2,000 men women and children. One by one, blessing them. Not just of their physical ailments to cure those, but their emotional ones as well. Afflicted in any manner. Now, that suggests there is patient listening going on. There is patient validation going on. Your day has really been a wreck, hasn't it sweetheart. I'm so sorry, that you didn't get what you were able, what you wanted out of that particular report that you worked so hard on. Taking time to tune into one another and validate those feelings.

To stay focused is another important element when we are discussing issues, disagreements, and conflict. Sometimes we will want to bring up the kitchen sink, which Gottman calls Kitchen sinking. And we dump in on people. Well we remember, well you know this is the same thing that happened 25 years ago January 23, 1987 at 2:30 pm and you know, same result. We are still not getting anywhere. Then and now, its all the same problem. We want sometimes to bring up all the past negative and place that in the laps of somebody that we are called upon. In fact the proclamation short of commanding exhorts us certainly highly strongly that we are solemnly responsible to love and to care not the kitchen sink, it doesn't say that. But to stay focused on the issue and the matter at hand and then to not bring these extremist issues in. While we discussing something that might be fairly emotionally loaded, we may get off base a little bit. I mean we are human right. Sometimes we get angry, sometimes we need to say oh you know that was really unkind of me by start off by saying that you never ever take out the garbage and you never have in your life. Then we start again. And in a relationship, the recipient of that repair attempt trying to start off better would be wise to say sure that hurt and you said you accused me of that. But you know, we are a team and my heart is filled with charity for you and I'm trying to understand what's going on here. So, yeah let's start again even if we might need to take a break for a while after we get some distance maybe the pain that the initial attempt had caused.

Soothing oneself and each other is also an important part. Sometimes when we are discussing issues they get a little warm. They will hot under the collar. Men particularly have a difficult time in this area because the research suggests that when there are conflict situations, it costs men more to stay in those conflict situations than it does women. Women would like to engage, they bring up the issue typically. You know, 80% of the time the issues are raised by women, by the wives. Uh, when there is concern and women are just gritty there. They are kind of geared, you know based on their experience, based on their nature to stay in the saddle to talk these issues through. Men on the other hand, they would kind of like to withdraw and do what the scholars call stonewalling. Essentially they become a stone wall. They are like communicating like a brick wall, nothing gets in and nothing is reciprocated. Now women stone wall too, but men at a higher, much higher percentage than women according to this research. Especially by Gottman, notes that men more often than not are the stonewallers. But part of the explanation for that sisters and its important to understand this in gendered marital relations is part of the reason for that. Marriage is part of the reason for that, is because it costs men more.

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Physiologically, even at the physiological level, at the blood pressure level, at the heart rate level, at the hormonal level, which measures the level of cortisone or cortisol in the blood stream. Even at that very microscopic level it is costing men more. So sisters and brothers we need to do things to soothe each other, like holding hands and assuring them that we are not going to bash them if they speak frankly and honestly their feelings. Taking a break, taking a deep breathe, closing well I guess maybe I shouldn't close my eyes during the presentation too long, but closing your eyes, taking a deep breath. Anything you need to do to relax, to soothe, to go to the paradise hat you most fondly remember in your personal experience to get calm. For me, it's Okinawa where I spent six months of my full time mission. But anything we do to soothe each other so that we can keep the issue warm enough that we can discuss it and get those feelings out and move towards some kind of solution, but not so hot that there is a meltdown of the relationship. Not so hot that we are yelling at each other angrily, things of that nature, typically not an appropriate thing.

