

“It Is Thy House, a Place fo Thy Holiness”

Gwen B. Goaslind

*Wife of General Authority emeritus;
mother; matron of Manti Utah Temple.*

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A couple of years ago a friend of ours was invited to serve as a volunteer at a temple open house. One of her assignments was to guide people from the receiving doors to enter the temple. Her duty station positioned her near a larger-than-life art print of the Savior, in which He appeared to be reaching towards those in the waiting line. In his extended hands were visible the imprints of the nail wounds.

The people were coming to see the completion of the beautiful temple, and she noticed as the people approached the many facial expressions and excited conversation. She said it was interesting to watch as each person eventually made eye contact with the picture of the Savior on the wall. There was a marked change of countenance, and their voices took on a hushed tone when needing to speak. Each visitor seemed to absorb "the message" of the moment and the out-stretched hands offering, "come unto me."

Temples are houses of the Lord wherein He may dwell and where He may pour out His blessings. The Savior said that ordinances performed therein "bear record of me, even Jesus Christ" (D&C 68:6). When Solomon's temple was completed, virtually the whole Israelite nation came together to celebrate the dedication (2 Chronicles 5-7). So, too, in our day, each temple dedication is a time of rejoicing for the Church.

Why is a temple dedication such a joyous occasion? President Boyd K. Packer explained, "All roads lead to the temple, for it is there that we are prepared in all things to qualify us to enter the presence of the Lord."[1](#)

All things in the temple do bear record of Him and of His atonement. "It is thy house, a place of thy holiness" (D&C 109:13).

Elder Lionel Kendrick reminded us, "The temple is a place of holiness. It is the most sacred and holy place on earth and should be treated with the greatest degree of reverence and respect. Reverence in the temple is an expression to the Lord that we consider it to be sacred and that we recognize it to be, indeed, His holy house."[2](#)

We have seen many temples being built around the world, where sacred ordinances can be performed, thus blessing many lives. President Gordon B. Hinckley said:

"Each temple built by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stands as an expression of the testimony of this people that God our Eternal Father lives, that He has a plan for the blessing of His sons and daughters of all generations, that His Beloved Son, Jesus the Christ, who was born in

Bethlehem of Judea and crucified on the cross of Golgotha, *is* the Savior and Redeemer of the world, whose atoning sacrifice makes possible the fulfillment of that plan in the eternal life of each who accepts and lives the gospel. Every temple, be it large or small, old or new, is an expression of our testimony that life beyond the grave is as real and certain as is mortality. *There would be no need for temples if the human spirit and soul were not eternal.* Every ordinance performed in these sacred houses is everlasting in its consequences."[3](#)

Temples are a sanctuary from the world, a place where we find peace and happiness. We feel the Lord's presence there as we learn through the Spirit of His purposes and teachings. As parents, we recognize the need to teach our children, to prepare them for the blessings of the temple. It has been said that we go to holy temples to make covenants. We go home to keep our covenants.

As parents, we want our children to develop a love for the temple. You will remember the counsel found in Doctrine and Covenants 68:28: "And they shall also teach their children to pray and to walk uprightly before the Lord." We should provide opportunities to learn about the temple. The Larsen family enjoyed this experience.

"It was a cold and snowy November night and we were part of the last group to attend the open house for the Bountiful Utah Temple. It was after 9:00 P.M. when we found a parking place for our old Suburban several blocks from the temple. The roads had been snow-packed, and the drive up to the temple had been a little bit frightening. We had even stopped and offered a prayer, and now we had arrived safely and on time.

"The temple shone brightly in contrast to the black, stormy sky. We marveled at its beauty as we trudged through the snow to the entrance of the temple. We looked like seven walking snowmen before we got to the long canopy that sheltered the line of visitors waiting to get in.

"Before entering the actual temple, we watched a short film about the Church and the purpose of temples. At one point we stopped in front of a replica of the *Christus* statue.

