

general presidency, will address us. She will be followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Twelve.

The chorus and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Sister Carol B. Thomas

Temples bless members' lives

Brothers and sisters, I *think* I am happy to be here today.

My assignment with the Young Women presidency puts me in many happy situations. One month ago a training assignment took me to Guayaquil, Ecuador. I arrived at the hotel after dark. The next morning I opened my curtains, and there across the valley was a beautiful granite building standing majestically on the Santa Ana Hills. Its stunning beauty was evident, but it wasn't until I saw the angel Moroni on top that I, with tears in my eyes, realized that here was a temple, a symbol of the glorious blessings that will come to the members of the Church in that part of the world.

"Temples are unique among all buildings. . . . They are places of covenants and promises. At their altars we kneel before God our Creator and are given promise of his everlasting blessings" (Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 632-33). Wherever we went, we found that temples are being built, temples that will lift the Saints of God and change the face of countries, whether in South America or throughout the world.

Has it only been one year since our beloved prophet announced the building of 32 more temples? President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, "This is the greatest era of temple building in all the history of the world" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 629).

Our youngest son, Spencer, now serving a mission in Mongolia, wrote that his mission president was addressing

the missionaries and members concerning their duty in building up the Church there. "As President Cox opened the discussion for questions, the first response was, 'When is Mongolia going to have a temple?' These people," Spencer said, "are hungering for the gospel to play a greater part in their lives. They don't even have a Book of Mormon yet, and they want a temple."

Why all this fuss about temples? Simply put, the purpose of temples "is to redeem all mankind who are obedient to the laws and commandments of God. The gospel in its fulness was revealed to Adam. . . . [And] Saints of all ages have had temples in one form or another" (David B. Haight, in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 29-30; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 23-24).

Preparing families to attend the temple

Joseph Smith said, "The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead" (*History of the Church*, 6:313). If this is true, then as parents and family members our greatest challenge is to prepare our families for the temple. Parents have the primary responsibility, but grandparents, aunts and uncles, even brothers and sisters all may teach the family.

When my husband and I were married in the temple, we understood the importance of never discussing the temple outside the temple, not because the ceremonies were secret but because they were sacred. "They are kept confidential lest they be given to those who are unprepared" (Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy*

Temple [booklet, 1982], 2). But in a family setting, there are many precious truths that, with sensitivity and common sense, will help prepare our children for the temple.

Consider:

- *The sacred nature of the temple clothing.* In the temples all are dressed in white. White is the symbol of purity.

- *The temple is the Lord's classroom.* President Hinckley has said, "[The temple] becomes a school of instruction in the sweet and sacred things of God" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 635).

- *What it means to be worthy for the temple.* Can we teach our children that receiving one's endowment and the wearing of the sacred garment will not require a change of wardrobe or lifestyle if the principles of temple worthiness are understood and lived in their earlier years? A young woman who wears knee-length skirts will not have to buy a new wardrobe after she receives her endowment in the temple. A young man who anticipates going to the temple will respect the Church's moral standards in his social behavior.

- *Understanding gospel language.* What do the words *endowment*, *ordinances*, *sealings*, and *keys* really mean? The story is told of a little boy who overheard his parents discussing doing temple sealings. He asked, "Are you going to do the walls next week?"

Teach children about the temple

Where may we teach our children? Family home evening is the formal setting, but there are so many more places where we may talk about our spiritual feelings for the temple. One of my favorite times was when my children were in bed at night. Occasionally I would lie on their bed and tell them of spiritual things. There in the peace and the quiet, the sweet Spirit can bear testimony to their heart and soul that the things you are saying are true.

We may assume that Joseph and Mary taught their family about the temple. As Elder Perry has discussed, when the Savior was a 12-year-old boy, His parents took Him to the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. When Jesus was left behind, He was not found in places or entertainments for a boy His age. His parents found Him in the temple. Perhaps when Mary tucked Him in bed at night, she shared her testimony of these sacred and precious truths.

My first memory of temples was when I was a little girl. I knew the temple must be a pretty wonderful place because my parents faithfully attended, and they always came home together in such a good mood. I understood the sacred nature of the temple clothing by the way my mother spoke about it with love and respect.

President Howard W. Hunter has said: "Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say. . . . Keep a picture of a temple in your home that your children may see it" ("A Temple-Motivated People," *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 5). I noticed every home I visited in Africa had a picture of a temple hung simply and beautifully on the wall.

Attending the temple brings blessings

New understanding comes as we prepare our families for the temple. May I share a few things I have learned:

1. *Going to the temple often provides balance in our lives.* After returning home we have an increased sense of well-being; the influence of the Spirit can shield us from the frustrations of the world. Listen to this promise by President Hinckley: "If there were more temple work done in the Church, there would be less . . . selfishness, less . . . contention, less . . . demeaning [of] others. The whole Church would increasingly be

lifted to greater heights of spirituality, love for one another, and obedience to the commandments of God" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 622).

2. *The spiritual atmosphere of the temple curbs our appetite for worldly things.* When we attend frequently, we no longer have such a need to wear the latest fashion, and we are not so easily drawn to the entertainment of the world.

