

Engaging Gospel Doctrine (Episode 117.2)

LESSON 40 (STUDY NOTES)

[“Enlarge the Place of Thy Tent”](#)

Hook	You may not be familiar with these chapters, but they have given us the term “Stake center”. As we will see, there is far more to be gained from this reading than the one bit of LDS vocabulary.
Goal	
Overview	
Conclusion	

Lesson 40: “Enlarge the place of thy tent”

Reading: Isaiah 54; 55; 56; 63; 64; 65; Alma 32:28

Manual Goal: To encourage class members to strengthen the stakes of Zion and prepare for the Second Coming and the Millennium.

EGD Goal: To encourage class members to strengthen the groups of which they are a part—family, Church, and local communities, and to bring in the present the traits of the Millennium as much as possible.

(Mention how difficult this lesson was for some reason, including accidentally deleting a moderate chunk of work including my outline. Sometimes it feels like I am bleeding out the lessons and this was one of those...)

I. Sunday School

- a. The lesson theme/title in the context of the reading
- b. Review the reading
 - i. Themes to look for: (see notes on next page)
- c. Our need for community
 - i. Monson quote (about Home Teaching, but also describes the way a community should ideally function and provide us opportunity and motivation to care for each other)
 - ii. Maxwell (instant community but not instant sainthood)
 - iii. Bishop Caussé (achieving unity by being attentive to each other)
 - iv. Quotes to read
 1. Hinckley, BYU talk
 2. Elder Richard Winkel, “No Man is an Island”
 3. Cautionary point from LDS scholar Richard Anderson, Ensign 1987
 4. Eugene England, Church is true as the gospel

- d. “Strengthening our stakes”
 - i. Individuals (how we can feel community AND how we can help others feel a sense of belonging)
 - 1. Some quotes on accepting our roles within the community and being ok with difference, both ours and that of others:
 - a. Okazaki, Strength in the Savior
 - b. Wirthlin, Concern for the one
 - c. (Read) Okazaki, Baskets and bottles
 - ii. Families
 - iii. Church and civic groups (“ward families”, Home and Visiting Teaching)
 - iv. Summary: Get out and do things for each other (inviting friends over for a dinner is a great place to start, share needs, try to help)
 - 1. Read quotes from Life, Inc and Love Sense.
 - e. “Enlarge the place of thy tent”
 - i. Insiders and outsiders (subgroup identity, heritage, motivation)
 - ii. Applying the reading to this topic (these chapters are powerful and profound, expanding and redefining what inclusion means)
 - iii. Pertinent quotes
 - f. Exclusivism and universalism (bring in insights from this section of Isaiah)
 - g. The Millennium now and later
 - h. Conclusion I
- II. Scholarship
- a. Return to reading (Jewish Study Bible)
 - b. Comments on Trito Isaiah
 - c. These chapters in historical context
 - d. Some thoughts on the Millennium (Judaism, Christianity, Mormonism)
 - i. Judaism: “The world to come” or “Messianic Era”, where the world is repaired, there will be peace (vegetarianism!), long life. Eventually the idea of resurrection developed (few centuries before Christ)
 - ii. Christianity: Originally considered a heresy called “chiliasm” (Greek for a thousand), the book of Revelation was controversial for centuries. That said, for pretty much EVERY SINGLE GENERATION since Jesus (and including him) some Christians have expected Jesus to return in their generation.
 - iii. Mormonism: As Glen Leonard’s 1979 Ensign article points out (and is apparent from a close reading of the D&C),
- III. Study Notes
- a. Who has a harder time feeling community and what we can do about it (LGBTQ, women, homosexuals, divorced, single, feminists, intellectuals, non-whites, non-Americans... in other words, anyone who doesn’t fit into the box. The current LDS Church seems most directly targeted to those who look like the top—white, married, educated/white collar, middle class or higher American men holding the priesthood and temple recommends)

- b. The psychology of ingroups and outgroups
 - i. We are “strategically altruistic”
 - ii. Multi-level selection: One of the great leaps forward for life on earth was ultrasociality, which includes:
 - iii. “groupishness is focused on improving the welfare of the in-group, not harming an out-group”
 - iv. Whenever a task involves groups/teams etc. our brains instantly think “our” group is better than “their” group, no matter how inane the task
 - v. “Adaptive value of religious ritual” High cost signaling (we obsessively desire to mark ourselves as members of a particular group, and sometimes do so at very high cost, think Jews and circumcision) This approximates trust and facilitates cooperation like nothing else. “cooperate preferentially with members of our group” This forms a sense of “we” that extends beyond kinship, called “fictive kin groups”
- c. Exclusivism and Universalism (Being a good person and being a good Mormon. Not the same thing, but possible to be both) Conservatives are better at getting tasks done.
 - i. Former coast guard now working for the government: “In the military, I was always impressed with the great deeds that could be accomplished by a small number of dedicated people with limited resources. In my new group, I am impressed when we can accomplish anything at all.” (Righteous Mind, 168).
 - ii. Other advantages: motivation, sub-group identity, heritage
 - iii. In sum, “we are selfish primates who long to be a part of something larger and nobler than ourselves. We are 90 percent chimp and 10 percent bee”
 - iv. Being part of something larger triggers an altered state of consciousness accompanied by a profound sense of well-being, of meaning, of belonging
- d. (Return to the other points as needed)
- e. Learning from historical context: Dealing with disappointment

