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Psychotherapists: Love Your Wives

Elder James E. Faust
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
2 October 1980

It is a little frightening for me to come before this august body whose academic qualifications in the areas of human behavior so greatly exceed my own. Just the title of this conference is imposing. I want you to know that as I approach presuming to speak to you, I do so with much humility and some reservation.

What I have to say will not be academic, nor erudite, nor sophisticated, but hopefully laced with some concepts in which you will find some verities. Some of what I will have to say will be very personal, oversimplified, and probably not very interesting.

When I was a very young bishop, a middle-aged single sister in my ward disagreed with something I said and straightened me up by saying, "Bishop, your just saying something doesn't make it true." I have that concept well in mind this evening.

To begin with, I have the feeling that the Lord God intended that all of his children become sufficiently adequate to meet their own challenges of life and to reach close to their potential. He no doubt wants all of us to function responsibly so that ultimately we are not a burden upon others and make some useful contribution to humankind. The Psalmist's definition of "What is man?" states, "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have

dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.” (Psalms 8:4–8) And this is not all. Each of us was made in the image of God, and has inherited gifts and talents from the Divine.

You would not need to be reminded that psychotherapy is not an exact science; just how inexact a science it is may be left to your own pondering, experience and wisdom.

You usually begin with a basic value structure or assumptions of norms of patients.

Surely the work of any Mormon psychotherapist should be to not tamper with, but support the values of faith of those he is trying to help. The psychotherapist can then be more supplemental to and reenforcing of priesthood leaders. Any professional behavioral scientist should recognize and respect the values of any faith, whether it be Catholic, Protestant, Mormon, or whatever.

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. (Proverbs 23:7.) But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (Matthew 5:28.)

I am impressed by the trend toward the linking of the benefits of cognitive therapy with behavioral therapy. Cannot those available to be counselors and teachers deal more effectively with depression and faulty behavior by helping their patients to gain control of their thoughts? Surely anyone can be made stronger by eliminating wrong or weak thoughts.

To suggest that lives cannot change, that habits cannot be overcome, that we are what we are, that we cannot change because we were born one way or another is profane and blasphemous to God who is the Father of us all. A definition of self-reliance might include the following: Reliance upon our own efforts, powers and achievement. Inherent in this is that one realizes that he is the one responsible for his own actions, his own health, and his own well-being.

So, do you not have a responsibility to encourage independence, industry, thrift and self-reliance, and strengthen emotional and

spiritual self-reliance? You also have a responsibility not to make your patients worse by being off balance yourselves by, as President Kimball says, “proclaiming the gospel of error.” The gospel of error comes about by confusing the doctrines of men for the doctrines of God. It is sound philosophy as well as doctrine that basic strength can be summed up with four words, two of which begin with self: (1) Self-reliance, (2) Self-discipline and (3) Personal righteousness. We question with Jeremiah: “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?” (Jeremiah 8:22).

I would warn against the feeling that unless a man has been professionally trained he has no competence. By this I mean having those of us with doctors’ degrees take over emotional guidance from those ordained and set apart to teach and counsel such as fathers and mothers, bishops, stake presidents and other priesthood leaders.

None of us seem to be able to become completely adequate and function responsively without any help from others, such as family and friends. At the same time, too much help, or the wrong kind, stifles and is counter-productive to human adequacy. You all know that at the heart of human inadequacy is the lack of self-esteem which is fed by the streams of lack of achievement. The life-giving milk of self-esteem is having someone who ministers the rich life-giving love, the confidence, and the caring we need. In fine, this support comes richly from loving grandparents, fathers and mothers who love and discipline, from siblings and collaterals as well as children and grandchildren. But for men it comes mostly from wives.

As you are also well aware, one of the saddest social problems of the day is the inadequacy of men. In their failure they default in their responsibility as husbands and fathers, heads of family, as providers, as teachers, as stabilizers in public and private life.

You would all be aware of more current statistics on the number of families in our society who are crippled because there is not an adequate, providing, functioning father in the family. The whole segments of our society in which this circumstance obtains

seem to be widening. The train of social consequences seems endless and the cost is staggering. There is no higher social commitment for any man than to be loyal to his commitment to his God and faith, to his wife and family. The reciprocating fruits of having kept that commitment will usually give to him the boundless sustaining love and the challenge to reach deep down inside him and call forth the seeds of the finest of his gifts for their full flowering. He will enjoy a place of honor, dignity and respect.

While I was serving as stake president, we had a forthright bishop who said, "A returned missionary is not worth the powder and shot to blow him to hell until he marries." This was, of course, an overstatement, but nothing short of marriage seems to settle a man fully into the discipline he requires to meet his potential.

