

# Healing the Time Starved Marriage

## “The Time Famine”



*Time flies on wings of lightening;  
We cannot call it back.  
It comes, then passes forward  
Along its onward track.  
And if we are not mindful,  
The chance will fade away,  
For life is quick in passing.  
'Tis as a single day.*

*“Improve the Shining Moments,”  
Hymns, no. 226.*



# Throw the Red Flag





# Rusty Romances



Elder Russell M. Nelson taught that **“Marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other human relationship. Yet some married couples fall short of their full potential. They let their romance become rusty, they take each other for granted, allow other interests or clouds of neglect to obscure the vision of what their marriage really could be.**

Marriages would be happier if nurtured more carefully” (Elder Russell M. Nelson, “Nurturing Marriage,” *Ensign*, May 2006).



# Marriage Takes Work



Elder Dean L. Larsen once explained, “I repeatedly encounter the illusion today, especially among younger people, that perfect marriages happen simply if the right two people come together. This is untrue. **Marriages don’t succeed automatically. Those who build happy, secure, successful marriages pay the price to do so. They work at it constantly**” (Elder Dean L. Larsen, *Ensign*, March 1985, 20).

# Time, A Significant Challenge

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- ❧ One of the most significant challenges in the lives of contemporary Latter-day Saint couples is the apportionment of time.
- ❧ With so much to do, how can husbands and wives find time for each other? **Careers, church responsibilities, children's activities, household duties, and community involvement often interfere with maintaining a close connection with one's spouse.**
- ❧ For many contemporary couples, marriage is still a high priority, but not necessarily where couples spend a high degree of quality time. *In fact, research documents that the longer people are married, the less time they spend together. Yet, the amount of time couples spend together in face to face interaction is critically important to marital happiness and satisfaction.*





# The Marriage Priority



- ❧ Unfortunately, too many ancillary activities keep couples distracted from each other.
- ❧ Today, **being hyper-busy is the new status symbol; the social prizes no longer go to the wealthiest, but the busiest.**
- ❧ As contemporary couples attempt to “keep all the balls in the air,” marital connection and intimacy are placed on the sacrificial alter.
- ❧ Marriage expert Michele-Weiner Davis argues **that the most significant contributor to the breakdown in marriages today is the *lack of time together*.** (See Michele Weiner-Davis, *Divorce Busting*, [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992]).
- ❧ **“I'm convinced that the single biggest contributor to the breakdown in relationships today is the fact that couples aren't spending enough time together. They aren't making their relationships a number one priority. The relationship gets put on the back burner. Everything else seems more important - careers, children, hobbies, community involvement, and personal pursuits. And when relationships aren't attended to as they should be, trouble sets in.**

# By the Numbers



- ❧ In the *National Survey of Marital Strengths*, spending time together was identified as one of the **top ten strengths for happily married couples**.
- ❧ In addressing the statement, “We have a good balance of leisure time spent together,” **71 percent of happy couples agreed to that statement**.
- ❧ Conversely, only **28 percent of unhappy couples felt that they spent a healthy dose of leisure time together**.
- ❧ In the same study, researchers identified the lack of time together as one of the top ten stumbling blocks for married couples.
- ❧ **Over 80 percent of couples who were having struggles in their marriage identified the lack of time together as a significant problem**.
- ❧ **Finally, in measuring couple connection and closeness, 97 percent of happy couples reported that they enjoy spending free time together**.
- ❧ For couples who reported they were unhappy in their marriage, only 43 percent reported that they enjoyed spending time together.

# By the Numbers



- ☞ A recent study by the *Pew Research Center* **reported that 76 percent of Americans feel that family is the most important element in their lives. Half of all families report eating dinner at least a few times a week.**
- ☞ Time has become the most precious commodity and the ultimate scarcity for millions of Americans. **A *Wall Street Journal* survey reported that 40 percent of Americans feel that lack of time was a bigger problem for them than lack of money.**
- ☞ **The University of Michigan reports that since the late 1970s, children have lost twelve hours per week in free time, including a 25 percent decrease in playing and a 50 percent drop in unstructured outdoor activities.** During this same period, time children spend in structured sports has doubled. Meanwhile, structured sports time has doubled, and passive spectator leisure (watching others play and perform) has increased from thirty minutes per week to over three hours.