Ezra 3:

10 When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments were stationed to praise the Lord with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, according to the directions of King David of Israel; ¹¹and they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, ‘For he is good,

for his steadfast love endures for ever towards Israel.’

And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. ¹²But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy, ¹³so

that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away.

Themes in the Reading:

Isaiah 54; 55; 56; 63; 64; 65

54: God replaces desolation with abundance. The feeling of separation is temporary; reconciliation will be forever.

55: God's invitation, democratizing of past promises (Davidic covenant, priesthood), God's ways and human ways, God and humans working together to accomplish divine promises

56: New rules for inclusion! (people such as foreigners and eunuchs formerly prohibited from joining the covenant community now are welcome, as long as they live distinctive markers such as Sabbath observance)

63-64: Divine warrior (rather grim), psalm of lament (with some beautiful passages about God sharing in and succoring us in our suffering)

65: Blessings and condemnations depending on behavior (with some striking concepts of God reaching out to humans)

(Talk about disappointment, the promises of return that were then disappointed, how that applies in our lives)

Per usual this lesson takes a few verses and spins the whole lesson out of it

<http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/overcoming-disappointment/>

Ezra 3 describes the time period in which this section of Isaiah was written.

Principles discussed in the manual:

Isaiah's advice and what we can do about it

Gathering and refuge

Millennium

True law of fast

Have a good talk about "big tent Mormonism" because of the title

Principles discussed in the assigned reading:

Community: (in part I talk about what we can do as individuals to feel a sense of community and foster a sense of community for others, then in part 3 really dig into who has a harder time feeling a sense of community)

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1993/10/strength-in-the-savior?lang=eng>

Well, there's not one right way to be a quilt as long as the pieces are stitched together firmly. Both of these quilts will keep us warm and cozy. Both are beautiful and made with love. There's not just one right way to be a Mormon woman, either, as long as we are firmly grounded in faith in the Savior, make and keep covenants, live the commandments, and work together in charity.

All of us face different family circumstances and home situations. All of us need strength in dealing with them. This strength comes from faith in the Savior's love and in the power of his atonement. If we trustingly put our hand in the Savior's, we can claim the promise of the sacramental prayer to always have his Spirit with us. All problems are manageable with that strength, and all other problems are secondary in urgency to maintaining a strong spiritual life.

...

Strong families build strong individuals who, in turn, strengthen other family members. We take turns in lifting each other.

<http://scriptures.byu.edu/gettalk.php?ID=4117>

President Hinckley at a BYU talk:

It is so even with community effort. Those who love Him will seek to do that which will encourage and uphold community standards which will create and maintain an environment of culture, of growth, and of peaceful relationships. Let us never forget that we are all sons and daughters of God and that if we are to please our Eternal Father, we must work to lift and strengthen his children and the communities in which we all live together.

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1980/10/the-net-gathers-of-every-kind?lang=eng>

The Church is for the perfecting of the Saints, hence new arrivals are entitled to expect instant community but not instant sainthood—either in themselves or in others. It takes time and truth working patiently together to produce the latter in all of us.

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1999/10/no-man-is-an-island?lang=eng>

The coastal redwoods are truly lords of their realm and a most exquisite creation of our Father in Heaven. They reign over associated trees because of their overwhelming height and majestic beauty. However, there is another feature of these towering giants that is truly remarkable and somewhat unknown to most of us. Even though they grow up to heights of 300 feet and can weigh more than one million pounds, these trees have a very shallow root system. Their roots only go down three to six feet but can spread out several hundred feet. As these roots extend out, they intertwine with their brother and sister redwoods and other trees as well. This intertwining of roots creates a webbing effect. Most engineers would tell you this shallow root system still would be impossible to keep the redwoods intact and protected against strong winds and floods. However, the interconnecting root systems are the secret of their strength and teach us a great lesson.

First, let's acknowledge that these magnificent giants simply could not make it alone. Without being connected to other family members and helpful neighbors, they would not survive.