Once we have had a chance to talk through and discuss the problem, the issue quite openly, that is when we move to what we call problem solution. Where we actually the goal here is to reach a consensus about a solution. Now some scholars say that compromise is the high ideal but if we are covenant members and we believe about the gospel of Jesus Christ and we read carefully the revelations, oneness and unity under well consensus in other words is essentially the gospel ideal, but we might have to settle for something such as a compromise. If we read section 107 for instance and look at the level of unity that's taken place in the quorums of the church as a council together and the seventy and the apostleship. I think those are worthy models to emulate both in our family councils but especially in our marital counsels as we talk through what should we do about the budget. Are we in harmony, are we synergized? We've synergized our ideas, we feel good about our direction we are taking so we are both equally committed and excited about doing something. Moving ahead, equally yoked to carry out a solution. I always liked this part, after you have had a disagreement or some discussion a little bit heated. I think the scriptures are clear when there has been some tension afterwards show that increase of love, why, well the scriptures tell us so that we are not perceived as an enemy. Certainly we don't want to be seen as an enemy by our spouse. That person we knelt across the alters in the temple and joined in heavenly covenant with as married partners. Part of renewing and making that exciting is making that time for an increased amount of love as we move ahead.

Well, there are some benefits that might come to this approach of working through problems, talking through issues, using some of these skills. I like this particular cartoon, its one of my favorites. Notice this young man, very wisely reflecting and validating what his sweetheart has just told him. So you are feeling frustrated and upset. Now, I might even use a question mark at the end of that, just to sound more tentative because we may not get it right. She may might want to correct this well frustrated and upset, and also invalidated. You know, but he's got a good start, to which she responds. This is the afterwards showing the increase of love part. And this is why I like it so much. But then notice his comment. Wow, this stuff really works.

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Now, that's an important question, does this strategy that I've just shared with you, or some of these processes work. Well, according to my colleague and friend, Dr. John Gottman they do. He's done over 25 years of research. Actually he has been around for about 3 decades doing systematic research in a place that he calls the marital love lab. Now, there's nothing kinky about it brothers and sisters. This is about a place where he uses video tapes, exercises and then uh gives couples things to talk about, things to fight about so to speak, or argue about, or have differences about, and then he videotapes them, even right down to the nanoseconds of their exchanges. Then he's come up with these coding devices and has been able to predict with 90% accuracy in a fairly limited amount of time with these persons. Who will later divorce, and who will later be staying together? And to prove that, he's followed these people on their way longitudinally, which means over time, multiple years, looking at who stays together and who does not. And this list I've just given you are characteristic of couples who stay together. These are the things that they are doing to preserve their marriage to build the marital muscle in their marriage to keep it from failing.

Now there is another condition that I would like to share with you, that I think evidence suggests leads to marital failure. First of all, I'd like to introduce you to scientific term, what is entropy. Well, if you all raise you hand and say "No, I don't want to learn anything about physical sciences in this class, or in this presentation, or what is entropy." Well, this is how it is defined in the physical sciences. It's the tendency of the physical system to lose energy and coherence over time. Such as, a gas that expands and dissipates until there is little trace left. Now in this fireside, devotional that I have been quoting from President Kimball, he made reference to this concept of entropy. Now let me introduce you to what the scholars have said. But this is how I apply the concept of entropy to marriage. Notice what President Kimball says "many couples" and you might ask is it me, "permit their marriages to become stale, and their love to grow cold, like old bread, worn out jokes, or" and I love this "cold gravy." Well a good friend and colleague of mine, William Doordy has identified what he call entropic couples. And this is how he characterizes them. These are couples who through lack of attention to its inner life or their inner life gradually lose a sense of cohesion over the years. Gradually drift apart because we lack infusions of bonding and intimacy. And I am borrowing the term from President Kimball's devotional and I'm calling this the cold gravy syndrome.

What about your marriage? Some scholars call this erosion. The tendency of a marriage unless we give it attention to essentially become old worn out, the positivity the things that we enjoyed and loved, reasons for why we got married in the first place, they kind of fade away to where we kind of wonder what on earth are we doing married. Why did I marry you? I don't get it. Well, seems like we need to do something about that, which leads us to number two principle.

