

## Three Ships



President and Sister Tanner  
BYU–Hawaii President and Wife  
Devotional  
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*[President Tanner]*

Brother's and Sisters, Aloha!

Today we want to share some gospel perspectives on three “ships.” These ships play an important role in our journey home to our Father in Heaven. They are friend-ship, court-ship, and physical relation-ship.

*[Sister Tanner]*

President Tanner and I like to think of friendship, courtship, and physical relationship as a pyramid. Friendship is the foundation of the pyramid. Above friendship is courtship, meaning dating and romance. And on the top of the pyramid is our physical relationship.

*[President Tanner]*

Friendship is not only nice but necessary to our emotional and spiritual well-being. It's a principle of the gospel. Courtship and marriage should be built upon friendship. With this foundation, romance can blossom into a sweet and enduring eternal relationship.

An intimate physical relationship caps off the other two. Properly, it needs to be built on friendship and romantic love. Physical intimacy can greatly enhance the other two, but must not replace them by becoming the foundation or core of a relationship.

*[Sister Tanner]*

We feel that our message today is particularly suited to you students, whether single or married, though it is a

good reminder for those of us who are a bit older, too. The college years are a time to make new friends. You have so many opportunities to do so here. You are surrounded with potential friends from all over the world. What a blessing! It is also a time when you should date and court. It is a time to fall in love and marry. And it is a time to learn to properly express and control physical feelings of love and desire.

The world does not teach correct principles about these things—in fact, quite the opposite. So it is important for us to be up front and explicit about friendship, courtship, and physical relationship. These “ships” are crucial to our happiness in this life and the next.

## **FRIENDSHIP**

*[President Tanner]*

So let's begin with the first "ship", with the foundation of friendship. I like the advice that a former president of Yale gave to students. I offer it to you:

"I encourage you to make as many friends as possible because your education will flourish only to the extent to which you meet new people and ideas and because years from now you will look back with the greatest fondness on the people—teachers, other students, coaches, counselors, friends—you came to admire and love here."<sup>1</sup>

This advice has been true for Susan and me. The friends we made in college are among the fondest, dearest gifts of our BYU education. Susan was particularly good—and intentional—about cultivating friendships when she was a student.

*[Sister Tanner]*

When I started college, I did not know anyone. I was a little scared and lonely. So I set a goal to sit by new people for each meal and learn their names and something about them. I did this day after day until I knew every person in my group. I became friends with them. And they are dear friends still.

*[President Tanner]*

It also helped her dating I must say. Sister Tanner learned the ageless truth that to make friends you must be a friend. Or as Proverbs puts it: “A man that hath friends must show himself friendly...”<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Jesus taught that to find our life we must lose our lives.<sup>3</sup> As you forget yourself and reach out to others, you will find new friends and a much richer life here.

*[Sister Tanner]*

Let's put this principle into practice right now. I invite you to look around you for someone you don't know and introduce yourself. Find out who they are and then share something quick about yourself.

Okay, go. Okay this is a great experiment. So the next challenge is that when you see this person on campus say hello and call them by name.

*[President Tanner]*

I often say that Susan has a gift for friendship. She truly cares about others. Friendship is a gospel principle. In fact, Joseph Smith, who also had a gift for friendship, said that “Friendship is one of the grand fundamental principles of ‘Mormonism’; [it is designed ] to revolutionize and civilize the world.” Then he continued with this memorable comparison, I love this, he said: “Friendship is like Brother Turley in his blacksmith shop welding iron to iron; it unites the human family with its happy influence.”<sup>4</sup>

*[Sister Tanner]*

How important is it to you to have this happy influence of friendship in your life? How does it bless your life? Have you ever felt friendless? It’s miserable to feel lonely and without friends. Friendship is necessary to our well-being. Not just nice but necessary. We all hunger for it; it’s a universal need.

This was brought home to me by one of my Young Women General Board members who quizzed many young women in her travels around the world. In each place, she asked them questions about their lives and compiled their answers. Here are some of the questions she asked, along with the most frequent response she received to each question:

What makes you happy?

Friends.

What are your greatest worries?

Friends.

What do you like to do in you free time?

Be with friends.

What do you spend most of your time thinking about?

Friends.

What do you like about Church?

Seeing my friends.

Why don’t’ young women come to Mutual?

No friends.

Why do the young women go inactive?

Pressure of friends.

*[President Tanner]*

Isn't that amazing! Friends are of paramount importance for young women all over the world. And I'm quite sure that young men and many adults would give similar answers. We all need friends.