"In the background, I could hear a very familiar song playing, and our son Daniel began singing in his sweet nine-year-old voice, 'Lead me, guide me, walk beside me, help me find the way.' I squeezed his hand, and we both felt the warmth of the Spirit.

"We all enjoyed the temple visit. The best part was standing in the celestial room as a family. We stood together with arms around each other and promised that we would all be back in this same temple, in this same room again someday. What a great joy!

"We hated to leave, but it was getting late and the storm was getting worse. As we left the temple grounds we looked up at the angel Moroni. He was glowing. Then we noticed that the lights were just right, and you could see Moroni's shadow, trumpet and all, against the cloudy sky. It was incredible. We had never seen anything like it. It left us with a powerful witness that the temple was a sacred place. The walk back to the Suburban was long. But we were warm and filled with the Spirit. The roads back home were treacherous, but we were at peace knowing we had been in the house of the Lord, together as a family, and we would be again."[4](#)

President Ezra Taft Benson addressed parents and grandparents: "I would like to share with you what I would hope you would teach your children about the temple.

"The temple is a sacred place, and the ordinances in the temple are of a sacred character. Because of its sacredness we are sometimes reluctant to say anything about the temple to our children and grandchildren.

"As a consequence, many do not develop a real desire to go to the temple, or when they go there, they do so without much background to prepare them for the obligations and covenants they enter into.

". . . If our children and their children are taught well, [the temple] will continue to be a symbol of special significance."[5](#)

It is in temples that families are organized according to the order the Lord has revealed. Families are the pattern-unit of heaven. Indeed, *families can be together forever*.

The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gave us "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." It is a guide to tell us what a family ought to be and why. A portion of it states: "In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be *united eternally*."[6](#)

The other day we saw an automobile with a personalized license plate which read 4EVR FAM. I enjoy figuring out what the letters stand for when I add vowels to them and decided this would read "Forever Family." These parents were teaching their children what their desire was every time they got in the car to drive anywhere.

What do our families need to know about temple and family history work? How can we teach them to love this service? One of the best ways is to set a proper example by attending the temple regularly where possible and testifying often about the blessings you experience in temple worship and the importance of ordinances performed there.

Elder David B. Haight said: "When we return from the temple, we should share with our children and loved ones at home our feelings about what we experienced. We should not speak of the sacred ordinances but of the love and power manifest by them."[7](#)

Family home evenings provide the needed time and proper setting to tell your children about their heritage and the importance of eternal families. Family life here is the schoolroom in which we prepare for family life there. Elijah returned to the earth to bestow the keys of the sealing ordinance to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The coming of Elijah was described this way: "And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming" (Joseph Smith-History 1:39).

One evening we attended a lovely wedding reception. A beautiful picture of the bride was displayed by the wedding book. Close to it was another picture that caught my eye. It showed the bride, her mother, her grandmother and other great-grandmothers to seven generations. It was an impressive picture. The bride's grandmother, Sister Marjorie Hinckley, said she and President Hinckley have given each of their granddaughters one of these pictures when they were married. Their hope is that seeing the seven generations of women in the family will give them a "feeling of belonging." She said each has hung the picture in a prominent place in her home. On the back of the frame is a short biography of each of the women. What a lovely way to show love of family and to reinforce the feeling of belonging.

The women share a common bond, which ties each succeeding generation together. One granddaughter said on a particularly trying day she looked at the picture of these women and said, "I

can do it, too." We have a lot of people who are cheering us on and who care about us.

Reflect for a moment upon those who have gone before you. Pause to remember or at least to imagine the lives, struggles, sacrifices of your ancestors. What do you know of your parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents? We can be assured that those people who have gone before us are somehow part of us today. The cords that link our present to their past come together to form a rich tapestry that is none other than the Lord's handiwork.

