



CREATING TEMPLE

*Patterns*

*in*

YOUR HOME

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## Chapter 1

# APPLYING TEMPLE PRINCIPLES TO YOUR HOME

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*Only the home can compare  
with the temple in sacredness.*

—BIBLE DICTIONARY

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**T**his book started with a simple question that has grown into a deep inquiry: If the temple is the house of the Lord, what principles can we apply to make our homes an extension of the temple?

Years ago as I was studying the scriptures and trying to learn more about the temple, I was led to the Bible Dictionary in the King James Version of the Bible used by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I looked up the word *temple* and loved what I read: “A temple is literally a house of the Lord, a holy sanctuary in which sacred ceremonies and ordinances of the gospel are performed by and for the living and also in behalf of the dead. A place where the Lord may come, it is the most holy of any place of worship on the earth. *Only the home can compare with the temple in sacredness*” (emphasis added).

The last sentence hit me hard. What a privilege and responsibility it is to make our home a house of the Lord. As I have designed and built homes in the past, I have wondered what it means to have a home comparable to the temple. I have lived in apartments and starter homes, bought existing family homes, and recently built an empty nester home. As I have pondered these

feelings of bringing our temporal self in line with our spiritual self, I've learned that the size of the home and cost of furnishings or finishes have little to do with what others feel as they come into our home. So what does make a home feel holy? What are the essential building blocks to create the spiritual, comforting feeling that we all yearn for?

One Sunday as I was pondering on my home and temples, it occurred to me that there is a pattern to building temples. I sat down and created a list of ten principles that will help create that same pattern in our homes. After making the list and starting to research, I also conversed with friends and family about thoughts and stories they might have. I was excited and blessed with much understanding. With President Nelson's recent announcement of making our church a home-centered, church-supported institution, we all need to know about these patterns and how to recreate them. Have you ever thought the phrase "temples will dot the earth" can also mean that our homes are part of that prophecy?

One concern I had about writing this book was the overwhelming guilt about trying to create a sacred home that sometimes feels chaotic in everyday life. As I reflected on this, I had an epiphany that has gained momentum in my life—the "AND principle." We can have an "ordinary" home AND still have temple-like attributes. We live in such a divisive time when everything has to be on one side or the other. In seminary I learned to be "in the world, but not of the world." AND as we think about this concept, let us remember that because we are in the world AND we have knowledge of the gospel, it can help us arise above many of the problems of today.

In ancient times, temples were sometimes mobile. Moses and the children of Israel had a portable temple. Solomon built a temple that had the finest materials of that period. The worship was the same in the portable and the first stationary temple. The main point was that sacred ordinances were performed there.

We are a worldwide church with many diverse customs and styles. With this in mind, the homes of the many members are very diverse in style. One of the fun and exciting aspects of going to the different temple open houses is seeing the interiors and exteriors of the temple and themes that are represented. The Payson Utah Temple has a beautiful theme around apple blossoms, the Gilbert

Arizona Temple has an agave plant, and the Paris France Temple has a lily and other flowers native to the country. Because all of the temples are beautiful and unique to their area, we aren't able to talk about all the different styles of the temple. This book is not about the style or size of your home, but more about principles that can be applied to your personal homes to help you feel the Spirit.

When the San Diego California Temple was built, Rabbi Wayne Dosick wrote, "The Temple is built . . . of earthly materials to construct a place that inspires heavenly awe. This Mormon Temple uses sweeping architecture to create a space that invokes the celestial heavens that is awesome. . . . We thank them for reminding us how holy a place a mere building can be."

I love that the Rabbi understands that the temple is a symbol of our heavenly home. Many of us understand that the temple is very symbolic on so many levels.

There are so many wonderful quotes about symbols. I have also heard many different opinions about symbols and temples and whether they are correct or if some people are too far reaching in their interpretation of them. As I was going over my individual list of relating temples and homes, I realized that this book is my particular list. I felt that I wanted to emphasize that some people's ideas about certain symbols are sacred to them. I think we need to be careful and not talk about symbol recognition for the entire church. One of the blessings of the temple is the deep personal meaning it gives to each of us individually. If I offer an idea in this book of a certain symbol that I have discovered, please know that I am sharing with you my thoughts and ideas. You may add your own interpretation and thoughts. I hope that as you ponder this book for your own home and family, thoughts will be impressed on your mind of what works for you. I have found three favorite quotes that leaders of the Church have talked about regarding the idea of symbols for the temple.