Life, Inc, Douglas Rushkoff

The best reason to begin reconnecting with real people, places, and value is that it feels good. Happiness doesn't come from the top down, but the bottom up. The moment we think of ourselves as part of a movement, instead of real people, will be the moment we are much more susceptible to being disheartened or sidetracked by the business page, the terror alert, and the never-ending call to self interest.

But real people doing real things for one another- without expectations- is the very activity that has been systematically extracted from our society over the past four hundred years through the spectacular triumph of corporatism. And this local, day-to-day, mundane pleasure is what makes us human in the first place. (p. 242)

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1997/10/home-teaching-a-divine-service?lang=eng>

President Ezra Taft Benson said that home teaching is “priesthood compassionate service.”⁸ Not long ago I received a touching letter from Sister Mori Farmer. It tells of two home teachers and the loving service they provided the Farmer family during a time when the family was experiencing some difficult financial circumstances. At the time the service was provided, the Farmer family was out of town attending a family reunion.

I share with you first a letter written to the Farmer family by their home teachers, which the family found taped to their garage door when they returned home. It begins: “We hope you had a great family reunion. While you were gone, we and about fifty of our friends had a great party at *your* house. We want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the years of unselfish service you both have given to us. You have been Christlike examples of untiring service to

others. We can never repay you for that—but just thought we’d like to say thanks. Signed, your home teachers.”

I quote now from Sister Mori Farmer’s letter to me:

“[After reading the note from our home teachers] we entered the house with great anticipation. What we found shocked us so much we were at a loss for words. I stayed up all night crying over the generosity of the people in our ward.

“Our home teachers had decided that they would fix our carpet while we were away. They had moved the furniture out into the front yard so the carpet could get stretched and finished. One man in the ward stopped and asked what was going on. He returned later with several hundred dollars’ worth of paint and said, ‘We might as well paint the house while everything is out.’ Others saw the cars out front and stopped to see what was going on, and by week’s end 50 people were busy repairing, painting, cleaning, and sewing.

“Our friends and fellow ward members had fixed our poorly laid carpet, painted the entire house, repaired holes in the drywall, oiled and varnished our kitchen cabinets, put curtains on three windows in the kitchen and family room, did all the laundry, cleaned every room in the house, had the carpets cleaned, fixed broken door latches, and on and on. In trying to make a list of all the wonderful things they did for us, we filled three pages. All of this had been accomplished between Wednesday and our return on Sunday.

“Almost everyone we talked to told us, with tears in their eyes, what a spiritual experience it had been to participate. We have been truly humbled by this experience. As we look around our home, we are reminded of their kindness and of the great sacrifice of time, talents, and money they made for our family. Our home teachers have truly been angels in our lives, and we will never forget them and the wonderful things they have done for us.”

Expanding the Tent:

Groups who may have a hard time feeling the community (which can be very strong in the LDS Church, that is what we are commanded to be) (Would be worth discussing during the lesson)

Any religious group that values purity and morality must deal with the problem of clannishness. However, clannishness can be largely avoided if the members of the group have a vigorous concern to share. There is a big difference between reaching out and shutting out—and Jesus steadily opposed every hint of the latter.

Richard Lloyd Anderson, “Parables of Mercy,” Ensign, Feb 1987, 20

Uchtdorf, There is room for you

Sometimes we assume it is because they have been offended or lazy or sinful. Actually, it is not that simple. In fact, there is not just one reason that applies to the variety of situations. Some of our dear members struggle for years with the question whether they should separate themselves from the Church. In this Church that honors personal agency so strongly, that was restored by a young man who asked questions and sought answers, we respect those who honestly search for truth. It may break our hearts when their journey takes them away from the Church we love and the truth we have found, but we honor their right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience, just as we claim that privilege for ourselves.

Elder Uchtdorf

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/come-join-with-us>

Wirthlin, Concern for the one

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2008/04/concern-for-the-one?lang=eng>

Some are lost because they are different. They feel as though they don't belong. Perhaps because they are different, they find themselves slipping away from the flock. They may look, act, think, and speak differently than those around them and that sometimes causes them to assume they don't fit in. They conclude that they are not needed.

Tied to this misconception is the erroneous belief that all members of the Church should look, talk, and be alike. The Lord did not people the earth with a vibrant orchestra of personalities only to value the piccolos of the world. Every instrument is precious and adds to the complex beauty of the symphony. All of Heavenly Father's children are different in some degree, yet each has his own beautiful sound that adds depth and richness to the whole.

This variety of creation itself is a testament of how the Lord values all His children. He does not esteem one flesh above another, but He "inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; ... all are alike unto God.