Every marriage is subject to entropy if neglected. Marriage relationships need regular, and note this word, intentional care if they are to survive and thrive. Not just what happens to occur over the weekend will be good enough. Something that we decide to do, that we exercise our deliberate will to carry out as couples. We need to do something actively. Well, here are some ideas for actually doing that. First of all, attend

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to the little things. Now, that might bring up the question for you, well what are little things? There are prophets that have mentioned a little bit about this, that we can use and we can use their general points to use this for illustrations. Elder James E. Faust when he was still serving as a member of the quorum of the twelve said, after noting that one of the key reasons for divorce is the lack of constant enrichment in marriage added that in the enriching of marriage the big things are the little things. Sounds a little like some of our modern revelations. How the small things precede, that which is great. What are some of those little things?

I was on the conference once, and I noticed what my wife does one of the little things that she does is that every shirt that I wore at that conference it had something in it. One a love note, two chocolate. Now as you know, chocolate is romance food right? Isn't that what you've learned? In this case it didn't melt at 40,000 feet when things were still quite cold as we were traveling. Here are some other little things and again, from which we can generate hundreds literally hundreds brothers and sisters. Particularly if we go to our couple of counsels and we talk about "Sweetheart, what are the little things that you want me to do over this week to show that I am literally crazed about you? What would you like me to do?" Rather than relying on our customary mind reading approach. Instead of finding out from our partner what he or she would like to receive from us.

Here's what President Kimball says "Love can not be expected to last forever unless it is continually fed with portions of love, the manifestation of esteem and admiration, the expression of gratitude, and the consideration of the unselfishness." Now I like the portions of love business, one of the love notes is one of those things is one of those things that Barbara and chocolate knows that I happen to love love to receive from her. I happen to know that she likes almond roca. If I show up at home with a one of these wonderful, glorious, pink tins full of the individually wrapped golden candies. You know its like the gold plates you know, it has the same effect. These are precious; they are love messages, because she understands that I know that that is what communicates love to her.

President Kimball continues on in this same talk and same which of course has been published as an article "Oneness in marriage" in the Ensign as well as the book "Marriage and Divorce." And was also refeatured uh, in a more recently released Ensign as one of the classic articles on marriage that we would be forever seeking the interests, comforts, and happiness of the other. Now think about walking out of here, what are my wife's interests, what are my husband's comforts, what are my wife's, what are my husband's ways that they feel happy? Making those the object of our attention. Suggesting that maybe it would be very difficult to sense entropy or erosion in our marriage if we are actively involved that in those activities. In addition to attending to the little things to focus on our spouses positive qualities.

I need to tell you a story which I call the brass bowl story. Soon after Barbara and I became engaged, my bishop called us to his house, invited us to come to the first of a series of engagement interviews. We arrived at his home, went in, he invited us in, and sat us down in his den. And then he excused himself and then came back with this beautifully polished brass bowl and he sat it on the table in front of us. And he said,

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Steven and Barabara I would like to tell you a story about this brass bowl. I had come home from work that day and I greeted Ruth, my wife, at the door customarily. And then I walked over to the mantle where this brass bowl was sitting. And I picked it up and I noticed that there was a smudge on it. And I said, Ruth, this brass bowl has a smudge on it. Here, clean it. Now sisters, what is your reaction. Honestly and truly. You clean it, where are your hands, get the rag. Well, Ruth uh reaction was different than what we might expect. She began to laugh. The laugh began softly, quietly soon welled up and she was literally howling, uncontrolled laughter and collapses on the couch. Now her husband, is at this time feeling a little self-conscious and he says ok, what is so funny? And she said, Steven, which was his name, not me. Look around you, which he did. And what do you suppose he found. He found an immaculate home. Nothing out of place, so what had he done. It shows him to focus on the one perceivable flaw in the entire dwelling and then to focus on it, to draw attention to that. Do we do that in our relationships? I think that it is human nature to focus on the negative. It is easier to do that. For instance, if this were a white board rather than a screen and I put just a small black dot in the middle of it, enough for the persons in the back row to notice it that would be the object of our attention rather than everything else that surrounds it.