#### **Quote 1**

A gospel symbol can be an object, event, action, or teaching that represents a spiritual truth. The bread and water of the sacrament, for example, represent the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Symbolism as a mode of teaching is as ancient as Adam, who was taught by an angel that the firstlings of his flocks, which he was commanded to sacrifice, were "a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father" (Moses 5:7). Just as Adam needed help in understanding the symbolism of sacrifice, we may need some guidance in understanding the "ancient and rich"

method the Lord uses to teach us the highest priesthood ordinances of the gospel. The following information from the scriptures, church leaders and Latter-day Saint scholars can help us better understand the rich symbolism found in the temple.

#### **Why Does the Lord Use Symbolism?**

“Behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth” (Moses 6:63).

Symbols are the universal tongue. ... Symbols bring color and strength to language, while deepening and enriching our understandings. Symbols enable us to give conceptual form to ideas and emotions that may otherwise defy the power of words. They take us beyond words and grant us eloquence in the expression of feelings.

I had the privilege to volunteering at the Provo MTC. With this assignment, I was able to learn and then teach others about how to understand the scriptures better. One of the methods taught in our lessons was to look for symbols in the scripture stories and apply them to us personally, especially as a missionary. I know this is a lifetime pursuit and we can continue to look for that symbolism and how to apply it to our lives.

One of the sweetest experiences of living in Boston was the many testimonies that were given by converts of the Church. My testimony was strengthened every time they used an analogy about finding the gospel. One of my favorite testimonies was from a sweet lady who said that before she knew about the gospel, she felt like she was playing a board game and making up the rules as she took part in life. Once she learned about the gospel and the plan of salvation, the game started to make sense to her. She now had the instructions to the game, and she knew how to finish playing the game successfully. Don't you just love this symbolism? It just makes sense.

#### **Quote 2**

Balance the interpretation of symbolism with other revelation and gospel knowledge. ... Fit the interpretation of any symbol into the overall scheme of gospel knowledge. No matter how clever, or how logical, or how ingenious our interpretation of a particular symbol may be, if it contradicts what is revealed in other places, we can assume it is wrong.

I love this quote in that it warns us about being overreaching in our interpretations. I think it is important that we are cautious about trying to make some symbolism fit to benefit us or sensationalize the scriptures and doctrine.

The last quote I feel is to tell us how to be prayerful about attending the temple.

### Quote 3

If you will go to the temple and remember that the teaching is symbolic, you will never go in the proper spirit without coming away with your vision extended, feeling a little more exalted, with your knowledge increased as to things that are spiritual. The teaching plan is superb. It is inspired. The Lord Himself, the Master Teacher, taught His disciples constantly in parables—a verbal way to represent symbolically things that might otherwise be difficult to understand.

I encourage each member who goes to the temple to be prayerful about the symbolism that is taught in the temple. I think if we remember the following three things, we will be filled with insight beyond our comprehension: 1) There is symbolism in gospel teaching and we need to be aware of it. 2) Make sure our interpretations fits with the doctrine that is taught. 3) How is the Spirit teaching me personally?

### *A Temple Ready People*

We are encouraged to be a temple ready people. How can we be temple ready unless we daily live the principles that we need to answer for our temple recommend questions?

As members of the Church it is our privilege and duty to enter into the holy temple worthily. In October 2019, President Russell M. Nelson ended general conference with a reminder of how we can be worthy to enter the temple. He listed the questions asked in a temple recommend interview. These questions have no preference to our outside attributes. They don't ask if we are rich or poor, what ethnicity we are, or even what our church calling is. We are only asked about our worthiness.

I had a sweet experience years ago as I went into a temple recommend interview. The member of the bishopric was our good friend, and it was a privilege to sit down and have him ask me the questions. The first question was, "Do you have faith in and a testimony of God, the Eternal Father, His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost?" I burst into tears while expressing my true conviction that I did have a testimony of the Godhead. I was overcome with emotion because although I do have a testimony of the Godhead, it's not every day that I can answer to someone else that I truly believe this. I was able to verbally answer yes to the question. He then proceeded to the next question. "Do you have a testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and of His role as your Savior and Redeemer?" I also answered yes. He asked the rest of the

questions.

We were down to the last questions that always seems so hard to answer. He asked, “Do you consider yourself worthy to enter the Lord’s house and participate in temple ordinances?” I paused and thought about how I am not perfect. I humbly answered by saying, “I hope I am . . . I’m trying.”

He taught me one of the greatest lessons that has helped me in my life as I try and live worthy of the temple recommend questions. He said, “Michelle, you answered yes to the second question that you believe in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. So, if you believe in the Atonement and you can answer the other questions confidently, you are worthy to enter.”