And we all need to be friends. That is, we need to befriend others. In fact, we assume the responsibility to be a friend when we covenant to follow Christ at baptism.

*[Sister Tanner]*

One of my favorite examples of that that I really like is the example of the people of Alma who fled from wicked King Noah to the waters of Mormon. There, they expressed their desire to come into the fold of God. Alma asked them if they were willing to bear one another's burdens, to mourn with those that mourn, and comfort those who stand in need of comfort. That is, he asked them if they were willing to covenant to act as friends. They clapped their hands for joy to enter into such a covenant. And their hearts were knit together in unity and love. This is a great scriptural example of covenant friendship.[5](#)

*[President Tanner]*

We can look to Jesus Christ for the greatest example of friendship. "Friend" seems to have been a tender, even sacred concept for him. It is the highest compliment he could pay his disciples, both ancient and modern. He said, [SLIDE 10] "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends...Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends..."[6](#)

*[Sister Tanner]*

So friendship is an important part of college life; a necessity for our emotional well-being; and a gospel principle. In addition, it is the basis of strong and lasting marriages. Your spouse should be your best friend. You should choose your spouse from among your covenant-keeping friends who love the Lord. Then, as you become closer to your spouse you will also become closer to each other, as Elder Bednar has taught. Your covenant marriage, which you make with each other and with the Lord, will prepare you to live with two friends for eternity: The Savior and your spouse. As Latter-day Saints, we know that exaltation involves the privilege of spending eternity with our true friend, the Savior, and others who have become like him, particularly our eternal partners. The scriptures give us this glorious promise: "...That same sociality which exists among us here shall exist among us there, only coupled with eternal glory..."<sup>7</sup>

## COURTSHIP

*[President Tanner]*

I just love that scripture. This brings us to the second "ship": Courtship. Friendship should play a key role in courtship and marriage. Romantic love needs to grow out of and be infused with the qualities we associate with friendship. When I think of lovers, I picture them gazing into each other's eyes. When I think of friends, I picture them gazing out onto the world with similar vision. You and your spouse need to be able to see life with similar eyes. It's important to share similar values about such matters as religion, family, child-rearing, education, politics, and so forth. It is good to be compatible in your sense of humor and tastes—as friends usually are. Now, you don't have to be exactly alike, but you need to share essential values in common. And then you need to keep your friendship in good repair over the years. For, as one observer put it: "It is not a lack of love, but a lack of friendship that makes unhappy marriages."<sup>8</sup>

*[Sister Tanner]*

Friendship is the foundation for a lasting romance in the courtship pyramid. Let me tell you a little story to illustrate this point.

It is the story of Isaac and Rebecca. Now this is not the Biblical account. It is about our daughter Rebecca and her suitor Isaac. Our Rebecca was not persuaded to marry her Isaac nearly as easily as was the Old Testament Rebekah. Our Becky was 21. She had signed up to do a summer internship through BYU in Mozambique. She had also started doing preliminary dental and doctor appointments for a mission application. Another option in her mind was applying for a master's program in her field. In short she was trying to decide what to do with the next phase of her life. We all wondered which would win out of the 3 M's – Mozambique, mission, or master's degree.

*[President Tanner]*

Does that sound sort of familiar? Meanwhile Isaac came along in her pursuit and soon offered a choice of a fourth M - marriage. He was headed for medical school in a few months and he did not want to go without Becky. He later told us that he had his own 3 M's that he hoped she would choose – marriage to me, medical school, and eventually motherhood. He said, "If she didn't I knew I would be a fourth M - miserable."

*[Sister Tanner]*

Becky stood at the brink of many glamorous opportunities, and it was hard for her to set aside some of her dreams. (Parenthetically I would like to say that this is a pitfall for lots of young adults today. One project after another seems to get in the way marriage.) What finally won Becky over was Isaac's intrinsic goodness and his kindness to her. He did the romantic things like taking her on nice dates, but this was not the most important thing to her. What she liked was how he put her feelings and her needs above his own. He did little thoughtful things, the kinds of things that one friend would do for another. Becky realized that he had the qualities that would endure through good and bad times. So she did marry Isaac. And now she reflects that she was right about his great strengths being a wonderful asset to their relationship.

*[President Tanner]*

So now we have our own Rebecca and Isaac in our family. In the history of marriage, this is called "companionate marriage." This is the idea that the purpose of marriage is not just about economics or even procreation. It's about companionship. That God established marriage between a man and woman, in part, so we would not be alone.

