

Strengthening the Family:

Created in the Image of God, Male and Female

A continuing series giving insights for your study and use of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”

“All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”¹

In the Beginning

“Man was also in the beginning with God,” the Lord declared. “Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” ([D&C 93:29](#)).

Little has been revealed about the process by which we became spirit children of God, but we understand that heavenly parents organized spirit bodies for us and that these spirit bodies housed intelligence, or light and truth, which “is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself” ([D&C 93:30](#)). Thus, agency, the ability and liberty of intelligent beings to choose between one course and another—with the attendant accountability—is an eternal principle.

Offspring of God

Many religions teach that human beings are children of God, but often their conception of Him precludes any kind of bond resembling a parent-child relationship. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught of a much simpler and more sensible relationship: “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit ... was to make himself visible ... , you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with Him, as one man talks and communes with another.”²

We are of God’s family. We are His sons and daughters, created in the image of heavenly parents. “No greater ideal has been revealed,” taught President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “than the supernal truth that we are the children of God,

and we differ, by virtue of our creation, from all other living things. (See [Moses 6:8–10, 22, 59](#).) No idea has been more *destructive* of happiness, no philosophy has produced more sorrow, more heartbreak and mischief; no idea has done more to destroy the family than the idea that we are not the offspring of God, only advanced animals, compelled to yield to every carnal urge.”³

Gender Is Eternal and Essential

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that our creation as male and female children of God “was done spiritually in your premortal existence when you lived in the presence of your Father in Heaven. Your gender existed before you came to earth.”⁴

Gender is part of our eternal identity and is necessary for our eternal progression. President Packer explained: “The plan of happiness requires the righteous union of male and female, man and woman, husband and wife. ... A body patterned after the image of God was created for Adam, and he was introduced into the Garden. At first, Adam was alone. ... But alone, he could not fulfill the purposes of his creation. No other man would do. Neither alone nor with other men could Adam progress. Nor could Eve with another woman. It was so then. It is so today. Eve, an help meet, was created. Marriage was instituted.”⁵

Agency and Same-Gender Attraction

Confusion about gender issues is rampant today. Some men and women experience same-sex attraction—a great trial for those who desire to be obedient to God’s commandments. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has addressed this issue: “[Satan] seeks to undermine the principle of individual accountability, to persuade us to misuse our sacred powers of procreation, to discourage marriage and childbearing by worthy men and women, and to confuse what it means to be male or female. ... Some kinds of feelings seem to be inborn. Others are traceable to mortal experiences. Still other feelings seem to be acquired from a complex interaction of ‘nature and nurture.’ All of us have some feelings we did not choose, but the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us that we still have the power to resist and reform our feelings (as needed) and to assure that they do not lead us to entertain inappropriate thoughts or to engage in sinful behavior.”⁶

The trials of mortality are not easy, nor are they intended to be. But whatever our struggles, we can call upon divine doctrine, the power of the Atonement, and the Holy Spirit for help and comfort.

We can remember that we are God’s sons and daughters, that He created us in His image, and that His plan prepares us for life eternal. If we obey His commandments, He will not withhold from us any of the blessings He has promised.

Left: Illustrated by Robert T. Barrett; *Leaving the Garden of Eden*, by Joseph Brickey

Photograph by Craig Dimond, posed by models