

IT'S NOT A *Secret*

Everyday conversations with
your family and friends about the temple.



James D. Holt

© 2023 James D. Holt

Cover image courtesy of Tiny 3D Temples. Used with permission.

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form whatsoever, whether by graphic, visual, electronic, film, microfilm, tape recording, or any other means, without prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief passages embodied in critical reviews and articles.

This is not an official publication of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The opinions and views expressed herein belong solely to the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions or views of Cedar Fort, Inc. Permission for the use of sources, graphics, and photos is also solely the responsibility of the author.

ISBN 13: 978-1-4621-4412-9

Published by CFI, an imprint of Cedar Fort, Inc.

2373 W. 700 S., Suite 100, Springville, UT 84663

Distributed by Cedar Fort, Inc., www.cedarfort.com

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022947376

Cover design by Shawnda T. Craig

Cover design © 2023 Cedar Fort, Inc.

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed on acid-free paper

Everything Points to the Saviour

It shouldn't be a surprise as we begin any discussion about preparing to attend the temple that Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega, is the beginning and the end of our discussion. Everything about the temple points us to the Saviour Jesus Christ, and so the best thing that we can do to prepare to attend the temple is to come to know Him and have a testimony of His Atonement and role as Saviour, Mediator and Advocate with the Father. If we have a testimony of His love then we will have a desire to attend His house. The scriptures teach us much about the link between the Lord and His temple:

“And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it; Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 97:15–16)

The temple is the natural next stage in our relationship with our Saviour Jesus Christ. We come to know Him in the daily act of living but this is developed and enhanced in the temple. Defined in context of the plan of salvation, life is a continuum of knowledge where we learn line-upon-line. As we attend the temple and claim its blessings, we can draw closer to Him in a way we had not previously enjoyed.

President Henry B. Eyring has said:

“President Russell M. Nelson made clear for us that we can “see” the Saviour in the temple in the sense that He becomes no longer unknown to us. President Nelson said this: “We understand Him. We comprehend His work and His glory. And we begin to feel the infinite impact of His matchless life.” If you or I should go to the temple insufficiently pure, we would not be able to see, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the spiritual teaching about the Saviour that we can receive in the temple.” (2021)

For our understanding to be added to, for us to comprehend His matchless life and love, we must have a testimony and understanding of Christ in the first place. We must, in preparing children, youth and adults to attend the temple, place Christ at the centre of all our teaching and example:

“And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.” (2 Nephi 25:26)

We do this through the way that we teach and the way that we live. When we teach the principles of the gospel, whatever they may be, we must be explicit in our explanation of how they relate to the Saviour. When I explore the teachings of Christianity with my students at University, I begin by asking them to compile a timeline of the events of Jesus’ life from the Annunciation to the Ascension. I then have them make a list of all of the actions that Christians perform such as baptism, prayer, partaking of the bread and wine, helping others and so on. Following discussion, I send them away to match up the two lists with the hope that they realise that every action that a Christian performs relates to the life and teaching of the Saviour.

The dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple as recorded in section 109 of the Doctrine and Covenants shows how temple experiences develop our knowledge of the Saviour:

“And that they may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing.” (D&C 109:15)

Whilst we can never fully comprehend the work of the Saviour, in the temple we are able to “grow up” and receive more of a fulness of the Holy Ghost with regard being able to understand Him and His work. As we help others prepare to attend the temple we need to remember that everything points to the Saviour; we need to teach people both the importance of symbolism and the importance of asking purposeful questions.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in our public and private worship we are used to fairly clear symbolism. Consider the use of bread and water as emblems of the sacrament in representing the body and blood of the Saviour. The symbolism of the ordinance of baptism in the burying of the old person/creature, and coming forth as a new creature:

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we

should not serve sin." (Romans 6:4-6)

We explain baptism as representing a new birth, drawing together the elements present at physical birth:

"Inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood,
and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be
born again into the kingdom of
heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood,
even the blood of mine Only Begotten." (Moses 6:59)

There are many symbols that we perhaps do not give much thought to: the raising of the right hand to sustain; the anointing with oil in the healing of the sick; the laying on of hands and so on. The meaning associated with such symbolism can be found when questions are asked and answers sought from the scriptures and from the Holy Ghost.

