

To the newlywed / or those who will soon be wed:

I am very happy for you.

I want to take a minute and put a few thoughts down for you. The reason I'm doing this is because I know too many people who are not happily married, but could be. Jodi and I have had friends who've gotten divorced and friends who probably will down the road. On the other hand, we have friends who are still "dating" and so much in love. We are still in love and becoming more so every day. That's why I felt it important to share a few ideas with you.

We've been married for over 25 years now, hard to believe because it has gone by so fast. Over those 25 years we've had an incredibly strong relationship and it has gotten better and better. This too was impossible to imagine back when we first were married, but it is true.

In my leadership callings in the church I've felt pushed by the Spirit many times to talk about marriage and some of the things Jodi and I do to keep our bond strong. We'd like to share those with you now. We want you to know we do this in a spirit of love and humility. These are simple truths you too will come to know, just as we have. We had close advisers and friends who shared these with us, and now it's time for us to do the same.

1. Every day express your love for each other. Say, "I love you." -- Even if it's just as you are falling asleep. This simple phrase can make so many of the tough parts of life disappear. As long as you know your spouse is there for you and with you, it's as if you can take on the world – at least for another day.
2. Make a habit of every day praying together. Then after your prayer, kiss your spouse good night. – Believe us, it's hard to be angry at someone if you are holding their hand, and praying for your growth together as a couple, and then kissing them. There's something about sharing a prayer and then sharing your love that helps to melt your pride away. We've done this throughout our marriage and I can't tell you how many times I've been humbled by it and apologized for my pride and mistakes I've made during the day. I know Jodi has felt the same.
3. Good communication, practice it every day. This will help you in:
  - a. Finances: This can be a very difficult part of your relationship. But it doesn't have to be. I guarantee you will have financial stress, no matter how much money you make. It's all about setting up a plan and sticking to it. My recommendation is that you both are involved in paying the bills. Make a budget for yourselves, and stick to it. Set financial goals for yourselves – and reward yourselves. – Save up for a couch and then pay cash. MOST IMPORTANTLY – STAY AWAY FROM DEBT. You should have at least one credit card to build your credit, but promise each other to pay the balance off every month. If you can't do that, then don't put it on the card.

Do yourselves a favor. Read a couple books together.

- The Richest Man in Babylon

- Rich Dad / Poor Dad

Both of these books are short, very easy to read and will form the base of the financial attitude you will need going forward.

b. Sexuality: Be true to each other in the bedroom. It's important to express yourself verbally to your spouse about what you are not comfortable with and what you enjoy. By promising to always be honest you're never guessing what your spouse wants or doesn't want.

- Remember this concept in relation to your sexual differences:

*"Women are like old time airplanes, you have to spin their propeller again and again to prime them before they will be ready for take off. Men on the other hand are similar to today's rockets. Push the button and they will take off."* What this means is making love to a woman starts a long time before the bedroom. (for example, helping with chores that are taking up her time and thoughts, like dishes or laundry or vacuuming, or saying kind words throughout the day). Don't expect your spouse to take off once YOU get in the mood. You'll need to work at making sure you are doing everything she needs to take off – don't just focus on yourself. So, if you want a good sex life, then you need to keep the romance alive all day long!

- You two will have differences in your sex drives. If not now, then in the future. Learn to give and take here. Get used to your differences and be willing to work through them.

c. Goals and Dreams: Now that you've gotten married you've reached the end of your childhood goals. But you're not even close to the end. You have to continue to grow and develop personally, spiritually and physically. Share your yearly, monthly, weekly, daily goals with each other in these areas. **Because if you're not growing together you are growing apart.** Your spouse is probably the best person on the planet to help you stick to your goals and help you achieve them.

4. Remember your relationship is not a 50% / 50% relationship. If you got into this relationship thinking you only have to keep up half of the relationship and your spouse is responsible for the other half, then you're dead wrong. To keep your relationship going it needs 100%. For the most part, half comes from one spouse and the other half from the other spouse. But there are times when you will not be able to "give" to the relationship. As a matter of fact, sometimes you will not only be giving nothing, but still taking from it as well. If your spouse is only giving 50% then the relationship won't be able to last very long. In times like that, someone has to make up the slack and give 75% or 100% during that time – to make sure the relationship is at its needed 100%. Then the trial passes and a more mutual give/take relationship returns. This part also falls under good communication. Express your feelings to each other when you feel you need more or can give more. Do so in a loving non-accusatory way. It is much easier to help when someone is asking sincerely and lovingly, rather than statements

such as, “You’re not pulling your weight!” Remember this thought when your spouse is having a really tough day or week. They will need you to help them personally and to keep the relationship going. *This goes both ways – don’t let the ball drop when it’s your turn to give.*

5. Pride is the root of all sin and will sink your marriage faster than anything else. As Elder Maxwell once said, stay away from the inward focused word “I” and look to the humble bowed knees in the word “WE.” You are one now. Make sure all you do is focused on the success of your family. As Pres. Hinckley said in General Conference, the man and woman walk side by side, not one in front of the other in importance or stature. Keep a charitable attitude by asking yourselves “What can I do to make our marriage better?” instead of thinking about what your spouse should be doing. That attitude of charity is contagious.
6. Date Night. Do it religiously, at least once a week. Even if it is just a short walk or a trip to the ice cream store. Spend time nurturing your relationship as husband and wife. It’s easy when you’re first married. But when the jobs and kids hit, it gets harder and harder. You need to focus on the thing that brought you together, your love. Keep it alive and growing.
7. Keep your private things private. There’s no need to bring your parents or friends into your relationship. Talking to your mother / father about the problems your spouse has will only jade your parents against your spouse. Yes you can ask for counsel as a couple but don’t just gossip about what faults you found that week and especially not about what goes on in your sex life. When we were still dating we went to a party with my parents and a bunch of their friends. Toward the end they were sitting around making fun of things their spouse did or had done. Everyone was laughing but lots of “dirty laundry” was being shone to all. Except for one couple who laughed but did not add their own information. We decided right there that we were going to be like that couple who didn’t embarrass each other in front of others just for a laugh. Instead, find things of praise to say about one another in public. It has a much more positive influence on your relationship.
8. Temple attendance. We advise you to take this time to go to the temple often. When we lived close to the temple in Provo we made an effort to go once a week, and we were very blessed for our efforts. It was a struggle at times to go, but it was worth it. Go as often as you can, because once you have children it will become even more difficult, but even more blessings will come.

### A few things I remember from a recent sealing.

The Sealer had three rules for a successful marriage:

1. Unquestioning loyalty

2. Obey the commandments
3. “Love” as defined by President Hinckley. To be actively concerned about the welfare of your spouse.

He quoted one of the prophets as saying, “Never get angry at the same time.”

-- good advice ☺

We love you. We know you will be successful in your marriage and your life. Let us know if there's anything we can do to help.

Bishop Chatham

### **Added September 8, 2017**

9. In today's environment - We share passwords with each other, and keep nothing secret between us.

I can access her phone, she can access mine. She knows where I keep all our encrypted passwords. I don't think she's snooping when she's looking at my phone. I don't have anything there to hide.

10. We argue - but we work it out.

We strive to remedy the situation when it gets off the rails. We know we're in this together, and having things amiss only hurts everyone. So, work it out, apologize, talk things through.

## **Talking Points**

1. Finances:
  - BOOK (the financial Bible): The Richest Man in Babylon
  - Rich Dad/Poor Dad
  - Financial Pyramid – build a solid base so it can handle future storms
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2. Intimacy:
  - BOOK: Between Husband and Wife – Deseret Book