# By the Numbers



- ❧ **Families are also talking together much less than ever before, and family vacations have declined by 28 percent.** In the 1980s alone, family vacation time shortened by 14 percent.
- ❧ **Since 1960, children have lost ten to twelve hours per week of time with their parents. Moreover, 60 percent of preteens feel distant from their parents.** Consequently, many of these young people report high rates of depression, anxiety, delinquency, and substance abuse.
- ❧ **In a Gallup Poll several years ago, 41 percent of adult American's said they had too little time to spend with their families.** Likewise, in a *Los Angeles Times* Survey, 57 percent of fathers and 55 percent of mothers reported feeling guilty that they spent too little time as families.

# Satan's Tactics



“Lucifer works hard to undermine our innate tendency to nurture and care for others. **He wants us to become separated from each other. Voice messaging and pagers are efficient, but they don't replace a listening ear and a caring heart. If the adversary can cause us to focus more on our differences than on our similarities, if he can keep us so busy running from one commitment to another that we no longer have time for each other, he has made great strides towards neutralizing the strength and influence that we have.** We need each other. We need each other's testimonies and strength, each other's confidence and support, understanding and compassion

# Satan's Tactics



**“Lucifer would have us so busy – with the details swirling around family, friends, careers, and every soccer league in town – that there’s no time to actually *live* the gospel. No time to fast and pray, to immerse ourselves in the scriptures, to worship in the temple – all the things we need to do to “study for our mortal test.”**

In other words, he wants us to be a little more concerned with the world than with the gospel, a little more interested in life today than in life forever. Regret is what happens when we figure out too late what was really important” (Sheri Dew, *No Doubt About It* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001], 97-98, 100).





# Who Cares How Busy You Are

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- œ President Dieter F. Uchtdorf asked the men of the priesthood,
- œ “Brethren, when we stand before the Lord to be judged, **will He look upon the positions we have held in the world or even in the Church? Do you suppose that titles we have had other than “husband,” “father,” or “priesthood holder” will mean much to Him? Do you think He will care how packed our schedule was or how many important meetings we attended?** Do you suppose that our success in filling our days with appointments will serve as an excuse for failure to spend time with our wife and family? “(President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Lift Where You Stand,” *Ensign*, November 2008, 53-56).

# Of Regrets and Resolutions

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# Where Do You Spend Your Time?

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Doctors Les and Leslie Parrott have stated, “Time is made whenever we decide what matters most. **A top priority gets more time. If you decide that collecting stamps is the most important thing in your life, you will begin to schedule your day around it, you will spend your money on it, and you will talk about it.** Because you prioritize it, you’ll make decisions that create more time for it.” (Les & Leslie Parrott, *Your Time Starved Marriage*, [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006], 65).





# What Screams the Loudest Gets Our Time

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- ❧ **What pulls and tugs on your time as a Latter-Day Saint?**
- ❧ Family
- ❧ Work and Work Travel
- ❧ Children's Activities
- ❧ PTA
- ❧ Church and Church Responsibilities
- ❧ Home maintenance

**Satan loves it  
when we confuse  
activity with  
accomplishment.**

What would happen if a father didn't take his son to the final game of seven-game championship series? What if a mother, who also happened to be the ward Young Women's President, simply refused to plan girl's camp? Conversely, what would happen if a husband failed to take his wife out to dinner on a Friday evening? The consequences *could* be quite different. Unfortunately, marriages often get whatever is left over after everything else has been said and done, which often isn't much. When couples fail to put their marriage first, they risk the possibility of having significant marriage complications.