Similarly, there are elements of the temple experience where the symbolism is immediately apparent. By dressing in white, for example, we show the equality of all in the eyes of God. This symbolism also helps us understand our relationship with Christ: that through baptism and becoming His, we are unified in His work whatever our background or situation may be.

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have
put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is
neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female:
for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:27-28)

Central to any preparation to enter the Lord's house is to know Him so that we can recognise what we can learn both about Him and from Him. Only by having that burgeoning relationship can we hope to recognise His influence and teachings. Purposeful questioning then, is an essential part of our preparation and our temple experience.

How does what I am seeing, doing, saying point me to Christ?
What am I learning about Christ through these experiences?

This questioning is more important in the temple because not everything is immediately apparent. We have to consider the symbolism of our experience, our actions and words and seek understanding through revelation. We have to be careful about taking this to the extreme, however. After observing the events of creation in a film that was part of the temple experience, I remember one sister talking to me and saying, "Bishop, I'm sorry, I didn't manage to count the number of fish." In seeking symbolism in the minutiae, it is possible for us to miss the "bigger picture."

The Temple in our Homes

We are encouraged, as members of the Church, to have a picture of the temple in our homes and to make the temple an important part of our conversation with our young people. From an early age, our children are taught the importance of the temple through the songs they sing. From the Children's Songbook we sing:

I love to see the temple.
I'm going there someday
To feel the Holy Spirit,
To listen and to pray.
For the temple is a house of God,
A place of love and beauty.
I'll prepare myself while I am young;
This is my sacred duty.
(Children's Songbook, 95)

In the Latter-day Saint Hymn book we read:

While I am in my early years,
I'll prepare most carefully,
So I can marry in God's temple for eternity.
(Hymns, no. 300)

Making the temple a natural part of our children's lives is essential if we want them to desire to go there. Having a picture of the temple in our homes and perhaps even in our children's rooms helps them connect with the temple. Rather than just a decorative piece, a picture of the temple is a stimulus for discussion as we teach our children about its importance in our lives. My wife and I are fortunate to have been sealed together and so in our home, our sealing certificate is displayed prominently to remind us that we are an eternal family, sealed in God's holy temple. These visual reminders help prompt discussion and serve to remind each member of our family how important the house of the Lord is.

We are also fortunate to live only forty-five minutes from a temple and visit the temple

regularly with our children. The Preston temple, where we attend, has beautiful grounds and being in and around the temple as a family, helps us feel at peace and helps us feel the Holy Ghost. We have had picnics in the grounds, walks around the temple—even scavenger hunts to help the children connect with the temple. A trip to a local ice cream shop on the way home sometimes becomes part of our visits too. These small things have helped the temple become a place of happiness, peace and beauty—a place our children all want to go. When we go to the temple, we explain to each of the children about the importance of the temple in our lives; they, in turn, looked forward, anticipating the day of their twelfth birthday when we would be able to go to the temple with them. (Since 2018 youth can now attend the temple at 11).

Prior to their going to the temple for the first time, I would sit with each of our four children and go through the temple recommend questions with them. For our youngest, I was her bishop but for the other three this was in preparation for their interview with the bishop. None of the principles or topics explored in the recommend questions were new for the children but I wanted them to know what to expect and to have any questions asked of me. This was always a special experience as we discussed the nature of a testimony; the importance of our Saviour; the covenants we make and the commandments we keep. Having this conversation with me was a lovely step on the way to the temple.