President Spencer W. Kimball spoke of his appreciation for his ancestors. "Over the years as my thoughts and heart have turned to the lives of my noble ancestors, my appreciation for them has increased. Learning about my ancestors has not only turned my heart to them, but has helped me see eternity more clearly. My own life is rooted not just in the present, but in the lives of my ancestors as well."[8](#)

"As our posterity read of our life's experiences, they, too, will come to know and love us. And in that glorious day when our families are together in the eternities, we will already be acquainted."[9](#)

We have the blessing and responsibility to identify our ancestors and perform their sacred ordinances if we want to maintain our eternal family units. We must do their temple work so that they too can come unto Christ. We all have a responsibility and have been commanded to do this work for those who did not have an opportunity to accept the gospel while they lived on earth.

The Prophet Joseph Smith instructed in Doctrine and Covenants 128:15 "And now, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters, let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, as Paul says concerning the fathers-they without us cannot be made perfect-neither can we without our dead be made perfect."

Including our children in doing our family history research helps to strengthen the link with the past. Let them take part in special ordinances. Last Christmas, a family friend visited Manti, Utah, with several members of her family. It is part of a Christmas tradition started several years ago as they returned to trace their heritage in the area. Their ancestors were among those who helped to build the Manti temple. On the day after Thanksgiving, members of the Hendrickson family gathered to do an endowment session at the temple. Following this, the family met in the baptistry at the temple while younger family members did baptisms for the dead. The next day was spent in the hills outside of town choosing a Christmas tree to chop down and return home to decorate. When the grandmother asked one grandson what was the best part of the outing, he replied, "going to the temple to do the baptisms." What a marvelous tradition. Traditions are the cement that hold families together.

President David O. McKay taught, "I believe there are few . . . who comprehend the full meaning and power of the temple endowment. Seen for what it is, it is the step-by-step ascent into the Eternal Presence [of the Lord]. If our young people could but glimpse it, it would be the most powerful spiritual motivation of their lives."[10](#)

Church auxiliaries provide teaching opportunities for all ages of children in whatever class they attend. The making and keeping of sacred temple covenants and other principles are supported by class lessons. We are a covenant-making church. We must learn and teach the importance of what covenants are, how we can keep them, and why we need to honor them.

Youths twelve years of age and older, who are baptized members, and un-endowed young single adults can participate in doing baptisms for the dead. Young men must hold the priesthood. Limited-

use recommends are issued by proper authorities for this purpose.

Youth of the Manti Utah Stake participated in a "search and rescue" project similar to the "Second Rescue" project of the Riverton Wyoming Stake. They were aware of many, buried in the cemetery in the shadow of the Manti Temple, who had faithfully worked and sacrificed in the building of the temple but who had died before it was completed. How many were waiting for these exalting ordinances? They researched records, entered names on the Personal Ancestral File, found names of individuals whose work was not completed, and they performed baptisms for more than two hundred pioneers. The spirit of Elijah has come to these young people.

Gratitude expressed in family prayers for the house of the Lord and sacred ordinances can also be special times. You could include in your prayers a desire that your children will keep themselves worthy to receive temple blessings. This may also open up opportunity for a discussion on your hopes and desires for them.

Prophets for many years have counseled us to obtain and display pictures of the temple in our homes, where children can see them regularly. Perhaps each child could choose his own temple picture to have in his room.

A greater understanding of temple blessings came to one family following the death of two of their children. In their sorrow and grief, the parents gently discussed the importance of the eternal family and comforted their loved ones with the knowledge that they were sealed together, making the tremendous loss much easier to understand and accept.

President Thomas S. Monson shared this tender story of the importance of teaching children. He writes: "Long ago I received a glimpse of eternity and what it means to be sealed in the temple of God. I received a telephone call from a lovely woman, now a widow. She and her husband had been members of the Temple View Ward when I lived there. She called to say that her precious daughter, in the prime of life, had passed away.