The poet John Milton was an early advocate for companionate marriage. In his great poem on the Fall, *Paradise Lost*, Milton describes Adam as feeling lonely in the Garden. In the Bible, God declares that "it is not good for man to be alone." In *Paradise Lost*, Milton has Adam tell the Creator that it is not good for him to be alone. He says that I feel somehow incomplete. I look around and see all the animals in pairs, but I am not. I want someone I can converse with, someone more on my level than the animals. The animals just aren't enough. He does not want a pet. He wants a companion. Milton's God is pleased that Adam understands his need for companionship and so He creates Eve to meet this need. Adam loves her with rapturous intensity. He loves her beauty and her grace. But mostly he loves her companionship. She feels like the missing half of his soul. He tells an angel that he especially loves:

"Those thousand decencies that daily flow  
From all her words and actions mixt with Love  
And sweet compliance, which declare unfeign'd  
Union of Mind, or in us both one Soul;"<sup>9</sup>

I feel this way about Susan. In fact, I used these few lines from *Paradise Lost* to dedicate my book on *Paradise*

Lost to her. For "those thousand decencies that daily flow" from her goodness.

*[Sister Tanner]*

Thank you. In marriage there should be a union of the mind and soul, not just the body. Beck was attracted to Isaac not only physically, but even more for his thousand daily decencies. These kindnesses promised an enduring friendship and they expressed qualities of character that would last even when physical beauties eventually fade.

*[President Tanner]*

So you get the point. Friendship, then, should form the foundation of romantic love—the love that leads to courtship and marriage. Likewise, friendship and romantic love, both of them, can only become what God intends them to be when they are founded on charity, the “pure love of Christ.”

As we learn in Moroni and Corinthians, charity is patient, long-suffering, kind, free from envy, and unselfish. Charity leads lovers to rejoice in truth, to believe, to hope, and to endure.<sup>10</sup> This is the kind of love that we need in our marriage and you need in your romance. Couples whose love is based on the pure love of Christ will want the best for each other. They will be selfless, patient, and kind. These are the qualities we should seek for in courtship and in marriage.

*[Sister Tanner]*

One of the ways to develop a strong, loving companionship is with good communication. Communication is the way a good romantic relationship begins and also endures. When they were not yet married our children used to often ask me how is it that anyone ever gets together. It seemed like such a mysterious puzzle to them. I know that everyone’s falling-in-love story is different. But there seems to be at least one commonality among most stories. This is an ease and spontaneity in conversation. So many couples try to explain why they were attracted to each other. They often say things like, “we just talked and talked; I lost track of time when we were talking; it was so comfortable to talk; we share the same sense of humor; we love talking about similar interests and values.

It was like that for me on my first date with John. All evening we were surrounded by myriads of people, but I felt like it was just the two of us, and we couldn’t stop talking.

I’ve heard it said that “Love is a long conversation.” I believe it. In fact I often joke with our children that if I ever run out of things to say to Dad, then our marriage will be over. I’m pretty safe at saying that though, because we love to talk to one another about everything.

*[President Tanner]*

We haven't run out of things yet. When we were preparing this talk, I found another version of this quote that I like a lot: “A happy marriage is a long conversation that always seems too short.”<sup>11</sup> I like that.

Communication can be fun and heady in a romantic relationship. But it is also essential to communicate prior to marriage so that you really get to know someone's deeper self. It is not good enough to just joke around together or to speak in inch-deep generalities. It's particularly important on this campus of many languages and cultures that you learn to really get to know a potential spouse. Through wise and careful assessment of each other and through good communication you can avoid possible future heartache. You can know if you truly are or are not suited for each other. If you need help, you can seek premarital counseling with professionals and you can talk to church leaders. You should go into marriage with your eyes wide open about your own and your future spouse's strengths and weaknesses. Then after marriage have should have your eyes half closed. When there is poor communication in a relationship difficulties may arise, misunderstandings occur, and feelings may be wounded.

*[Sister Tanner]*

So to sum this up, we sometimes look for happiness in exotic places, like Mozambique, and for romance in mystique, money, or charm. We sometimes look just for looks. Instead, we need to look for friends who embody Christ-like character. As you date, seek friendships which have enduring strength and which can provide a firm foundation for a marriage. After you have established a solid, virtuous base in your relationship there is a place at the peak of the pyramid for physical intimacy—in marriage.

## **PHYSICAL RELATIONSHIP**

*[President Tanner]*

The physical relationship between a man and a woman can be a beautiful blessing. However, if the physical part of romance comes too early or becomes inappropriately intimate prior to marriage, it can take over. It can become the tail that wags the dog in a relationship. This can lead to heartache, remorse, and loss of temple privileges.

