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HOME, THE HEART OF ETERNITY

By Katherine Padilla

This script was adapted from a program that was presented at Homemaking Night on September 18, 1997 in the Mount Airy Ward, Frederick Maryland Stake.

Narrator 1

The scriptures are full of examples of different kinds of homes. The word “fold,” which describes a home for sheep, is a symbol that represents the Church. “Household” is another term that describes the Church. Temples are designated as houses of God. The word “refuge” is also used to describe the temple, as well as different cities, the New Jerusalem in particular. The Lord refers to Zion as his “abode forever.” The terms “habitation” and “dwelling place” describe the temple, Zion, and Heaven. The word “mansions,” always plural, never refers to any type of residence but the one of God.

To get a feel for the integral place of homes in God’s plan and the indispensable role women have in creating them, let’s take a tour of the homes that lie at the heart of our eternal existence, reflect on their multifaceted beauty, and observe what is required to “make” those homes.

Song: “I Will Follow God’s Plan,” Primary 164. (All sisters or special arrangement.)

Narrator 1

From Latter-day revelation, we learn that our first home was with our Heavenly Father in his celestial mansions. We often long for a description of our premortal home and the life we led there, and it’s easy to become frustrated by the scarcity of information. For that reason, statements such as the two that follow are treasures.

Reader 1

The prophet Brigham Young stated:

I want to tell you, each and every one of you, that you are well acquainted with God our Heavenly Father, or the great Elohim. You are all well acquainted with him, for there is not a soul of you but what has lived in his house and dwelt with him year after year; and yet you are seeking to become acquainted with him, when the fact is, you have merely forgotten what you did know.

There is not a person here today but what is a son or a daughter of that Being. In the spirit world their spirits were first begotten and brought forth, and they lived there with their parents for ages before they came here.

The prophet Spencer W. Kimball gave this added insight:

Remember, in the world before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood tasks. While we do not now remember the particulars, this does not alter the glorious reality of what we once agreed to. . . .

How special it is for Latter-day Saint women to be given the lofty assignments they have been given by our Father in Heaven, especially those of you who have been privileged to be born in this part of this last dispensation.

Narrator 2

We know little about the premortal life we led in the home of our heavenly parents and even less about the nature of our role there. Would it not, however, be logical to theorize that we engaged in our primeval apprenticeship by working, relaxing, and rejoicing alongside our heavenly parents in the same way we do our earthly parents? Perhaps we can best be true to our premortal role as women by honoring our mothers and fathers, learning all we can from them about our divine roots and destiny, and doing everything in our power to be exemplary daughters.

Narrator 1

Eventually the time came to leave the celestial home of our heavenly parents and be born as mortals on our new home, the earth. The many creation accounts we possess not only vividly

describe the earth and the many orders of life therein and thereon, but are detailed home creation blueprints. Let's isolate each day of the creation account contained in the Book of Moses and compare the procedures the Lord used to create our earthly home to the procedures we as women use to create our own homes.

Reader 2

When confronted with the task of organizing the enormous amount of matter that must have been used to create the earth, the Lord took the most powerful tool he had, the priesthood, and little by little, began sorting through the matter and putting it in its proper place.

Reader 3

And I, God, said: Let there be light; and there was light.

And I, God, saw the light; and that light was good. And I, God, divided the light from the darkness.

Reader 2

According to this account, God's first step in creating the earth was to divide the light from the darkness. In our lives and in our homes, we too must divide the light from the darkness. We must perfect our ability to recognize the good and bad in everything around us and then use that knowledge to gather in the good things and discard those things that are evil. In our own homes, we can compare the light to the Holy Ghost; our homes glow with spiritual power as we conduct family home evenings, read the scriptures, play uplifting music, and speak with kindness.

Reader 3

And again, I, God, said: Let there be a firmament in the midst of the water, and it was so, even as I spake;

Reader 2

During the second phase of creation, the Lord began forming the planet, the actual physical place where physical life could live. A home always begins with a place, whether that place is as small as the corner of a room or as large as a planet.

Reader 3

And I, God, said: Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and it was so; and I, God, said: Let there be dry land; and it was so. . . .

And I, God, said: Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, the fruit tree yielding fruit, after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed should be in itself upon the earth, and it was so even as I spake.

Reader 2

Once God completed his construction of the planet itself, he gradually organized the different systems on it, making it more functional and beautiful. We follow his example in our own homes when we clean, plant gardens, organize our possessions, and create and display artwork.

Reader 3

And I, God, said: Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years;

Reader 2

Just as God organized the times and seasons of the earth, we organize the times and seasons of our lives when we set priorities, establish a routine for work and righteous living, and progress toward goals that make all of the seasons of our lives meaningful and full of joy.