"The night before the funeral, I went to the mortuary, where I saw a host of friends and family. At one end of the room was the open casket. Within the casket I saw the body of this beautiful, sweet mother and devoted wife, the daughter of my friend. At the side of the casket stood the husband to whom she had been sealed, along with their children, the oldest to the youngest. Before I could say a word, a tiny girl, the first one in the line, looked up and said, 'I know who you are. You're Brother Monson.' Then, with her hand in mine, she took me to the open casket and said, 'Isn't she pretty? She's my mommy.' Tears began to blur my vision. She looked up again and said, 'Don't cry, Brother Monson. Look at me; I'm not crying. My mommy taught me about the temple and eternity and promised me that we would be together again, and my mommy always told the truth.'

"I stooped down to where I could look at her and said, 'Little one, you will indeed be with your mommy again, for you are a family forever.' The truth, taught by a mother, had found lodgment in the heart of a child." [11](#)

One of the loveliest blessings that those who serve in temples have is the privilege to witness little children, dressed in white, going to sealing rooms where they join with their waiting parents to be sealed for time and all eternity. You can see in their beautiful faces that they know this is something special and that the temple is a special place. Our own family remembers witnessing the sealing of one of our grandchildren and how blessed we felt for this sacred experience.

Another family had this blessing not long ago when a little two-year old was sealed to their family. As she walked into the beautiful sealing room, she saw her grandmother, ran to her and gave her a hug, and then to the grandfather, and then to an uncle, and finally to her parents. All wept tears of joy as she greeted each loved one with such happiness. After the sealing, the family reflected on this little

one's loving expressions. They shared the feeling that this is what it will be like for families in the eternities-warmly, personally greeting each family member with love and eternal joy.

As children grow, simple, clear teachings about temple marriage for time and eternity, the holy endowment, exaltation, and eternal life (the kind of life God lives) can be emphasized. It will strengthen not only our children and their understanding but can also be a great encouragement for us to live righteously in this life and find answers to life's challenges.

How can marriage in the temple be the beginning of a righteous union? Life does not end at death, nor was marriage intended to end at death. But marriage by civil officers or by Church officers outside of the temple is for this life only. Eternal marriage in the temple is the only marriage that will continue after death. Exaltation in the highest level of the celestial kingdom comes only to those who make and keep the covenant of eternal marriage.

As the Proclamation states, "We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ." [12](#)

The new and everlasting covenant of marriage exalts to the highest level of the celestial kingdom. By making and keeping our covenants, we may be united with our families for eternity in the greatest of all the blessings of our Father and His Son. Just as baptism is the gateway to salvation, the sealing ordinance is the gateway to eternal life and exaltation, the crowning ordinance of the temple.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie summed up these principles this way: "The most important things that any member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ever does in this world are: 1. To marry the right person, in the right place, by the right authority; and 2. To keep the covenant made in connection with this holy and perfect order of matrimony-thus assuring the obedient persons of an inheritance of exaltation in the celestial kingdom." [13](#)

President Joseph Fielding Smith defined "all the Father has" or the new and everlasting covenant as "the sum total of all gospel covenants and obligations. . . . It is everything-the fullness of the gospel." [14](#)

Worldly philosophies on marriage and its duration, with all its pomp and display, pale significantly when compared to President Gordon B. Hinckley's wise observations: "Was there ever a man who truly loved a woman, or a woman who truly loved a man, who did not pray that their relationship might continue beyond the grave? Has a child ever been buried by parents who did not long for the assurance that their loved one would again be theirs in a world to come? Can anyone believing in eternal life doubt that the God of heaven would grant his sons and daughters that most precious attribute of life, the love that finds its most meaningful expression in family relationships? No, reason demands that the family relationship shall continue after death. The human heart longs for it. The God of heaven has revealed a way whereby it may be secured. The sacred ordinances of the house of the Lord [the temple] provide for it." [15](#)

Every time a pure and dedicated couple kneel at a holy temple altar and make covenants by the proper authority, a new eternal family organization is founded, intended to endure for time and all eternity. Entering into a clear commitment to build such a family will make possible the greatest joys on earth. They will be inspired by the hope of a glorious inheritance in God's celestial realms. They and we have the potential through agency and covenants to receive an eternal reward or in other words, all that our Father in Heaven has.