# Time Starved Couples



- ⌘ Time starved couples cease doing the very things that propelled them towards marital bliss.
- ⌘ **Once couples decrease the amount of time they spend together, nurturing is replaced with nagging, and praise is supplanted with pessimism. Simply put, no marriage will survive without nurturing.**
- ⌘ Without proper nourishment, the marriage will ultimately wither — just as a lawn would without sunlight, water or fertilizer.



# Marriages Need Nourishment

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**“Love is like a flower, and, like the body, it needs constant feeding. The mortal body would soon be emaciated and die if there were not frequent feedings. The tender flower would wither and die without food and water.** And so love, also, cannot be expected to last forever unless it is continually fed with portions of love, the manifestations of esteem and admiration, the expressions of gratitude, and the consideration of unselfishness” (President Spencer W. Kimball, “Marriage and Divorce,” *Brigham Young University 1976 Speeches*, 7 September 1976, 6).



# From the Trenches



*After 46 years of marriage and raising six children, I think hyper-business robs LDS couples of time together. You become like preschoolers who engage in parallel play....*

*Just going on your personal treadmills, thinking you are doing the Lord's work, but much too busy to do the most effective work – which is relationships, talking, listening, pondering, and loving. Now, I see the same busy patterns in my own married children's lives. We are running too fast for our own good.*

# From the Trenches



*My husband thinks that one of the greatest challenges for active Latter-day Saint couples is to learn to grow together, and not separately. When you and your husband are involved in children, church responsibilities, and work, it seems that you are constantly going in different directions.*

*How do you find the time to grow together? How do you make it so that when the children leave home, you and your spouse are not complete strangers? I know several couples who were not able to work through these challenges. Now, as older couples, their marriages are hollow and unfulfilling. They spent the majority of their time on everything else except their marriages.*

# Pitfalls of Busyness



**Busyness corrupts your conversations:** “We recently received an email from our friend... who told us that he and his wife, in managing their household of three children, feel more like air traffic controllers than husband and wife. He said they barely have time to talk because they spend so much time juggling schedules and taxiing kids to and fro. Their conversations consist primarily of sentences like ‘Next Tuesday is an early dismissal day for the kids to one of us needs to be home and then take Dominic to soccer practice’ .... **Busyness deludes us into thinking that we’re conversing when we are actually just trying to make it through the hectic speed of our day**” (Les & Leslie Parrott, *Your Time Starved Marriage: How to Stay Connected at the Speed of Life* [Zondervan: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2006], 35).



# Pitfalls of Busyness



***Busyness depletes your love life:*** ‘Devoting a little of yourself to everything,’ said Michael LeBoef, ‘means committing a great deal of yourself to nothing.’ It’s true. When you are scattered too thin, when you are trying to stretch time beyond its limits, you end up with a zero balance in your love bank. **The quality of your love life can’t help but suffer when you are too busy”** (Les & Leslie Parrott, *Your Time Starved Marriage: How to Stay Connected at the Speed of Life* [Zondervan: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2006], 36).

# Pitfalls of Busyness



*Busyness steals your fun: “Busyness is a fun killer. There’s no way around it. If you’re exhausted from just trying to keep the hamster wheel of life turning, you’re never going to enjoy the ride.* Think of some of the crazy things you did when you were a dating couple. You were all about fun in those days. Laughter was your third companion on every date. So what happened? You know. Busyness pushed fun out of the commuter car” (Les & Leslie Parrott, *Your Time Starved Marriage: How to Stay Connected at the Speed of Life* [Zondervan: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2006], 36).

# Pitfalls of Busyness



***Busyness erodes your soul:*** Perhaps the most corrosive by-product of busyness for a couple is the inevitable erosion of their inner resources. **If you are busy enough, long enough, you will become spiritually bankrupt. God will feel absent. Why? Because at the center of every couple's shared lives, underneath the layers of everydayness, an emptiness gradually settles in for even the most committed couples whose spirits have not been nourished.** Busyness slowly and steadily wears away spiritual contentment and depletes our relationship of inspiration" (Les & Leslie Parrott, *Your Time Starved Marriage: How to Stay Connected at the Speed of Life* [Zondervan: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2006], 36-37).

