"Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities”  (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”).

PURPOSE
To increase understanding of the family’s role in God’s plan of happiness, encourage the development of a gospel-centered home, and emphasize the joy to be had in the family.

Preparation
1. This lesson is designed to be approximately 20 minutes unless more time is available.
2. Seek the spirit in deciding which sections to emphasize. It is not critical that you cover all the material provided.
3. Prayerfully study ”The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (see p. 63 in this manual) and obtain copies for each participant for the activity in the lesson.
4. Consider the needs of the participants and prepare additional questions that promote discussion and connect the principles to apartment and family life.
5. Be prepared to bear your testimony throughout the lesson at any time the spirit prompts.

Doctrine

- Marriage is central to God’s eternal plan.
- Happiness in family life is achieved when founded on the teachings of Jesus Christ.
- Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on true gospel principles.

Discussion

SECTION ONE
The Family
Activity: Exploring the Proclamation
Provide a copy of “The Family Proclamation” for each person. Invite participants to underline statements in the proclamation that are opposite of what the world would teach or what the world might consider controversial. (e.g., “... marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God.”)

Questions for discussion:
Invite participants to share their thoughts as they underlined the principles that were contrary to the view of the world.
- How do these doctrines set us apart?
- What things can we do to actualize the blessings and heed the warnings contained in “The Family Proclamation?”
- How can it bless our lives when we follow the teachings of Jesus Christ?

“The subject of marriage is debated across the world, where various arrangements exist for conjugal living. My purpose in speaking out on this topic is to declare, as an Apostle of the Lord, that marriage between a man and a woman is sacred—it is ordained of God. I also assert the virtue of a temple marriage. It is the highest and most enduring type of marriage that our Creator can offer to His children. While salvation is an individual matter, exaltation is a family matter,” (Russell M. Nelson, “Celestial Marriage” Ensign, Nov. 2008, 92–95).

SECTION TWO
Righteous Marriage
“Righteous marriage is a commandment and an essential step in the process of creating a loving family relationship that can be perpetuated beyond the grave” (David A. Bednar, “Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan,” Liahona, Jun. 2006, 50–55).

Questions for Discussion
- What does it mean that “righteous marriage” is a commandment?
- What are the barriers to achieving a righteous marriage?
- What causes so many young adults to have fears or doubts about marriage?
- How do the doctrines of the “The Family Proclamation” help us to achieve successful marriages and families?

For Facilitators: Framing
When setting up a discussion, take a moment to determine what the desired outcomes are, how the discussion mechanics will flow, and how you will evaluate participant understanding. Framing helps everyone understand the boundaries of the discussion as well as where to focus learning and application.
As husband and wife grow closer to Christ, they grow closer together. Explain that the sealing ordinance is a covenant that we not only make with one another, but with the Godhead in each of their divine roles. Continue with the quote and the questions for discussion below.

“Marriage is the foundry for social order, the fountain of virtue, and the fountain for eternal exaltation. Marriage has been divinely designated as an eternal and everlasting covenant. Marriage is sanctified when it is cherished and honored in holiness. That union is not merely between husband and wife; it embraces a partnership with God” (Russell M. Nelson, “Nuturing Marriage,” Ensign, May 2006, 36).

Questions for discussion:
• Why is it so important that marriage is a triangle relationship with heaven?
• What are the practices that include our Heavenly Father as part of our relationship?
• What can we do now while we are single to strengthen our relationship with our Heavenly Father?

Different but Equal
“The man and the woman contribute differently but equally to a oneness and a unity that can be achieved in no other way. The man completes and perfects the woman and the woman completes and perfects the man as they learn from and mutually strengthen and bless each other.” (David A. Bednar, “Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan,” Liahona, Jun. 2006, 50–55).

“Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11).

Questions for discussion:
• What do you think that scripture means?
• What can men and women do to support one another?
• In what ways do men and women complement one another?
• Why would the Lord give us separate and distinct roles?

SECTION THREE
Creating a Gospel-Centered Home
“Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”).

Activity: Role of Parents
Divide into two groups. Assign each group one of the following paragraphs to study together: paragraph six that begins with “Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility” and to the other group the seventh paragraph that begins with “The family is ordained of God.”

Have each group write down questions to pose to the other group about how to accomplish one of the guidelines or doctrines shared in their paragraph (10 minutes). Examples may include:
• In what ways can we show ‘love and care’ for our spouses?
• How do parents share the responsibility in the love and care of their children?
• What does it mean and what does it look like to ‘honor marital vows with complete fidelity’?
• What does ‘preside’ entail in the responsibilities of a father?

Have the groups trade papers and answer the questions posed through personal experiences, examples, scriptures or from modern revelation.

Questions for discussion:
• Which gospel patterns can we develop and strengthen now that will bless our future families?
• What if you have not come from an ideal home?

Application
A lesson is not complete until a challenge or invitation is extended which inspires and motivates participants to apply what they have learned. “It’s in the doing, not just the thinking, that we accomplish our goals” (Thomas S. Monson, “A Royal Priesthood,” Ensign, Nov. 2007, 59–61).

As a result of the lesson, each participant should feel an increased desire to change an attitude or behavior and become a stronger disciple of Jesus Christ. Include the following steps as part of the application process:

1. Summarize what has been learned or ask a member of the group to do so.
2. Invite participants to write goals specific to what they have felt and learned. How will they apply the principles to their personal lives and apartment life (including roommate relationships)? How will they act on what they have learned as a means of preparation for marriage and family life? In short, what will they do about what they have learned?
3. Follow-up with participants on goals they have set. Regular and consistent follow-up will increase the likelihood that participants actually execute their plan of action.

Additional teaching resources are available under the Stake & Ward Leader Section at www.byui.edu/studentliving