Our physical emotions are powerful and exciting. This is how they are meant to be. Again they are meant to be a blessing, but this is precisely why they need to be kept in check until other fundamental parts of the relationship are developed and until after love has been sealed by marriage vows.

*[Sister Tanner]*

A number of years ago we attended a regional conference of combined BYU stakes. President James E. Faust was one of the speakers. His wife, Ruth, was accompanying him, so he brought her to the pulpit by his side as he began. He told how she was the love of his life and how he had to work at winning her over. Then he said, “Our first kiss was at the marriage altar – but we've been making up for it ever since.”

That may sound like a very old-fashioned story to many of you, but in being cautious about expressing physical intimacy too soon in a relationship, we need to be a little old-fashioned. In our current times there seems to be

no check on physical intimacy before marriage – or at any other time for that matter.

*[President Tanner]*

We have taught our children some old-fashioned principles that we hope have provided robes of protection for them. I also used these when I counseled young single adults as a campus bishop. We tried to create some catchy phrases so they would remember them easily in times of danger and decision. We want to share just four principles that you can also use as guidelines when you are dating and courting.

1. Avoid the dangers of the dark. Stay in well lighted places. Literally and figuratively. There's wisdom in leaving the lights on—on the porch, in the living room, at the dance. And there's safety in shunning places where you feel a darkness in spirit. Remember: avoid the dangers of the dark.

*[Sister Tanner]*

2. Beware the hazard of the horizontal. Don't lie down together with a date. Just don't do it - not to watch a movie, or to read a book, or to rest at the beach. There are hazards in the horizontal!

*[President Tanner]*

3. Remember the perils of privacy. Find public places to be alone. Learn even to have your intimate talks with others around you. There is great safety in being together where you can easily be interrupted. This is true for your computer and TV as well as for dating relationships. I remember that I particularly worried about young couples who would rent a house while they were still engaged. They wanted to spend time alone together and I would remind them to remember the perils of privacy. As a Bishop I had a policy called the "Ring, Ring" policy. When they got engaged they got a ring and I got a ring. This was one piece of advice that I gave them: There are perils in too much privacy.

*[Sister Tanner]*

4. Modesty is a must. Everything about your appearance, your speech, and your demeanor should bespeak that you are a literal spirit son or daughter of Heavenly Father. If we truly understand the paramount significance of our bodies in our Father's plan, we would show great honor for our bodies. When you dress and act modestly you demonstrate your understanding of this great doctrine. So, modesty is a must!

*[President Tanner]*

Now, these principles, most of them, are embedded in the Honor Code. We encourage you, we plead with you, we admonish you to live by the code of honor you promised to keep when you came here. Its rules and

guidelines are meant to bless you.

And apart from the value of following the sound principles embedded in the Honor Code, simply learning to keep your word is also an important preparation for marriage. Would you really want to marry someone who has shown that he or she either cannot or will not keep promises? This would raise questions in my mind as to whether or not I can trust the person to keep promises made to me. You prove your trustworthiness as a potential marriage partner when you keep your promises. When you break your word you erode trust and potentially sew seeds of doubt in a future spouse.

*[Sister Tanner]*

You can also protect yourself from making bad choices if you choose to be with others who are also trying to make good choices. Someone with whom you will want to share the rest of your life will only want the very best for you. It says in *For the Strength of Youth*, “Choose friends who share your values so you can strengthen and encourage each other in living high standards. A true friend will encourage you to be your best self.”<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the Lord planned for us to become one in every way. A physical relationship can help cement our spiritual union. We are made for each other. But these powerful desires must be kept within the bounds that the Lord has set. As Alma taught his son Shiblon: “...bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love...”<sup>13</sup> To bridle is not to banish but to channel.

*[President Tanner]*

Our model for marriage may be found in the very first love story. The Lord said that it was not good that Adam should be alone. So He created Eve to be “an help meet for him.” Through a misunderstanding of the archaic term “meet” the words “helpmeet” and “helpmate” have been invented and accepted into our language. However, the real meaning of this scripture is that Eve was created to be a “meet” help for Adam. “Meet” means a “fit” or “suitable help.” So Eve was to be a special kind of helper, one who is “suited to, worthy of, or corresponding to him.” Both a husband and a wife should seek to be such suitable companions for each other.