I now arrive at one of the dominant themes of my remarks. It can be summed up in this: "Psychotherapists: Love Your Wives." I say this not because you are psychotherapists, but because you are first and foremost men. My plea is simply that we put our professional lives in order by putting our personal lives in order. How can we be an adequate doctor or counselor of anything without being an adequate man? We professional men often shortchange those who mean most to us. The professional man syndrome often is that because of our special training and special knowledge, others have a greater claim on our time and concern than our own families. I fully recognize that the work my wife did in my home was more important to me than any work I did in the courtroom, or the office, and at the Church.

It was recently said of the family:

We now know that the quality of attention given by parents to children effects their I.Q. We now know that the psychological context of trust, love, and care given by parents to children—or the lack of such things—profoundly effects the psyches of their children. In a word, the family provides benefits, bodies, psyches, skills, morals, and spirit which no other institution in society provides so cheaply, so well, and with so much loving care. In some ways, families are the original departments of health, education, and welfare—far less costly, far more effective than a governmental H.E.W. Indeed, H.E.W. is mainly needed to pick up the pieces when families fail, and H.E.W. finds it very hard and very

expensive to put such pieces back together if it ever can. (Michael Novak, "Intellectuals Focusing on Family," *Deseret News*, July 31, 1979).

I would like to emphasize and narrow down this dominant theme in the family relation in terms of how we ought to strive to treat our wives. Lest our wives expect perfection too soon, you notice I use the word "strive." The relationship between husband and wife is the linchpin, if you please, in the whole family relationship. I am sorry that I have come so late to a fuller appreciation of the extent of the needs of our wives and women folk for love, appreciation, companionship and recognition. These needs are great, they are constant, and they need to be frequently met.

I am also sorry that I have not sooner appreciated the great sublime, unique gifts which our wives inherit from divinity. I speak of their womanly intuitions and their six senses, and their steadfast faith and capacity to love. Properly nurtured, the eternal relationship of a husband and wife flowers into a love of consummate beauty. It is an unrighteous exercise of priesthood authority for a man, as a conduit through his priesthood office, to withhold or limit blessings which should flow through the priesthood to his wife and family. The priesthood is not just male- or husband-centered, but reaches its potential only in the eternal relationship of the husband and the wife sharing and administering these great blessings to the family. Our wives have priesthood blessings, though not priesthood offices. These blessings are the keys to eternal life, salvation, and exaltation through obedience.

I now ask for your indulgence and forgiveness for the somewhat intimate matters I will discuss, and ask you to remember that I am speaking to the concept of what a wife means to a man and a priesthood leader in the fullest sense, including a professional man, and how she deserves to be treated. What I will say will not be academic; it will be very personal, for we should be striving to be adequate as a man, a husband, a father before we strive to be adequate as a highly trained or specialized doctor and servant of God. Kindness and courtesy does not begin in the professional office—it begins at home.

Elder Boyd K. Packer recently asked me a very penetrating question, “What would you have been without Ruth?” I could have answered immediately, “Not much,” but he already knew that. I took him seriously and spent the next 24 hours thinking about what I would have been without the loving sweet support and the discipline of Ruth Wright in my life. It shocked me a little to even think about what life would be and would have been without her. I would have to answer honestly that without my wife I would have been pretty much of a failure. I do not claim to be an expert in marriage. I have only been married once, but thanks to my good wife it took. I do not claim to have a better marriage than anyone, but I do claim to be married to a great companion.

I am still moved by what President Romney said to the Twelve in the first meeting in the temple a few days after the death of Sister Ida Romney, which with his permission I share. Said President Romney, “When Ida died, something went out of me. The holding force was gone.” At the graveside president Romney said to Ruth and me, directing his remarks to me, “Be good to your wife, take her with you everywhere you can. The time will come when you will not be able to be together.”

To begin with, we all realize that the most sacred, intimate and blessed relationship of life is between husband and wife. I do not love anybody like I love my wife. My Mother has Father, and my children have their companions, but Ruth is me. Our wives become part of us, and they become like our own flesh, and as Paul counseled, we should love them as such. The simple truth is that it is not good for man to be alone. The greatest sustaining influence in my mature life has been the constant supporting, unqualified, unreserved love I have felt for my wife. The sacred relationship with my wife, like your relationship with your wives, has been the supreme benediction of my life. I just can't imagine what my life would have been like without having had that blessing.

As a part of that, and overarching and undergirding all else, without our wives we would never have been privileged to be fathers, grandfathers, and all that that entails. This relation just has to come first in all of our relationships with other people. It is the

glue, if you please, that brings together all of the parts of the jigsaw puzzle of eternal joy and fulfillment and happiness.

