

Carey,

Thank you for your comment about how the Lord has blessed me with so many “eternal friends.” It caused me to reflect about how real that blessing is, and how grateful I am that you are one with whom I share that love.

May I tell you my personal feelings—and these are only my opinions—about the meanings of eternal family and of eternal friendships, and why I believe that they ultimately are almost exactly the same thing.

As a boy, I remember hearing church talks about genealogy and how important it is that one be sealed to one’s parents, and they to theirs, etc., etc., in one continuous and beautiful chain until finally we get to Adam . (There was always some wiggle room stuck in those talks, saying that if some ancestor were bad, then his link would not be in the chain, but the chain would be intact anyway.) So I visualized that concept this way:

Here is Adam—who looks very funny indeed—from him comes zillions of chains of people, so he looks much like poor old Jacob Marley in Dickens’ Christmas Carol, with chains attached to him in every direction. That imagery didn’t make a lot of sense when I was a boy, but it was what I was taught, so I believed it must be right somehow.

As I grew older, I realized that the idea of chains was very misleading. The sealing relationships do not work that way. Rather, it is like this: I am sealed to my parents. My mother is sealed to her parents. Grandma is sealed to her sister, my mother’s Aunt Rinda, who is sealed to her son, who is sealed to his wife, who is sealed to her brother, who is sealed (through his wife) to her parents, *ad infinitum*. It wasn’t a chain at all. It was a beautiful pattern like a spider web with everyone ultimately sealed to everybody else. I really liked that idea, and I still like its implications.

The practical application of that idea is that because everyone is ultimately related to everyone else, then everyone is also sealed to everyone else. For example, there is a point (probably there are many) where your genealogy connects with mine. That point creates a sealing link, so that you and I are sealed together by the same priesthood power as seals me to my children. An extension of sealing is that your son David and I are also sealed together. While the sealing is the same, the relationships are different. By that I mean this: I hope that someday David and I will be as close friends as you and I are, but however close our love that is called “friendship” may become, it is not the same as the love that is intimate family.

Nevertheless, I strongly believe that friendship bonds have similar roots to our family bonds, and that both kinds of love have a much firmer base than our short relationships in this world’s experiences. I believe that both kinds of love are founded on eternal covenants, originating a very, very long time ago. I believe that friendships that seem to originate here, and become projected into the future eternities, are strong here because they actually began in past eternities. That is, in this world we don’t make new friends, we only recognize old ones.

Similarly, I have been wondering about the marriage covenant relationships. Again, please understand that what I am about to write (like the rest of this letter) is only my opinion, but it

makes a great deal of sense to me. I think there may be two possible legitimate eternal covenant relationships that result in marriage in this world: (1) The first is that two people who are very much in love in the pre-mortal spirit world, and who have the blessing of living in this life at the same time and the same place as each other, covenanted with each other that they will marry in this life, and that their marriage relationship will continue into the eternities. (2) The second might be that two people who had a great respect for each other in the pre-mortal world, and who shared a mutual love for people who would become their children, covenanted with each other that they would marry in this world in order to give those children the genetic possibilities, and the home environments the children would need. Perhaps, if that is so, when the conditions of their covenant is completed, their marriage may end—sometimes in this world, sometimes in the next. But the important thing in this analogy is that the conditions of the covenant have been faithfully met, and the people have done what they promised to do. I presume in that case, having sacrificed their ultimate happiness in this life for the sake of their children, they will have the full opportunity to receive that happiness in the next world, if they are faithful to their covenants with their Heavenly Father. (3) There is a third arrangement also, but I cannot see how it could be covenant based. It is this: Given the attitude that many people have toward sex and marriage, I suspect that most of this world's marriages are not built on eternal covenants at all. Why that is, and what the ultimate consequences may be, I do not pretend to know. But this I do know. Our Father's object is to give each one of us the greatest happiness that one can appreciate and share—and that in the end, there will be nothing that one truly wants, and is worthy to receive, that will be withheld.

I liked the spider web imagery of our sealing relationships for many years, but after a while it asked questions it could not answer. The most pressing of those questions was also the most simple: Why was it flat like a spider web? What would happen if it were not two dimensional? The question answered itself. "Flat" really makes only a little more sense than "chains." It had to be a ball with everyone in the ball connected to everyone else. But then there were other questions: Are Adam and Eve in the center? Or is the Saviour? The answer has to be the Saviour. Then the next question was, "In this sealing relationship, who is next to him and who is on the outside edge? That question, in that form, does not admit to any answer: because the answer to the first part has to be "everyone," and the answer to the second part has to be "no one."

So my theoretical imagery broke down and had to be altogether reconstructed. This is where it is now: A way to visualize our sealing relationships is still as a ball, but not a three dimensional ball—a multi-dimensional ball that is so complex that every individual is next to the Saviour, and every individual is also in the center, and every individual is next to every other individual. It seems to me it has to be that way. Even though my mind does not know how to visualize such a ball, that doesn't matter because what I have tried to do is use the imagery of physical proximity to describe one's attitudes of love. So even though the physical juxtapositions I have tried to imagine is not adequate, that analysis is still the only way I can understand the meaning of charity, and the value of Adam's children being sealed to gather as one eternal family.

The next question is "What is the sealing power." Obviously, the first answer that comes to mind is the priesthood. The reasoning behind that answer would be that God is a God of order, and the sealing authority must be the ordinances of priesthood authority. But that answer does not address the question. Authority and power may not be the same thing. The question is, what is

the sealing power. I do not think the power that seals us to the Saviour is his authority. I believe the power by which he seals us to himself is his love for us. If it is true with him, then it must also be true with us—the power that seals the Saviour to one's Self is one's love for him. If it is true of that relationship, then it must be true of all relationships—the eternal sealing power is the love that emanates from each individual—called in the scriptures, “Charity.”

The Saviour's love for us is the eternal constant. The variable is one's love for God and his children. If that statement is correct, then the power to be saved in the Celestial kingdom is equivalent to one's individual power to personify—to respond to and to be an expression of—to BE—love.

If that is true—and I am convinced it is—then the whole matter boils down to the simplest of all possible formulas: Said one way it is this: “If you love me, keep my commandments.” Said another way it is the conclusion of Moroni 7, “But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.”

I truly believe that love is not only and the ultimate sealing power, but that, as such, it is also the final qualification for Celestial glory.

Essentially all I have written says only this: All one has to do in order to be saved in the Celestial kingdom is to be the sort of person who is comfortable being sealed to everyone else who is also a part of that multi-dimensional celestial relationship that is called charity.

I hope that makes sense to you, because the ideas are important to me. My writing all that was just a very long way of saying that I am grateful for the love that you and I share as friends, and I am grateful for the eternal value of that love.

Thank you for being my friend,

LeGrand