Reader 3

And I, God, created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind; . . .

And I, God, made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything which creepeth upon the earth after his kind;

Reader 2

Once the earth was formed and beautified and its systems organized, it was prepared to receive animal life. Obviously the Lord feels the fishes and fowls need a complete home, one with an atmosphere of light, order, and beauty. How much more, then, do we, as his offspring, need a home with those same qualities!

Reader 3

And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them.

And I, God, blessed them, and said unto them: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over . . . every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Reader 2

The Lord waited until the creation of the earth was complete before he placed Adam and Eve into the Garden of Eden because he knew they needed more than just a place that would provide shelter—they needed order, beauty, an atmosphere of light, law, companionship with other forms of life and with each other.

Reader 3

And on the seventh day I, God, ended my work, and all things which I had made; and I rested on the seventh day from all my work.

Reader 2

When life is hectic and we think that creating and maintaining a home is the most thankless, dreary job on earth, we should reflect on the fact that we are doing the same thing for our families that the Lord did for us all of those millennia ago, only on a smaller scale. We should also remember that even the Lord took time for himself and rested—what an example of stress management!

Narrator 2

Our Heavenly Father knew we needed the earth to progress, and its creation was an act of love. We, in turn, best magnify our role as stewards of the earth by recognizing the Lord as the Creator and worshipping him. We can also take care of the earth, learn about its systems, and extend loving service to our brothers and sisters who share it with us.

Song: "God Is Love," Hymn 313. (All sisters or special arrangement.)

Narrator 1

The separation from God that came as a result of the Fall brought imperfection and dissolution into Adam and Eve's new earth home. Their bodies became subject to death and disease, the ground was cursed, and the animals were no longer as congenial. They would have children who would sin and separate themselves from God forever. Their environment would no longer allow them to have a perfect home with its unity between the earth, all of its systems, and the life upon it. What unity they did possess was in their relationship with each other. Beginning with that marriage relationship, they could begin seeking the help of the Lord in creating a home that would, though imperfect, contain many of the qualities of heaven. That first home became the focal point in their difficult mission to bring their family, the entire human race, back into harmony with the earth and all forms of life thereon so that all could return to the presence of God. Likewise, our homes are the places we start in our quest to create heaven on Earth.

Reader 4

The prophet Joseph F. Smith explained the importance of the home with these words:

The very foundation of the kingdom of God, of righteousness, of progress, of development, of eternal life and eternal increase in the kingdom of God, is laid in the divinely ordained home; there should be no difficulty in holding in the highest reverence and exalted thought, the home, if it can be built upon the principles of purity, of true affection, of righteousness and justice. The man and his wife who have perfect confidence in each other, and who determine to follow the laws of God in their lives and fulfil the measure of their mission in the earth, would not be, and could never be, contented without the home. Their hearts, their feelings, their minds, their desires would naturally tend toward the building of a home and family and of a kingdom of their own; to the laying of the foundation of eternal increase and power, glory, exaltation and dominion, worlds without end.

Elder Spencer W. Kimball, before he was prophet and president of the Church, said this:

Heaven is a place, but also a condition; it is home and family. It is understanding and kindness. It is interdependence and selfless activity. It is quiet, sane living; personal sacrifice, genuine hospitality, wholesome concern for others. It is living the

commandments of God without ostentation or hypocrisy. It is selflessness. It is all about us. We need only to be able to recognize it as we find it and enjoy it.

Narrator 2

A woman doesn't have to be married, bear children, be wealthy, or hold a high position in the world to create heaven on earth. That celestial environment must be created by obedience to celestial laws. Adherence to gospel principles, therefore, is the most important skill any person can possess and the most difficult to master. Often we succumb to our weaknesses, and family members can bring an unwholesome spirit into our homes through their unrighteous actions. What, then, do we do? We do the best we can in our imperfection, recognizing the great influence we have on all those with whom we associate.

Narrator 1

The Church organization, like our home and family, can be a sanctuary of heaven on Earth. We, as women, create homes to aid us in teaching and nurturing the members of our families; the Savior, as the Good Shepherd, teaches and nurtures us by leading us to his fold, the Church. We refer to our church buildings as the Lord's houses. We think of the Church organization as a home. We call each other "brother" and "sister" and consider our wards and branches our families.