There was such a peace that came over me as I was joyfully reminded of this principle. I do feel that there are many things in our lives that we are not learning new; we just need to be reminded of them. This is why we go to church each week and partake of the sacrament. This is why we attend the temple as much as we can and why we read our scriptures each day. We need these reminders in our lives. I am thankful that every two years I have the privilege to meet with a priesthood leader and answer these personal, spiritual questions. This experience happened over twenty years ago, and since then I have been asked these questions every two years. As I get to the last question, I tell each priesthood leader that has interviewed me that yes, I can enter the temple because I believe in the Atonement and I need the Lord’s saving grace.

President Nelson said the following concerning temple recommend interviews:

All requirements to enter the temple relate to personal holiness. To assess that readiness, each person who wants to enjoy the blessings of the temple will have two interviews: first with a bishop, bishopric counselor, or branch president; second with a stake or mission president or one of his counselors. In those interviews, several questions will be asked.

Some of those questions have recently been edited for clarity. I would like to review them for you now:

Do you have faith in and a testimony of God, the Eternal Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost?

Do you have a testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and of His role as your Savior and Redeemer?

Do you have a testimony of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Do you sustain the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the prophet, seer, and revelator and as the only person on the earth authorized to exercise all priesthood keys?

Do you sustain the members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as

prophets, seers, and revelators?

Do you sustain the other General Authorities and local leaders of the Church?

The Lord has said that all things are to be “done in cleanliness” before Him (Doctrine and Covenants 42:41).

Do you strive for moral cleanliness in your thoughts and behavior?

Do you obey the law of chastity?

Do you follow the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ in your private and public behavior with members of your family and others?

Do you support or promote any teachings, practices, or doctrine contrary to those of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

Do you strive to keep the Sabbath day holy, both at home and at church; attend your meetings; prepare for and worthily partake of the sacrament; and live your life in harmony with the laws and commandments of the gospel?

Do you strive to be honest in all that you do?

Are you a full-tithe payer?

Do you understand and obey the Word of Wisdom?

Do you have any financial or other obligations to a former spouse or to children?

If yes, are you current in meeting those obligations?

Do you keep the covenants that you made in the temple, including wearing the temple garment as instructed in the endowment?

Are there serious sins in your life that need to be resolved with priesthood authorities as part of your repentance?

Do you consider yourself worthy to enter the Lord’s house and participate in temple ordinances ?

These questions are included in this book to remind you how to live in your everyday life. Most of these questions are about your beliefs and testimony. A major part of your beliefs is influenced by the way you live in your personal surroundings. Are your surroundings in alignment with the temple interview questions?

Now we turn to some principles that can help each of us to think about our own homes. I truly believe that we teach the ideal and then live in reality. As I was writing this book, I was pressed for time in between schedules. I came home to grab a quick dinner and then was off again to my next appointment. I glanced at the sink full of dirty dishes and other messy piles around the house and thought, “You can’t talk about the connection of homes and temples. Look at your home right now. Your sink is full of dirty dishes. You should be more organized. You aren’t good enough to write about this. Who do you think you are?” As I pondered these negative thoughts, I came to the realization that this is not about keeping a perfect home 24/7. We go to *visit* the temples to

worship and serve, AND we *live* in our homes to worship and serve. Yes, the temple is the pinnacle of worship in our lives where sacred ordinances are performed and covenants are made, AND our homes can be a reflection of the temple where we keep our covenants. Let's make sure our surroundings add to that peaceful feeling.

To be a temple ready people and to help with missionary work and temple work, we need to teach the gospel in our homes. In my youth, I lived outside of Utah. After my husband and I were married, we moved to Boston. I have loved all the different areas and wards I have attended. We eventually moved to Utah to an area where more than 90 percent of the population was active members of the Church. There were so many strong families, and I wondered how I was going to be active with the missionary service I wanted to be part of. I decided that I would be a missionary to my children. I would have weekly family home evening and counsels. We would have family prayer and try and keep the Sabbath day holy. We were not always consistent and perfect, but we tried the best we could. My hope was that when my children went out to serve missions, they would be able to say that we tried what the Church leaders and scriptures had taught us and they could testify about living the gospel in our home and how it helped to have joy in our lives.

### *Teach Your Children*

Something I love about the gospel is that we have agency and get to make our own choices and establish our own homes. Some people have come from very difficult family circumstances. Others have come with honorable legacies. I'm sure there is a broad span between the worst and best, but as we continue to grow and age in this lifetime, we can decide what our story going forward will include.