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1996/04/baskets-and-bottles?lang=eng>

All over the world, as brothers and sisters in the gospel, we can learn from each other, grow closer together, and increase in love for each other. Our unity grows from what we have in

common all around the world. They are the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel, our faith in the Savior, our testimonies of the scriptures, our gratitude for guidance from living prophets, and our sense of ourselves as a people striving to be Saints. These are the principles of the gospel.

Let us be sensitive to the unchanging and powerful core principles of the gospel. Let us understand that they matter most. Let us build firm foundations on these principles. Then when the rains fall and the floods come, our house will be “founded upon a rock” and it will not fall ([Matt. 7:25](#)).

Then, building on that firm foundation, let us rejoice with each other, listen to each other, learn from each other, and help each other apply those principles as we deal with our different circumstances, different cultures, different generations, and different geographies.

Bishop Causse's talk from 2013, Ye are No More Strangers

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/ye-are-no-more-strangers?lang=eng>

A promise has been made to everyone who becomes a member of the Church: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

...

In this Church there are no strangers and no outcasts. There are only brothers and sisters. The knowledge that we have of an Eternal Father helps us be more sensitive to the brotherhood and sisterhood that should exist among all men and women upon the earth.

...

Unity is not achieved by ignoring and isolating members who seem to be different or weaker and only associating with people who are like us. On the contrary, unity is gained by welcoming and serving those who are new and who have particular needs. These members are a blessing for the Church and provide us with opportunities to serve our neighbors and thus purify our own hearts.

“Will my personal direction from God be the same as yours? I don’t think so. We’re individuals. God deals with us as individuals. This is the same God who made not just apples but pears and apricots and persimmons and grapes. He likes diversity. He invented it.”

-Chieko Okazaki, Disciples, p. 52

Church is as true as the gospel, Eugene England

<http://www.eugeneengland.org/why-the-church-is-as-true-as-the-gospel>

Marriage [the Church] is an assault upon the lonely, atomic ego. Marriage *is* a threat to the solitary individual. Marriage *does* impose grueling, humbling, baffling, and frustrating responsibilities. Yet if one supposes that precisely such things are the preconditions for all true liberation, marriage is not the enemy of moral development in adults. Quite the opposite.

Being married and having children [being active in the Church] has impressed on my mind certain lessons, for whose learning I cannot help being grateful. Most are lessons of difficulty and duress. Most of what I am forced to learn about myself is not pleasant. . . . My dignity as a human being depends perhaps more on what sort of husband and parent [Church member] I am, than on any professional work I am called on to do. My bonds to my family [my church] hold me back (and my wife even more) from many sorts of opportunities. And yet these do not feel like bonds. They are, I know, my liberation. They force me to be a different sort of human being, in a way in which I want and need to be forced.

I bear witness that the Church can do those same frustrating, humbling, but ultimately liberating and redeeming things for us—if we can learn to see it as Novak does marriage, if we can see that its assaults on our lonely egos, and the bonds and responsibilities that we willingly accept, can push us toward new-kinds of being in a way we most deeply want and need to be pushed.

Sue Johnson, Love Sense: The Revolutionary New Science of Romantic Relationships

A love relationship is now not only the most intimate of adult relationships, it is also often the principal one. And for many it is the only one. The American Sociological Review reports that since the mid-1980s, the number of Americans saying that they have only their partner to confide in has risen by 50 percent. We live in an era of growing emotional isolation and impersonal relationships. More and more, we dwell far from caring parents, siblings, friends, and the supportive communities we grew up in. And more and more we live alone. According to the latest U.S. census, more than thirty million Americans live solo, compared with just four million in 1950. We toil for longer hours and at more remote locations requiring lengthy commutes. We communicate by e-mailing and texting. We deal with automated voices on the telephone, watch concerts performed by holograms of deceased artists (such as rapper Tupac Shakur), and soon we will be seeking assistance from holographic personnel. At New York City –area airports, travelers were recently introduced to a six-foot-tall, information-spouting AVA, short for airport virtual assistant, or avatar. Loneliness researcher John Cacioppo, a psychologist at the University of Chicago, contends that in Western societies, “social connection has been demoted from a necessity to an incidental.” As a result, our partners have been forced to fill the void. They serve as lover, family, friend, village,

and community. And emotional connection is the only glue in this vital, unique relationship.

Johnson, Sue (2013-12-31). Love Sense: The Revolutionary New Science of Romantic Relationships (pp. 15-16). Little, Brown and Company. Kindle Edition.

Resources

<http://ldsthoughtfulquotes.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/respect>

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/1979/08/early-saints-and-the-millennium?lang=eng>