We must clearly understand simply "going through the temple" does not guarantee such blessings. A

celestial marriage, like a celestial home, is built line upon line, by careful attention to priorities, needs and the keeping of God's commandments.

As the Proclamation states, "Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities." [16](#)

Fathers, mothers, teach your sons and daughters the order of heaven—worthily preparing to receive temple covenants and abiding in their covenants thereafter, determines their eternal reward. All of Christ's promises will be ours *if* we will walk up to all our covenants, for He has said, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10).

In an address at the October 1995 general conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley said of temples: "These unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology. I urge our people everywhere, with all of the persuasiveness of which I am capable, to *live worthy to hold a temple recommend*, to secure one and regard it as a precious asset, and to make a greater effort to go to the house of the Lord and partake of the spirit and the blessings to be had therein. I am satisfied that every man or woman who goes to the temple in a spirit of sincerity and faith leaves the house of the Lord a better man or woman. There is need for constant improvement in all of our lives. There is need occasionally to leave the noise and the tumult of the world and step within the walls of a sacred house of God, there to feel His spirit in an environment of holiness and peace." [17](#)

The full array of temple blessings can be ours if we will prepare spiritually and worthily. Each of us may receive all the Father has in His plan of happiness, which is eternal joy within heavenly, organized families. Regularly attending the temple to assist others in receiving their blessings will bring us happiness here and hereafter.

It is in the temple that we are able to grow closer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and their plan for us. It allows us to serve others and to gain greater knowledge.

I bear my witness that all that takes place in the temple has eternal significance, and I am so grateful for the privilege of serving in the Manti temple with my husband. It has been one of the richest blessings of our life.

May we all recognize that temple blessings can only be fully realized in the house of the Lord. He loves us. His hands are extended to all, complete with nail imprints in the palms. He ever calls, "Come unto me." I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

[1](#) Boyd K. Packer, *Remember Me: Relief Society Personal Study Guide 1* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989) 84; see also "The Visiting Teacher: Attending the Temple: Challenges and Blessings," *Ensign*, August 1994, 63.

[2](#) Lionel L. Kendrick, "Enhancing Our Temple Experience," *Ensign*, May 2001, 78.

- [3](#) Gordon B. Hinckley, "This Peaceful House of God," *Ensign*, May 1993, 74; italics added.
- [4](#) Letter in possession of the author.
- [5](#) Ezra Taft Benson, "What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple," *Ensign*, August 1985, 6, 8.
- [6](#) First Presidency and Council of the Twelve, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 102; italics added.
- [7](#) David B. Haight, *A Light unto the World* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 55.
- [8](#) Spencer W. Kimball, "The Things of Eternity-Stand We in Jeopardy?" *Ensign*, January 1977, 3.
- [9](#) Spencer W. Kimball, "President Kimball Speaks Out on Personal Journals," *Ensign*, December 1980, 61.
- [10](#) Truman G. Madsen, *The Radiant Life* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994), 102-3.
- [11](#) Thomas S. Monson, *Inspiring Experiences That Build Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 206.
- [12](#) First Presidency, "The Family: A Proclamation," 102.
- [13](#) Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 118.
- [14](#) Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols., ed. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), 1:156, 158.
- [15](#) Gordon B. Hinckley, *Be Thou an Example* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 130; italics added.
- [16](#) First Presidency, "The Family: A Proclamation," 102.
- [17](#) Gordon B. Hinckley, "Of Missions, Temples, and Stewardship," *Ensign*, November 1995, 53; italics added.