In 1977 Carol Lynn Pearson wrote a sweet Latter-day Saint musical with music by Lex De Azevedo called *My Turn on Earth*. It narrates The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saint's plan of salvation. It has musical numbers about the war in heaven in the premortal world, our journey here on Earth, and ultimately our return to our Heavenly Father and Mother. One of the songs is called "My Story." The lyrics to the first verse say:

I'm the one that writes my own story.

I decide the person I'll be.  
What goes in the plot, and what will not  
is pretty much up to me.

I was blessed with great parents who taught me the gospel. My father always said that he was better than the way he was raised, and he hoped we would be better than we were raised. I, too, hope my children will be better than I was as a parent and we can all continue to improve. So, with a prayerful and humble heart, I hope this book inspires you with ideas that help you and your family grow in the gospel and family life.

Elder Richard G. Scott said, “One of the ultimate blessings we can offer to the world is the power of a Christ-centered home where the gospel is taught, covenants are kept, and love abounds.” President Benson said something similar when he spoke at the Logan Temple Centennial on May 17, 1984. He stated:

I would like to direct my remarks to you 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.

I believe a proper understanding or background will immeasurably help prepare our youth for the temple. This understanding, I believe, will foster within them a desire to seek their priesthood blessings just as Abraham sought his.

Elder Gary E. Stevenson said, “There exists a righteous unity between the temple and the home. Understanding the eternal nature of the temple will draw you to your family; understanding the eternal nature of the family will draw you to the temple.”

Two Book of Mormon accounts stand out to me about the important connection between temples and homes. The first is in the book of Mosiah when King Benjamin is giving an address to his people:

And it came to pass that when they came up to the temple, they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family . . . every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which King Benjamin should speak unto them.” (Mosiah 2:5–6)

The next few chapters are filled with insightful guidance for our families and

ourselves. I love that King Benjamin treasured his people enough to give them counsel about serving others. He also taught by example.

In Mosiah 2:14, we read:

And even I, myself, have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you.” In verse 16 he added, “Behold, I say unto you that because I said unto you that I had spent my days in your service, I do not desire to boast, for I have only been in the service of God.” (Mosiah 2:16)

These scriptures are important because they show that King Benjamin labored with his people just as we should labor with our families and children to make our house a home. We don't do all the work for them, and we don't sit back and watch our children do all the work. We work alongside them. When we do this, each of us carries a lighter burden, we engage in meaningful conversation, and we grow closer together.

The other scripture account that portrays the connection between temples and homes is in 3 Nephi. This is another Book of Mormon event that I wish I were present for. Can you imagine the darkness of the land when the Savior was crucified, and then the brilliant light as He descended to the temple in Bountiful?

And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful; and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place.

And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death.

And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them.

And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. (3 Nephi 11:1–2, 8–10)

Once again, in the chapters that follow, the Nephites received heavenly instruction. Much of it was the same that was taught when Christ preached in Jerusalem before His death. Christ also set up His church on the American continent and gave more beautiful counsel. I'm sure it was an overwhelming “general conference” for these people so blessed to have the Savior in their midst.

In 3 Nephi 17 we read about the Nephites after many days of having the Lord in their midst. In verses 2 and 3 the Savior said, “I perceive that ye are weak, that you cannot understand all my words, which I am commanded of the father to speak unto you at this time. Therefore, go ye unto your homes and ponder upon the things, which I have said, and of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again.”

There is so much to love and learn from these verses. Jesus knew the people were overwhelmed and tired. He encouraged them to go and rest in their homes. He didn't expect them to continue beyond their strength. He knew their homes were a place of refuge from the outside world.

I know that life was different then without all of the distractions of modern-day media, but I can't help but wonder if they felt comfortable in their homes. Were there distractions of contention, clutter, or other disorder? Now let's think about our modern-day homes. As we listen to general conference or come home from church on Sunday, do we ponder and discuss the teachings of our latter-day leaders? Do we feel comfortable in our homes? Are they free from worldly distractions? Are our homes a place of refuge? This is a personal question for all of us to ponder. Some days will be better than others, and some days will be full of chaos, but collectively is our home a place of peace?

The Nephite people were tearful about the Savior leaving, and the Savior stayed and blessed the people who were hurt or sick so that He could heal them. He also blessed the children and asked all of the people to kneel down and pray to Heavenly Father. The Nephites were filled with joy beyond measure. I'm sure when they did eventually go to their homes, these experiences were discussed, and the people pondered in their homes of how they could continue to be a Christlike society.