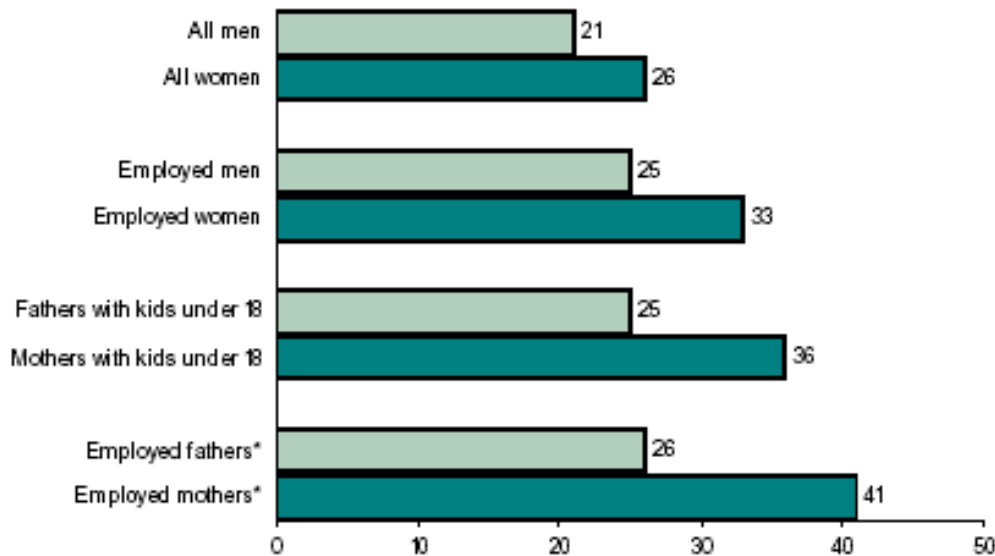


# Feeling Rushed?



## Pinched for Time: More Women Than Men

Percentage of Americans who "always feel rushed"



\*Employed fathers, employed mothers refers to employed parents with children under age 18.  
Employed does not include people who identify as retired but also work for pay.

PewResearchCenter

- Multi-tasking
- Working while in the car
- Working on vacations
- Working from home during prime-time family time

# Apathy



President Harold B. Lee once said, “**Someone has said that the opposite of love is not hate; the opposite of love is apathy. And I say to you brethren, the most dangerous thing that can happen between you and your wife or between me and my wife is apathy – not hate, but for them to feel that we are not interested in their affairs, that we are not expressing and showing our affection in countless ways. Women, to be happy, have to be loved and so do men**” (President Harold B. Lee, *Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, 241).

# Taking Your Spouse for Granted

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☞ , William Doherty also argued that the problem with many marriages today is indifference. He said, **“We get used to our mate. In marriage, familiarity breeds, not contempt, but taking each other for granted. All relationships lose some degree of newness and freshness over time if we don’t work to put these ingredients back”** (William J. Doherty, *Take Your Marriage Back*, [New York: Guilford Press, 2003], 13).





# Apathy Check



❧ A middle-aged father from Texas wrote:

❧ *“There was a time in my marriage that I was traveling extensively, and I certainly wasn’t paying attention to my wife or children. I was extra ornery and seemed to have a bad attitude about everything. Soon, my attitude transferred over to my wife and she began withdrawing from our relationship. Soon, our marriage became stale and boring, and we knew we had to do something about it.”*


# Cold Gravy Marriages



- ❧ An LDS wife from Idaho wrote, “Apathy is something that always needs to be kept in check. I feel that when I don’t appreciate or recognize the little things that my husband does, I am letting apathy control the marriage. I need to spend more time looking for the good that he does and pointing it out to him.”
- ❧ Years ago, President Spencer W. Kimball warned couples not to let their marriages become stale and their love grow cold, like old bread, worn-out jokes, or cold gravy (see President Spencer W. Kimball, “Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, March 1977, 3-6).