Maybe what we are talking about here with respect to the blessing of having a good wife is that most basic of all human needs, that of love. Women seem to have a greater capacity to love than we men. The greatest unreserved love that I have received in my life has been from the good women in my family, my wife, my mother, my mother-in-law, my grandmothers, my daughters, and my sweet granddaughters.

The example of how to be a man came from others, my father, my grandfather, my uncles, my older brother Gus, and the examples of many Church leaders, good bishops, stake presidents, as well as the general authorities.

If I hadn't married Ruth, I would not have known her mother. Her name was Elizabeth Hamilton Wright. She was one of the twenty-two children of Bishop James C. Hamilton, bishop of the Millcreek Ward for over twenty-five years. She only went to the third grade. Because she had a special gift for teaching children she was taken out of school to tend and teach the younger children in the family. It used to break my heart to see her struggle to write a simple note, but she had a spiritual maturity, wisdom, insight, and faith like my own mother. I loved her for her greatness and goodness and because she taught my wife so well, who in turn has taught our children and grandchildren. She understood things completely by the Holy Spirit.

One of the areas that our wives perform a very great service is in their loving discipline of us. Ruth can discipline me like nobody else in the world. In their discipline, they keep us closer to what we ought to be in our holy callings. In their discipline they teach us. It is part of the polishing we need to fill in the holes in our character and smooth the rough edges and make us more adequate. Together we are a team—we are one.

President Tanner's daughter, Isabel, says about her father, which with his knowledge I share, "When Mother married Daddy he was just a farm boy." But she went on to say that when Sister Tanner would give him a loving suggestion, unlike many of us who would

bridle or argue at being told something that was good for us by our wives, he would simply say, "If you think that's what I should do, I'll do it." Listening to Sister Tanner and listening to the Lord has made a very great man out of President Tanner.

I am grateful for the example of many of our Brethren in terms of the examples of kindness and thoughtfulness and solicitude that ought to be shown to our wives. I should like to pay a tribute to Elder S. Dilworth Young:

When I was in the stake presidency, Brother Young came to our stake conference. At that time his wife, Gladys, was an invalid, having suffered from a cruel stroke. As you may know, she remained that way for years. Brother Young made the extra effort to dress her and bring her and feed her and care for her. In all my life I have not seen a greater example of gentleness, kindness, and solicitude than Brother Young showed to Gladys. It was an example of perfect love. In obtaining his permission to tell of this he said, "It was the worst thing in the world that could have happened to Gladys and the best thing for me. It made me decent. I learned what love really should be."

Perhaps in these times of great stress we can become what we ought to be in terms of our relationship with our wives, in terms of a focus, but perhaps the eternal "every day" causes some of us to be more casual than we ought to be. Of course, we love our wives, but perhaps sometimes we also take them for granted too much of the time. Perhaps too often we fail to express our appreciation to them in little ways. I know I do. We could certainly show more affection and always look upon our companions with love and respect. We can surely be polite and courteous if we try. We can nourish and cherish them. The simple fact is that few of us could function nearly as well without the support of a gracious and loving wife. They make our homes the heaven on earth which they are. How can I expect God to honor me and be pleased with my service if I do not honor and cherish my very own companion?

In the scriptures we are told that we should not be unequally yoked together. I fear that in terms of our total person, our wives more often do a better job than we do; that is, being Christlike, thoughtful, kind, gracious, and loving. I feel that Ruth deserves a

better me. We have the responsibility to be instruments to impart righteousness and excellent professional care to the world. Unless we impart a full measure of righteousness to our wives and families we will be blunted instruments to the rest of the world.

In conclusion, in its simplest form, my humble message is that we can do nothing more worthwhile than reinforce the values to make fathers—including ourselves—more stable, function better, and come to a meeting of obligation. That, of course, begins first with us. Ultimately, I think it would be well if we would strive for greater spirituality in our relationships, and especially in our homes. Literally taking the Lord into partnership with us will bring the full measure of peace, happiness, unity, and contentment that we need to seek in our lives to be what we ought to be so that we can be more adequate vessels for the work which we have been commissioned to do. We have the responsibility to bless the lives of others. If our own lives and spiritual batteries are not full and complete, can we expect to touch the world and bless others with the skills we have and the other sacred work which the Lord has entrusted to us?

I know the gospel is true, and I know a substantial part of that gospel is how I treat my Ruth on an hour-to-hour, day-by-day on-going basis. I believe that none of us would have or can come into full possession of all of our powers without an eternal companion. I suggest the ultimate judgment will come to us in terms of what kind of a person we have been, what kind of a husband we have been, what kind of a father we have been, and what kind of a family we have raised, and this will be above all else that we have done: "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else." That we may do so, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.