Here are a few modern-day parables that teach that sometimes we live far below our blessings and opportunities in this life.

The first parable is about a lady who saved up to go on a luxury cruise ship. She was excited to see the world. She booked the cheapest room and brought a suitcase full of saltine crackers to sustain her on her travels. She had spent all of her money on transportation to get to the cruise ship and her ticket to get on the boat. She watched as many of the other passengers on the ship would dress

up and go to fancy dinners in the evening. She was content to just be on the ship. Toward the end of the trip, she discovered that all of the food was already included in the price of her ticket to go on the cruise. She could have eaten at all of the buffets, had five-star service, and eaten more desserts than she knew what to do with. She had denied herself some luxuries (and to a certain extent, lifesaving nutrition) because she didn't understand all that was available to her.

Another parable I love is the following story. There was a newspaper article entitled "Woman lives in poverty but leaves two million dollars." While this woman lived as though she were destitute, she was worth nearly two million dollars.

This discovery was made when her safety deposit boxes were opened. Among deeds to valuable properties and deposit slips for money in American and foreign institutions, there was \$125,000 in US government securities for which the coupons had not been clipped since 1935. It was learned that a Toledo attorney, believing she was poor, had charged her only eight dollars for recent legal services.

As practical mortals, we not only pity this woman but wonder at her lack of understanding in not using the available wealth to secure the good things of life. Having at her command sufficient wealth to satisfy any normal desire to live in ease and comfort, we are appalled at her judgment in choosing to live a life of poverty.

Such a philosophy of life is almost beyond our understanding. Yet, the worldly wealth to which this woman had access was paltry compared to the wealth offered to the humblest member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Lord has said, "The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours. And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, year, more and he that is a faithful and wise steward shall inherit all things" (D&C 78: 18–20, 22).

The securities listed here are unlike those found in the safety deposit boxes of this unfortunate woman. Here is a promissory note given by the one infallible banker. Here is a promise to pay not two million dollars but all the riches of eternity. Are we wisely making use of the wealth available to us and sharing it with our families? Or, like the foolish woman, do we prefer to live

impoverished? We clearly see her lack of wisdom. Yet, many members of the Church are neglecting to take advantage of the spiritual wealth freely offered them and are content to live spiritually poor. They choose to be associated with those who are spiritually undernourished. Latter-day Saints must go to the scriptures, our safety deposit box of knowledge, and then our knowledge must be converted into good acts. And lo! The riches of eternity are ours.

We have and want a wealth of knowledge and inspiration about the temple. Are we learning and sharing this wealth of knowledge with our children and extended families?

There are so many humble homes throughout history that show many of these temple patterns. My thoughts turn to Joseph Smith and the home he was brought up in. Although his home was modest in size and amenities, it was a home where the Spirit dwelt. He could not have had the place of refuge to read the scriptures and receive heavenly visits if there were ill feelings in the home and a disruptive atmosphere. He needed and did have a home where there was love, acceptance, and even a reverence for the holiness that was created there.

From the beginning of time, there are countless stories of people standing up for what is right for our families, our communities, and ourselves. An important and well-known story is from the Old Testament about an ancient prophet of Israel, the prophet Joshua. The following story is as imperative today as it was thousands of years ago.

Joshua was worried about his people because they had their hearts set on worshipping idols and foreign gods. He “gathered all the tribes of Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and they presented themselves before God” (Joshua 24:1).

Joshua expressed his concern and admonished them to repent and to only serve the God of Israel in honesty and precision. Thenceforth, in a powerful testimony that he bore and, in his calling, as their prophet, he commissioned them: “Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

As we read about this bold example of a righteous leader standing up before his people and exhorting them with all his might, we are reminded of the innumerable other people throughout history who have also made the same commitment. If we make the commitment to serve the Lord with our whole

might, we will stay on the strait and narrow path. We know what we need to do. It is always the Primary answers: read the scriptures, pray daily, attend church, go to the temple, and so on. We continue to teach them and live them.

One of the hallmarks of the gospel is setting up our homes so we can follow Jesus Christ. We prayerfully come to the Lord with the righteous desire to have a home where there is pure worship of the Savior and His gospel. We offer gratitude for the blessings He has bestowed on us.

With the twenty-four-hour newsreel about all the ills of the world, it is becoming more evident that we need to be in the world and not of the world. As we look at our options, there is but one answer that will always work out for us. It echoes Joshua's testimony from thousands of years ago: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." As we serve the Lord in our homes and temple, we will witness more blessings than we can even comprehend.

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