Reader 5

Nowhere in the scriptures is the concept of the Church as a home better described than by the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesian saints.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints,
and of the household of God;

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself
being the chief corner *stone*;

In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:
In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

More recently, President Gordon B. Hinckley declared:

The little stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands is rolling forth to fill the earth. . . . What a wonderful thing it is to be part of this growing kingdom of our Lord. There are no political boundaries separating the hearts of the children of God regardless of where they may live. We are all one great family. We are sons and daughters of God. We are engaged in the service of His Beloved Son. He is our Redeemer and our Savior, and a testimony of this truth burns within our hearts. Each is entitled to such a testimony of this work. It is an individual knowledge of great fundamental truths that binds us together into what we call the church and kingdom of God.

And so we gather . . . to renew our faith, to enlarge our understanding of things divine, to express our love and respect one for another in this great and remarkable brotherhood and sisterhood which all of us knows as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Narrator 2

Our sisterhood is diverse. We all have different difficulties, different talents and skills, different directions our lives take. That diversity sometimes divides us, when it should make us stronger, both as individuals and as a group. Not one of us is perfect. Not one of us can do everything she would like to do. When we teach each other new skills, extend compassionate service, and strengthen each other spiritually, we are creating a home within the Church for all members. We also help the Church fulfill its role as a home when we work together to take care of our buildings and grounds, when we serve in callings, and when we sustain those men and women who have been called to preside over us.

Song: "As Sisters in Zion," Hymn 309. (All sisters.)

Narrator 1

Perhaps the most convincing evidence that the Lord's Kingdom is "rolling forth to fill the earth" is displayed by the rapid building of temples, chambers of heaven on earth. The Lord loves us so much that he wants to dwell with us and has provided a way to do so. The most glorious scriptural description of the temple lies in the Doctrine and Covenants, sections 109, in the

prayer the prophet Joseph Smith offered at the dedication of the Kirtland temple, a prayer he testified was given to him by revelation.

Reader 6

Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God;

That your incomings may be in the name of the Lord, that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord, that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with uplifted hands unto the Most High— . . .

That thy glory may rest down upon thy people, and upon this thy house, which we now dedicate to thee, that it may be sanctified and consecrated to be holy, and that thy holy presence may be continually in this house;

And we ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them;

And from this place they may bear exceedingly great and glorious tidings, in truth, unto the ends of the earth, that they may know that this is thy work, and that thou hast put forth thy hand, to fulfil that which thou hast spoken by the mouths of the prophets, concerning the last days.

We ask thee, Holy Father, to establish the people that shall worship, and honorably hold a name and standing in this thy house, to all generations and for eternity;

That no weapon formed against them shall prosper; that he who diggeth a pit for them shall fall into the same himself;

That no combination of wickedness shall have power to rise up and prevail over thy people upon whom thy name shall be put in this house; . . .

O Jehovah, have mercy upon this people, and as all men sin forgive the transgressions of thy people, and let them be blotted out forever. . . .

Let it be fulfilled upon them, as upon those on the day of Pentecost; let the gift of tongues be poured out upon thy people, even cloven tongues as of fire, and the interpretation thereof.

And let thy house be filled, as with a rushing mighty wind, with thy glory.

Remember all thy church, O Lord, with all their families, and all their immediate connections, with all their sick and afflicted ones, with all the poor and meek of the earth; that the kingdom, which thou hast set up without hands, may become a great mountain and fill the whole earth;

Narrator 2

All worthy Latter-day Saint women have the opportunity to serve in various roles in the Lord's house. Most of us will stand as proxies for women who have died, doing our part to bind families together beyond the grave. Some of us will receive the opportunity to be ordinance workers. A few of us will be called to direct the work in the temple. We'll use the spiritual power gained in the temple to proclaim the gospel and strengthen our families.

Narrator 1

Just as Latter-day Saints build temples to be the dwelling places of the Lord, the time will soon come when the Saints will build an entire city that will serve as a refuge for themselves and an abode for the Lord, a city of holiness that will be known as Zion, the New Jerusalem. The Lord has provided us with several examples of people who created Zion. One of them was the prophet Enoch, a real person with faults and insecurities, a person who felt depressed at times because of the wickedness of his brethren, people who were probably related to him and perhaps even his descendants. Despite the difficulties, Enoch accomplished the magnificent task of building Zion with the help of God and the Saints of his time and found heavenly joy. His story is found in chapters 6 and 7 of Moses.

Reader 7

And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him. . . .

And from that time forth there were wars and bloodshed among them; but the Lord came and dwelt with his people, and they dwelt in righteousness.

The fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the Lord, which was upon his people. And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish.

And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.

And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION.

And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah;

And the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve;

And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.

. . . a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God;

And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, . . .

And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety. . . .

And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand.

And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy.