# Common Distractors for LDS Couples: “Work Time”

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- ❧ **“The demands at the office are colliding with marriage and family responsibilities “and placing a tremendous time squeeze on many Americans.”**
- ❧ **In a recent report from the U.S. Census Bureau, it was documented that 53 percent of commuters leave their homes between 5:00 to 8:00 a.m. to travel to their offices. Furthermore, 54 percent of commuters travel between twenty to fifty minutes to work each day.**
- ❧ **Working men and women spend 14 more hours a week at the office than their cohorts did thirty years ago. Today’s working American man put in an average of 49.4 hours per week on the job while today’s working woman averages 42.4 hours of work per week.**
- ❧ **In fact, more than one-third of male managers and professionals work more than 50 hours a week.**



# Women in the Work Force

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- ⌘ Moreover, there are more women in the labor force than any other time in our Nation's history.
- ⌘ In 1970, only 43% of women were employed. However, in 2008, that number increased to 77 percent of mothers with older children, and 63 percent of women with younger children.
- ⌘ Furthermore, **for the first time in American history, women now hold the majority of the nation's jobs. And, of the 15 job categories projected to grow in the next decade, all but two will be primarily occupied by women.**

# LDS Women



- ⌘ According to the *Religiosity and Life Satisfaction Study*, 56 percent of LDS women between the ages of 24 and 44 are working.
- ⌘ **However, of married LDS women with children at home, only 23 percent work full time.**
- ⌘ **Another 22 percent work part time.**
- ⌘ It appears that not as many LDS women are in the workforce when compared to the National average.
- ⌘ **However, these statistics point to almost half of all LDS women working, which is a huge family life and marriage disrupter.** (S.M. Johnson, “Dispelling the Myths of Mormon Womanhood,” in *Helping and Healing Our Families*, eds. C.G. Hart, L.D. Newell, E. Walton, & D.C. Dollahite, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005], 205).

# Nevertheless...



President Ezra Taft Benson taught the brethren of the priesthood, **“Nothing except God himself takes priority over your wife in your life – not work, not recreation, not hobbies.... What does it mean to ‘cleave unto her’? It means to stay close to her, be loyal and faithful to her, to communicate with her, and to express your love for her”**

(President Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Fathers of Israel,” *Ensign*, November 1987, 48).





# Common Distractors for LDS Couples: “Media Time”

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- ❧ In the average American home, the television set is on approximately seven hours per day
- ❧ **One study documented that American men spend 15 hours a week watching television, while women spend almost 17 hours a week in front of the tube.**
- ❧ Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught, “**Priorities should govern us in the precious time we give to our family relationships.** Compare the impact of time spent merely in the same room as spectators for television viewing with the significance of time spent communicating with one another individually...” (Elder Dallin H. Oaks, *Conference Report*, April 2001, 109).

# Media Time



- ❧ Brad Stone of *Newsweek* reported that **75 percent of American's use the internet and spend an average of 3 hours a day on line.**
- ❧ According to a recent *Nielsen Survey*, **men between the ages of 18 to 34 are now the biggest users of video games, with 48.2 percent of all American men using a video console each day, averaging over 2 1/2 hours daily.**
- ❧ **The average age of a gamer is now 32 years old.** A recent study conducted by researchers at *Brigham Young University* reported that 75 percent of gamer's spouses wish their spouse would put more time and effort into the marriage.
- ❧ **Furthermore, 36 percent of those who play online role-playing games are married, and 22 percent have children. Therefore, many wives and children are being ignored during prime-time-family-time.**

# From the Trenches



*I hate electronic media, all of it. I feel that so much time is wasted on unimportant facts and information. I will admit that when my husband gets a new computer, I-Pad, I-Phone, or other gadget, I get jealous. I want his time and attention. The truth is that our family only has a few short hours a day together. So, when my husband comes home, I do not like competing with media devices for his time. I want us focusing together on our family; cooking dinner, eating dinner, doing homework, and cleaning up together – with both parents engaged.*



# Prime Time



Elder Russell M. Nelson has taught, “**If marriage is a prime relationship in life, it deserves prime time**” (Elder Russell M. Nelson, “Listen to Learn,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 23).



