

Are Families Forever?

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The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as the Mormon Church, teaches that when a man and woman are married in the temple, their family can be together for eternity. To make this happen, Mormons' immediate goal is perfection. They take to heart Matthew 5:48. Their ultimate goal is attaining godhood. The public-relations-conscious Mormon Church has downplayed the teaching on attaining godhood. Instead of talking about godhood, today's Mormons talk about *gaining eternal life or having an eternal family*. Or, they may say, "We can become **like** our Heavenly Father." But in Mormonism, to attain eternal life and have an eternal family, one has to become a god.

The *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:19-20 clearly states the final destiny of faithful Mormons (*Doctrine and Covenants* -one of Mormon Church scriptures) ^a. *Gospel Principles*, one of the Mormon Church teaching manuals, teaches about some of the blessings to those who receive exaltation (becoming a god in the highest level of the celestial kingdom) :

1. They will live eternally in the presence of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (see D&C76).
2. They will become gods (see D&C 132:20-23).
3. They will be united eternally with their righteous family members and will be able to have eternal increase."(*Gospel Principles*, 2009 edition, p.277)

Only those who gain 'eternal life' ('exaltation') will be able to have an 'eternal family' and the family will increase through the procreation of spirit children for all eternity. This teaching on "Families forever" may appeal to those who have recently lost their loved ones or who are starting a family. Are families forever? I came across an article dealing with this question written in 1994 by the staff of the Institute for Religious Research in Michigan, USA. I do not think I can improve on this article, so, with their permission, I would like to share it with you.

All of us are part of a family. Families give us a sense of identity, stability and belonging. There can be no doubt that the family is the central structure upon which our society is built. The Mormon church offers special ceremonies that it says will make it possible for the family unit to stay together for eternity. Is this truly possible?

The Mormon church places a lot of emphasis on family life and on the idea that families can stay together as families forever. In fact, one of their teaching books titled *Gospel Principles* makes the following statement; "Families can be together forever. To enjoy this blessing we must be married in the temple. ... If we obey the commandments of the Lord, our families will be together forever as husband, wife, and children." ¹

So the Mormon church teaches that not only will husbands and wives be together, but their kids will also be with them forever.

In a later chapter *Gospel Principles* states, "We know that we can have our children with us throughout eternity."² You see, Mormons are taught that God the Father was once a mortal man who has now progressed to become a God and rules with his goddess wife. ³ Mormons hope that they can become gods and goddesses and eventually rule over their own worlds, just as God the Father rules over this world. They look forward to having their whole family together while they do this. That's why they emphasize the theme "Families are forever."

It all sounds appealing. On the surface it is. In fact, the Mormon church considers marriage done by other ministers as inferior, since such marriage are for this life only, while Mormon Temple marriages are for time and eternity. But there are some logical and biblical problems within the system.

What do I mean by that? Mormon parents want their children to grow up and also be married in the temple and become exalted to godhood. However, some of them end up leaving the Mormon church. This means that they will not be with their parents in the celestial kingdom. They will be separated from their parents forever. Other children may never marry in the temple, which means they can never become gods and goddesses and will never enter the highest level of the celestial kingdom. Those children will be separated from their parents also.

What about children who are faithful, and are married in the temple? According to the Mormon church, they **do** go on to be gods and goddesses. But think about this for a minute. According to Mormonism, once they become gods and goddesses they will be given their own worlds to oversee. This means that they might be in a completely different universe to their parents. In the Mormon system, once you reach the goal of being a god or goddess, you can no longer always be with Heavenly Father and the rest of your family members. Instead you now become the Heavenly Father & Mother to your spirit children.⁴ Since they have tried to pattern eternity after family relationship in this life, they face the same problem we all face here, Children grow up, get married, move away, have their own children, grow up, get married and move away.

But, Mormon teaching regarding marriage and family also fails to measure up to the Bible. Family relationships are fluid and constantly changing. The Sadducees of Jesus day, who did not believe in a resurrection, recognized this and tried to trap Jesus on this point. In Matthew 22:23-32, they asked Jesus what would happen if a brother married a woman, and following his death a second brother married her, and so on until seven brothers, one at a time, had married her and died. In the resurrection, they wondered, whose wife would she be?

How did Jesus respond? He said simply, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, not the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.” In other words, **the Bible teaches that marriage relationships are not going to be an issue in heaven.** Jesus taught that the family of God takes precedence over human relationships. In Matthew 12:46-50. Jesus was teaching the people when someone in the crowd advised him that his mother and brother were outside and wanted to talk with him. Jesus replied, “Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?” And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, “Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

As Jesus was dying on the cross he re-emphasized the importance of spiritual family relationships over purely physical ones. In John 19:26-27, when he saw his mother standing there beside the apostle John he said to her “Woman, behold thy son!” And to John he said, “Behold thy mother!” Jesus placed his mother in the care of his disciple John, rather than in the care of one of his fleshly brothers. John was a believer in Jesus as the Christ, while his brothers had not yet believed he was the Messiah. You see, our focus once we enter God’s presence, is going to be our relationship with God, giving praise, worship and honor to him.

So according to the Bible, family members who have repented of their sin and received forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus Christ will all be together for eternity. We will stand shoulder to shoulder together in the presence of God, not as husbands or fathers or nieces or nephews, but as adopted children of our Heavenly Father. We will be united as one family, with one focus - worshipping God our Father and enjoying His presence forever.

That’s quite a contrast from the logical end of the Mormon church’s teaching where families will actually be split up and separated for eternity. “Families forever” is a nice slogan, but within the Mormon system it doesn’t work out that way.

ENDNOTES

¹. *Gospel Principles*, 1992 edition, p. 277.

². *Ibid*, p. 243.

³. *Achieving a Celestial Marriage*, Student Manual, 1976, p. 129 - an official Mormon Church teaching manual

⁴. *Ibid*, p. 302.

Notes to the introduction:

a. *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:20 teaches, “Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.”

b. Bruce R. McConkie, quoted in *Achieving A Celestial Marriage*, pp.135,136 -an official Mormon Church teaching manual.

c. The Institute for Religious Research is a non-denominational, non-profit Christian foundation devoted to the study of religious claims in light of history and the Bible (www.irr.org).