Where possible, we took each of our children to the baptistry on their twelfth birthday. When Abi, our second daughter was twelve, her mum was in the hospital that day but we had spoken about it so much as a family, that we decided that even without her mum, it was important for her to be there on that day and enable her to feel of the love and Spirit in the temple. For our son, his birthday was on a Sunday and having received the priesthood first, we took him on the Tuesday because the temple was closed on the Monday. When it was finally the turn of our youngest, Martha, we all attended the temple together and the love and spirit we felt was indescribable. As I baptised each one of my children for our ancestors there was such a special feeling. I acknowledge that this is not possible for all; when Ruth and I, as converts to the restored gospel, attended the temple first, it was our priesthood leaders who worked with us in the baptistry. Against this background we have always sought to have one or both of us attend the temple with our children. It is imperative that they see that the temple is important to us and we fully support their work and worship in the Lord's house.

As a Bishop helping to prepare each new young woman, new young man or new member of the Church to attend the temple, I was very conscious in the temple recommend interview that each person recognised the blessing it would be. I also endeavoured to ensure that all their needs were catered for as if they were my own child; this included helping them prepare by talking them through many aspects of the experience before them.

As our children grow, we are preparing them for their next steps and often speak of the time when they will receive their endowment and be sealed to their spouse. In order to focus the children on the temple, it is important that Christ is at the centre of all of our discussions. We work on family history and take the opportunity, when it is afforded, to speak of the temple, the blessings we receive by attending the temple and the closeness

to the Lord we can feel through the worship and ordinances in which we participate.

In our scripture study we look out for ways to link our reading to the temple. Consider reading the story of Lehi, Sariah and their family as they travel to the promised land. The first activity on arriving at the borders of the Red Sea that they undertake is recorded in 1 Nephi, chapter two:

“And it came to pass that he built an altar of stones, and made an offering unto the Lord, and gave thanks unto the Lord our God.” (v7)

And then, later after their second journey back to Jerusalem we read:

“And after I and my brethren and all the house of Ishmael had come down unto the tent of my father, they did give thanks unto the Lord their God; and they did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings unto him.” (1 Nephi 7:22)

We also read of similar activities following the split of the sons of Lehi and Sariah into Nephites and Lamanites:

“And I, Nephi, did build a temple; and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not built of so many precious things; for they were not to be found upon the land, wherefore, it could not be built like unto Solomon’s temple. But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon; and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine.” (2 Nephi 5:16)

Each of these events create easy segues into a discussion about why the temple, altars and sacrifices were of such importance to the Lehites and Nephites. In likening the scriptures to ourselves (1 Nephi 19:23) we are able to begin a discussion about the nature of sacrifice today and the importance of the temple as we go through the journey of life. Some of the scriptural examples may not be as obvious, but we are able, through our own study and understanding to begin to link elements of our teaching to the temple. Consider the many times in the scriptures where people go into the mountain, which became synonymous with a temple experience. We can read of Moses’ experience at Sinai; the brother of Jared; Nephi or the Saviour and his disciples at the Mount of Transfiguration. Each of these instances “endowed” the person with new knowledge or a new task—and this can be likened to our own temple experience today.

In addition to the natural conversations that enable us to discuss the temple with our children, President Nelson has suggested topics that might help people as they prepare to attend the temple:

“I like to recommend that members going to the temple for the first time read short explanatory paragraphs in the Bible Dictionary, listed under seven topics: ‘Anoint,’ ‘Atonement,’ ‘Christ,’ ‘Covenant,’ ‘Fall of Adam,’ ‘Sacrifices,’ and ‘Temple.’ Doing so will provide a firm foundation.”
(Russell M. Nelson, 2001)

We can begin to teach from a very early age or from a very early stage in the gospel, each of these fundamental principles. Elder Bruce R. McConkie called the Creation, the Fall and the Atonement as the “three pillars of eternity.” On these three events hang the plan of salvation that enables all of humanity the opportunity to return and live with our Heavenly Parents.

You've Just Finished your Free Sample

Enjoyed the preview?

Buy: <http://www.ebooks2go.com>