# Common Distractors for LDS Couples: “Children’s Schedules”

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- ☞ Parenthood is stressful, and children are one of the largest drains on their parent’s time. The presence of children in the home increases the time demands for housework more than any other factor. In fact, the more children in the home, and the younger the children are, the less time couples will have together.
- ☞ **In a recent study, “spouses with children at home reported spending nearly two hours less per day together than did those without children at home.”**
- ☞ **Studies confirm that children have first claim on their parent’s non-working time. Therefore, free time is rarely spent between husband and wife. Instead, children monopolize most of the life and energy of their parents.**
- ☞ Contemporary parents spend much of their parenting time shuttling their children to fun activities, parties, and to their friends’ houses. Once again, free time isn’t directed to the marriage, but towards the children.

# From the Trenches



*Our children's time demands and commitments is the single reason we don't spend enough time together as a couple. This causes trouble in our marriage because when we don't spend adequate time together, our marriage slips. We probably tend to let our children be too involved. We've talked about limiting their activities, but we always come back to the fact that we want them to develop their talents and do things they want to do. Because of my work and church schedule, and our children's activities, there is never time for myself or my spouse. We both face the same challenges so finding time for each other is difficult. Even if we wanted to have a special night every week for a date, it is almost impossible because our children will have a game or activity.*



# Intervention #1: Couple Prayer

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***“I know of no single practice that will have a more salutary effect upon your lives than the practice of kneeling together as you begin and close each day.*** Somehow the little storms that seem to afflict every marriage are dissipated when, kneeling before the Lord, you thank him for one another, in the presence of one another, and then together invoke his blessings upon your lives, your home, your loved ones, and your dreams.

***“God then will be your partner, and your daily conversations with him will bring peace into your hearts and a joy into your lives that can come from no other source. Your companionship will sweeten through the years; your love will strengthen. Your appreciation for one another will grow”*** (Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, June 1971, 72; emphasis added).

# Intervention #2:

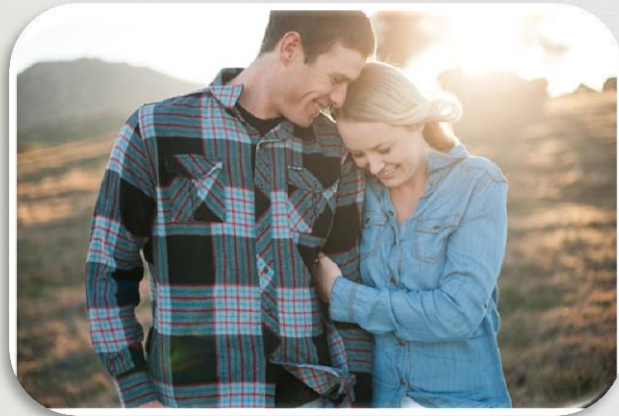
## Recreation

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- ❧ Management Recruiters International recently reported that 82 percent of family vacations include bringing work with us.
- ❧ Furthermore, 13 percent of American's report shortening their vacations because of work.
- ❧ Brigham Young said, "Life is best enjoyed when time periods are evenly divided between labour, sleep and recreation... All people should spend one-third of their time in recreation which is rebuilding, voluntary activity – never idleness, '**Eight hours work, eight hours sleep, and eight hours recreation**' was Brigham Young's motto" (S.Y. Gates and L.D. Widtsoe, *The Life Story of Brigham Young*, [New York: Macmillan Books, 1930], 251).



# Right Now...Plan Something Fun Together



*"The Couple That  
Plays Together,  
Stays Together."*