Now President Hinckley has called upon us to focus on the positive. First of all he said that which we, that focus on begins, if we will focus on the positive rather, that element will grow until it sparkles. It takes literally no energy to focus on the negative. Now, returning to that element of research that was done by my colleague John Gottman. He talks about positive sentiment override, let me tell you the background of the research that led to this recommendation that I'm gonna share with you in just a bit. First of all, as I mentioned he's been videotaping couples, monitoring their interactions and noticed that this one thing became apparent. That the couples that really did well, had a lot of what he calls positivity going on in their marriage. They tended not to focus so much on negative things, or the exchanges they had about things tended to be more positive. Even when they were dealing with differences, even when things got a little bit heated, they still had the underlying virtue of respect and appreciation and going because they were also friends. But he monitored this enough and was able to actually come up with a ratio of positives to negatives that every happily married couple that he has followed longitudinally needs in order to preserve that marriage. And this is what I, what he calls the 5 to 1 ratio. To maintain a happy marriage, a couple needs at least 5 positive interactions for every negative. The 5 to 1 ratio. A helpful thing for marital couples to do would be to talk about, even to rate how often do our interactions our exchanges have negative outcomes. How often do the leave in positive reactions. Create your own ratio, your current ratio, and then see what you can do to move it closer to the 5 to 1.

Here's three guidelines to help you to do that. One, you can even do this right now. What three things do you admire about your spouse? You can even take now to right these down. What are those three things? And you may pause and wonder, boy I can't think of three things. Sometimes that's what happens because we have been rehearsing the negatives or more focused and attentive to the negative for so long that we have sort of submerged the positivity to where we are not immediately aware of it. But I can identify three things about my Barbara. She is extremely bright, she has an incredible

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sense of humor. In fact the brightness is incredible because she actually has the honorary doctorate, its what I like to tell my students. And then, she is among the most excepting people that I know. In fact, is the most excepting person that I do know.

She is the woman that if there's somebody in the ward that needs to be loved, she should be assigned to Barbara Duncan. If you are working by assignment. But I'm just telling you, that's the kind of person that she is. She loves, she accepts, she does not judge. What do you appreciate about him or her? I appreciate when you wipe the sink in the bathroom. I appreciate when you make the bed. So many things that we might appreciate that we might list. And the third is to rehearse those positives in our minds. Keep them even in the frontal lobes of our brain, so that is what is gaining our dominant attention so it will push out the negative that we tend to focus on, which is a doorway for feeling and avoiding that brass bowl syndrome.

Additional ideas beyond attending to little things, beyond focusing on our spouses positive qualities, here's that word again, to be intentional. Now my colleague Bill Doerdy talks about different ways of being intentional. He calls them marital rituals, that we have connection rituals, we have love rituals, we have celebration rituals. For instance going back to connection. One wonderful connection ritual is demonstrated in the life of David O. McKay. Who, as you will probably remember in the later years was confined to a wheel chair. He left to go to his meeting, was being helped by an attendant. Got on the way to the temple, through the tunnel, he stops and says we must go back. Back through the tunnel, up the elevators in what used to be Hotel Utah. He goes. Why, he hadn't kissed Emily good-bye. That is a connection ritual. A coming and going in the marital life of the McKays. What are your comings and goings? What comings and goings would you like to establish? What about rising and retiring? I have a friend who doesn't get out of bed until he has hugged his wife in the morning for 20 minutes. Try that. Maybe that won't work for you, it wouldn't work for because when the alarm goes off, I'm up I'm in the shower. I'm just, I don't know, I'm more morning kind of guy. Getaways don't have to be expensive; they don't have to be cruises. Our twentieth anniversary get away was all the way to Salt Lake City Utah. That was where we got married. We did what we could fully and completely our first day together as husband and wife. It was a glorious outing and costs us less than 150 dollars. Unfortunately the temple was closed that day so we couldn't go to the temple. That was one of the things that we wanted to do.