3. *The temple is a place of revelation.* Many years ago I was walking into the temple, and in my mind I heard the words, *Learn public speaking.* I thought to myself, *When will I ever have need for public speaking?* Over several months' period of time I tried very inadequately to conjure up some enthusiasm to obey the prompting I had received. I even checked out a tape from the local library by a public speaker who admitted that his goal was to someday speak in the Mormon Tabernacle. I thought at the time, *I'll never be speaking in the Tabernacle!*

Elder John A. Widtsoe has said, "At the most unexpected moments, in or out of the temple will come to [us], as a revelation, the solution of the problems that vex [our lives]. . . . It is a place where revelations may be expected" ("*Temple Worship*," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 63-64).

4. *One of the biggest lessons I have learned is that Satan will try to keep us from going to the temple.* During a discussion with friends once, they shared with me that whenever they attend, they don't tell anybody they are going. They just jump into their cars and go because if they don't, something is sure to happen to keep them away.

I remember reading of a warning given by the president of the Logan Temple that Satan's followers will "whisper in the ears of the people persuading them not to go to the Temple" ("*Genealogical Department*," *Church News*, 12 Dec. 1936, 8). "Temple work brings so much resistance because it is the source of so much

spiritual power to the Latter-day Saints" (Boyd K. Packer, "The Holy Temple," *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 36).

5. *The Spirit of Elijah is brooding in the land.* As we work with youth of the Church, we see they are being drawn to their temples.

In Nicaragua, Central America, a group of 49 young women and their leaders took 2,000 names to the Guatemala City Temple. It took each girl a year to save enough money to go. These faithful young women rode a bus almost two days' journey through three country borders and spent two or three days at the temple before returning home.

In another ward, young people have located the names of 10,000 ancestors as they have turned their hearts to their families. Where temples are available, we see youth doing baptisms for the dead, sometimes on an individual weekly basis.

6. *In the temple the Spirit of the Lord provides comfort and peace, especially during moments of despair.* Recently I met a 35-year-old woman in the temple. As we visited, I asked if her husband was with her. With a look of tenderness in her eyes, she shared with me that he had died of a brain tumor three months ago. The temple is her anchor; the Spirit found in the temple gives her comfort and peace, and perhaps her husband was there.

Attend as often as circumstances allow

Each of us may ask ourselves, "How often should I attend the temple?" Our leaders will never tell us how often we should attend because it is different for every person. Many women of various ages who live close to a temple try to go once a week. When one of my friends worked full time, she spent one day a month in the temple, attending several sessions. These women are obedient, but they also understand the strength of priesthood power that comes into their lives.

For young parents, attending the temple may be a once-a-month date. President Packer has said: "Perhaps you will understand . . . we are trying to establish family history as . . . a 'cottage industry.' . . . Couples raising little children should not feel inadequate or guilty . . . if they cannot afford the time or money to attend a distant temple frequently. Mother makes a contribution by noting important events, collecting pictures, bits of memorabilia, . . . all as it fits into the schedule of a busy mother" ("A Plea to Stake Presidents," leadership training meeting, 1 Apr. 1988, 5).

Emphasize the temple

My own mother didn't do scrapbooks, but she gave me a love for my heritage. She told me story after story about my ancestors as she taught me to love them.

President Packer continues: "Father and mother can speak of ordinances and

covenants. By the inflection of their voices, they can italicize the word 'temple' every time they say it. . . . In proper season, family obligations will be a bit less and income a bit more. Then members can and should give more to this sacred [temple] work" ("A Plea to Stake Presidents," 5).

We plead with you mothers and fathers to teach your sons and daughters the meaning of the temple covenants. Teach them that "wearing the garment is [a] sacred privilege. . . . [It] is an outward expression of an inner commitment to follow the Savior Jesus Christ" (First Presidency letter, 5 Nov. 1996, 2).

Brothers and sisters, as servants of the living God, we shall press forward in this sacred temple work. May we teach our children that as they spiritually prepare themselves for the temple, they may stand in the presence of the Lord, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Gratitude to God the Father

On this Easter weekend I wish to thank not only the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ but also His true Father, our spiritual Father and God, who, by accepting the sacrifice of His firstborn, perfect Son, blessed all of His children in those hours of atonement and redemption. Never more than at Easter time is there so much meaning in that declaration from the book of John which praises the Father as well as the Son: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."¹

I am a father, inadequate to be sure, but I cannot comprehend the burden it must have been for God in His heaven to

witness the deep suffering and Crucifixion of His Beloved Son in such a manner. His every impulse and instinct must have been to stop it, to send angels to intervene—but He did not intervene. He endured what He saw because it was the only way that a saving, vicarious payment could be made for the sins of all His other children, from Adam and Eve to the end of the world. I am eternally grateful for a perfect Father and His perfect Son, neither of whom shrank from the bitter cup nor forsook the rest of us who are imperfect, who fall short and stumble, who too often miss the mark.

Jesus' relationship with His Father

In considering such beauty of the "at-one-ment" in that first Easter season,