*[Sister Tanner]*

After learning this, Adam was taught that he and Eve should “cleave unto one another and they twain should become one flesh.” So here it is, in the first marriage are all of the elements we have been discussing today: The scriptures first emphasize that God made a help meet for Adam, emphasizing their companionable relationship. Then they mention that the Lord authorizes the physical relationship: “they shall be one flesh.”

This is a marriage built to last, for it is built on our pyramid of friendship, courtship, and physical relationship.

*[President Tanner]*

Speaking of a marriage meant to last, let me just share some tender remarks made by President Hinckley about Sister Hinckley near the end of their lives. He said:

"May I be personal for a moment? I sat at dinner across the table from my wife the other evening. It was fifty-five years ago that we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. The wondrous aura of young womanhood was upon her. She was beautiful, and I was bewitched. Now, for more than half a century, we have walked together through much of storm as well as sunshine. Today neither of us stands as tall as we once did. As I looked at her across the table, I noted a few wrinkles in her face and hands. But are they less beautiful than before? No, in fact, they are more so. Those wrinkles have a beauty of their own, and inherent in their very presence is something that speaks reassuringly of strength and integrity and a love that runs more deeply and quietly than ever before."<sup>14</sup>

Now this is an example of lasting love! When you marry, don't marry for looks, wealth, or any other fading quality. Look for someone who will "wear well" as we like to say in my family. Look for a marriage that will last.

*[Sister Tanner]*

To me, President's Hinckley's tribute to his wife sounds like the epitome of sanctified, fulfilling friendship and love. I know what it is to have such a friend. I love John for his "thousand decencies that daily flow from all [his] words and actions mixt with Love" in our relationship.

He was kind and thoughtful and romantic in our courtship. This continued even when he was going to school full time, working full time and we had three children under the age of four. He has shown this by helping me in my busy roles, bathing the little children every night, scrubbing the kitchen floor, and being my window to the world – keeping me abreast to what was happening out there. Through the years he supported the children in plays, concerts, athletic events, and papers to write. He would give me moments of reprieve – for a walk or a weekend getaway or a trip to the temple. In my more-than-full time assignment as Young Women President, he was solicitous and loving. When I came home tired at night he made cheese toast (and other such delicacies), so I didn't have to cook. He was my muse and my editor in my writing and talks. He prayed for me and gave me priesthood blessings. He was a "meet" help or a help suited for me in every way. I would like to pay tribute to him with this favorite 17th Century love poem by Anne Bradstreet.

"To My Dear and Loving Husband"

If ever two were one, then surely we.

If ever man were loved by wife, then thee;

If ever wife was happy in a man,

Compare with me, ye women, if you can.

I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold.

Or all the riches that the East doth hold.  
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,  
Nor ought but love from thee, give recompense.  
Thy love is such I can no way repay,  
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.  
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere  
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

*[President Tanner]*

Thank you, that is so sweet! I too pray that we can so persevere that we can live together forever! I want to just reciprocate by quoting from a poem that Susan knows well. I first quoted these lines to Susan when we were dating. It was on her doorstep during a surprise visit to her apartment. She had just washed her hair and was a little embarrassed to have to greet me with hair dripping wet and no make-up. But, as she opened the door I said, quoting Shakespeare's Sonnet 116:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O no; it is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

Ours has been a marriage of true minds--grounded on friendship, which blossomed into romance, and was capped by physical love.

*[Sister Tanner]*

It is our earnest prayer that you, too, will find joy in your lives through our covenant relationships with friends, family, and God as we have in ours.

*[President Tanner]*

We pray that you will make deep friendships, friendships built on Christ-like virtues. From among such friends, may you find one whom you will want to court and with whom you will build a happy marriage. And in your covenant marriage, may you find an even deeper, eternal friendship, sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise and Temple covenants and then crowned with a sacred and joyful special closeness that comes from a sanctified physical relationship.

*[Sister Tanner]*

That we all may find joy in the holy socialities that the Lord has provided for us, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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nbsp;[1] A. Bartlett Giamatti, “A Family of Freedoms and Responsibilities” in A Free and Ordered Space, p. 84

nbsp;[2] [Proverbs 18:24](#)

[3] [Matthew 10:39; 16:25](#)

[4] HC 5:517

[5] [Mosiah 18](#)

[6] [John 15:12-15](#)

[7] [Doctrine and Covenants 130:2](#)

[8] Friedrich Nietzsche

[9] Paradise Lost, 8:601-04

[10] [Moroni 7:45](#)

[11] André Maurois

[12] [For the Strength of Youth](#)

[13] [Alma 38:12](#)

[14] [BYU, March 1, 1992](#)