Love rituals are really important. Weekly dates, the mantra that we have heard over and over again. You are going to hear it again in just a minute. Anniversaries, taking time for intimacy. Celebrating our intimate life together. That's what Billy Graham quoted by President Kimball that we ought to be doing with sex. The Bible celebrates sex as this bonding between husband and wife within the covenant of marriage. It is a sacred blessed, soulful union as Elder Holland commented on.

Celebration, I learned fairly early on in our life together, Barbara and I that I was bad at birthdays. Birthdays were very sensitive for Barbara because she was in a family of seven kids and frankly didn't get all the attention that she would have liked. And she wanted that from the man she loved. And so I learned first of all to remember birthdays,

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that was a some what of a challenge for me. I had a woman who wrote me a Dear John on my mission because I forgot so, anyway which for different reasons you know you want to focus on the work and not what is going on back home. But once I got schooled on the date, then I figured out kind of through conversation and making sure that I was meeting her love needs, these are the kind of things that I would like to have happen for celebration on my birthday. And I think that I have got it right. Those celebrations, special events in a partner's life. Now I put an equal sign here, not to confuse those who are mathematically challenged, but totaling a magic five hours a week. Now, why do I say five hours? That goes to my next slide.

Anyway back to my colleague and friend John Gottman. He did some interesting research on couples that came to his marriage seminars. He wanted to find out how they were doing as time went on. How did their lives improve, how did their marriage improve as a result of their experience with him. So he followed them along, and what he found they were doing. The ones that were doing the best, the ones that were still the happiest when compared to matched control groups. You know, experimentally they were doing things that he called the magic five hours. And these are the things that were included in the magic five hours.

Number one, learning one thing that is happening in your spouse's life that day. Is that something that you could do? Sweetheart, what's your plans for today? What are you going to be doing? Well see, my wife asks me this every morning. So what is on your agenda at work? Well I'm working on real families, real answers lesson material and oh ok. And she will tell me, well I've got laundry. Or I'll ask her, and she will talk about her primary president calling. We are finding out, we are checking in, we know what one another's agendas are so we are having that connection.

Two, having a stress free conversation at the end of each day. Now in my marriage, the time to have stress free conversation is not while Barbara, who is, tends to be the chief cook is cooking dinner. When our blood sugar is low and when we are starving is not the great time to have a stress free conversation. That's the time to be validating and doing other things. But, just sitting down after our tummies are full and maybe after the kids have left the table too, and then tune into each other then. Or maybe it's a time when we are reading the mail together, or talking about something together, something that appeared in the newspaper. How President Hinckley's health is doing for instance, might be one of those things that might be a point of conversation.

Three, to do something special everyday to show genuine affection and appreciation. A simple phone call from work, where we are emotionally connecting with our wife or our husband. I really appreciate that about you. I really appreciate the way that you look after the kids and give them advice about what do to with their life. You can come up with many ways. And then finally, here's that repeated counsel. It's wonderful when we have prophets and scholars who are saying the same thing. I call them, dual witnesses of true principle. Having a weekly date. This is not a date where we talk about children, as much as we love our children. This is a date when we simply enjoy fun together. We celebrate our marriage, we celebrate our time together.

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There is a wonderful conference talk, and I conclude with this. Now it was given by Elder F. Burton Howard where he likened and you'll remember this I bet our marriages to precious silver. And how they need to be cared for certainly much more sophisticatedly than simple heirlooms, but certainly being taught about their care and attention, using that as a basis. If you want something to last forever, you treat it differently. You shield it, and protect it. You never abuse it, you don't expose it to the elements. You don't make it common or ordinary or let it erode or become entropic. I would add there. If it ever becomes tarnished, you lovingly polish it until it gleams like new. It becomes special because you have made it so and it grows more beautiful and precious as time goes by. Eternal marriage is just like that. We need to treat it just that way.

God bless us, to earnestly strive to deal with the natural differences that occur in our marriages. Deal with them using gospel principles with a desire to love and respect and be together and to continue our courtship infinitely as we care for it like precious silver. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.