Narrator 2

As time passes and the world increases in wickedness, the more we yearn for a society of complete righteousness, a society that will enrich our lives in every way instead of one that is, in many ways, an enemy we constantly have to fight. We learn from Enoch's life that we don't have to be perfect or even experienced to assist in creating this glorious abode of the Lord—we just have to be willing to rely completely on the Lord, to consecrate our time, talents, and means to his work. He, then, will give us those feelings of charity, purify our hearts, and provide us with the spiritual power necessary to accomplish this task.

Song: "The Spirit of God," Hymn 2. (All sisters.)

Narrator 1

Zion is the first home following the fragmentation of the Fall where the earth, all of its systems, the animal kingdom, and the human race begin returning to the unified state that existed at the time of creation. Eventually Zion will spread and cover the earth. According to D&C 88:26, the earth "shall be sanctified; yea, notwithstanding it shall die, it shall be quickened again, and shall abide the power by which it is quickened, and the righteous shall inherit it." It will become our celestial kingdom, a planet far more glorious than it was at the time of its creation, and we, with it, will return to the presence of our heavenly parents.

It is significant that the earth must be resurrected to receive its full glory and attain its final state of perfection. We, like the earth, must be resurrected to receive our full glory and perfection. We so often become frustrated with the imperfections in ourselves, in our families, and in our lives. It's comforting to know that our resurrected bodies will have capacities our mortal ones don't. We will have our memories of our pre-earth life restored. We will, if we've done all we can in this life to improve ourselves, be able to create that perfect home we were unable to make here because of the limitations of mortality. The most comprehensive scriptural description of the celestial kingdom lies in the vision of the Apostle John, found in the book of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22:

Reader 8

AND I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. . . .

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. . . .

And he . . . shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; . . .

And the building of the wall of it was *of* jasper: and the city *was* pure gold, like unto clear glass.

And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. . . .

And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass. . . .

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof.

Narrator 2

What wonderful blessings await us in our celestial home! This quote by Elder Neal A. Maxwell enables us to step into the celestial gallery for a moment and lift a tiny corner of the veil covering the portrait of the perfect woman, in whose footsteps we hope to follow: “When we return to our real home, it will be with the ‘mutual approbation’ of those who reign in the ‘royal courts on high.’ There we will find beauty such as mortal eye hath not seen; we will hear sounds of surpassing music which mortal ear hath not heard. Could such a regal homecoming be possible without the anticipatory arrangements of a Heavenly Mother?”

Song: “O My Father,” Hymn 292.” (All sisters or special arrangement.)

Narrator 2

Is it any surprise that, in his effort to destroy the home, Satan fights to confuse and divide us by degrading the critical role women have in the home? Ezra Taft Benson, when President of the Quorum of the Twelve, gave this promise to the women of the Church: “Home is love, understanding, trust, welcome, and a sense of belonging. If you, as wives, mothers, daughters, take proper care of yourselves, your families, and your homes, and keep close to each other as sisters in the Relief Society, many of the problems of the day troubling youth and parents will pass you by.”

The home truly is the heart of eternity so let’s recognize ourselves as the potential queens we are and, with our husbands and brethren in the priesthood, create those heavenly places where the Lord can dwell, both in this life and in the next.

Song: “I Walk By Faith,” Janice Kapp Perry. (All sisters or special arrangement.)

REFERENCES (should be printed in program as follows):

INTRODUCTION

Narrator 1: (name of Narrator 1)

Narrator 2: (name of Narrator 2)

Song: "I Will Follow God's Plan," Primary 164.

PREMORTAL HOME

Reader 1: (name of Reader 1)

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EARTH

Reader 2: (name of Reader 2)

Reader 3: (name of Reader 3)

Excerpts from Moses 2, 3.

Song: "God Is Love," Hymn 313.

INDIVIDUAL HOMES AND FAMILIES

Reader 4: (name of Reader 4)

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THE CHURCH

Reader 5: (name of Reader 5)

Ephesians 2:19-22; Gordon B. Hinckley, "As We Gather Together," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995.

Song: "As Sisters in Zion," Hymn 309.

THE TEMPLE

Reader 6: (name of Reader 6)

Excerpts from D&C 109.

ZION, THE NEW JERUSALEM

Reader 7: (name of Reader 7)

Excerpts from Moses 7; D&C 45:66-68, 70-71.

Song: "The Spirit of God," Hymn 2.

OUR CELESTIAL HOME

Narrator: D&C 88:26.

Reader 8: (name of Reader 8)

Excerpts from Revelation 21.

Narrator: Neal A. Maxwell, "The Women of God," *Woman*, p. 98.

Song: "O My Father," Hymn 292.

CONCLUSION

Narrator: President Ezra Taft Benson, "The Honored Place of Women," *Ensign*, November, 1981.

Song: "I Walk By Faith," Janice Kapp Perry.