

Additional blessings of the temple

Let's look at a few other blessings the temple brings. The house of the Lord is a refuge from the world. The Sacramento members shared the following comment with their open house guests: "Sometimes our minds are so beset with problems, and there are so many things clamoring for [our] attention at once that we just cannot think clearly. . . . At the temple the dust of distraction seems to settle out, the fog and the haze seem to lift, and we can 'see' things that we were not able to see before."²

The celestial room in the temple is especially a place of peace, tranquillity, and beauty. It is a quiet haven where one can reflect, ponder, pray, meditate, and feel the love of Heavenly Father and the Savior. As we ponder and meditate in the temple, our thoughts naturally focus on members of our family.

In 2 Samuel 22:7 we read the words of David: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears." The temple is a place of personal revelation that will bless us in our stewardships.

President Hinckley has told us that "just as our Redeemer gave His life as a vicarious sacrifice for all men, and in so doing became our Savior, even so we, in a small measure, when we engage in proxy work in the temple, become as saviors to

those on the other side who have no means of advancing unless something is done in their behalf by those on earth."³

This is such meaningful service we give because our departed brothers and sisters literally become more connected to us.

The temple is a place to know the Father and the Son. It is a place where we experience the divine presence. The Prophet Joseph Smith made this plea: "I advise all to . . . search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Godliness."⁴ And where shall we search? In the house of God.

Let's become a temple-attending and temple-loving people. I bear testimony that the temple is about families. I also testify that everything in the temple testifies of Jesus Christ. His example of love and service is felt there. The temple is His holy house. I know that He is the Son of God, our Savior, our Redeemer, our Mediator, and our Advocate with the Father. He loves us and wants our families to be happy and to be together forever. He wants all of us to be active in His temple.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110.
2. Boyd K. Packer, "The Holy Temple," *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 36.
3. *Discourses of President Gordon B. Hinckley, Volume 2: 2000–2004* (2005), 265.
4. *History of the Church*, 6:363.

Elder Paul B. Pieper

Several days ago, we were discussing talks during a family meal. Clarissa, our 13-year-old daughter, was preparing a sacrament meeting talk for our branch in Moscow and felt some anxiety. I reassured her that all would be well and released a little anxiety of my own by saying that at

least she didn't have to speak in front of thousands of people in general conference. Clarissa gave me some advice of her own: "It will be OK, Dad. Just pretend it's a big branch." Brothers and sisters, you are indeed a very large branch.

A message for first-generation members

I have chosen to address my remarks this morning to first-generation members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You are those who are the first in your family to hear and embrace the message that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth in our day with living prophets, seers, and revelators. You humbled yourselves, exercised faith, and repented of all your sins, taking upon you the name of Jesus Christ through baptism by immersion, and received the Holy Ghost.¹ By being the first in your family to accept the gospel, you become the first generation, a chosen generation through which generations past, present, and future may be blessed.²

Being a first-generation member of the Church is not always easy. You will walk where no one in your family has walked before. Conditions around you may be challenging. You may have few, or no, friends or relatives to understand and support you. At times you may become discouraged, wondering if it is all worth it. My purpose this morning is to assure you that it is.

Serving in the Church

First-generation members occupy a special and important place in the Church and their families. Did you know that first-generation members constitute more than half of the membership of the Church?³ Perhaps not since the early days of the Church has the first generation constituted such a large percentage of total Church membership as it does today. Your faith and testimonies are a great strength and blessing to others. Through you, we gain a deeper understanding of gospel principles and our testimonies are strengthened.

You add great strength to the Church when you use your testimony, talents,

abilities, and energy to build the kingdom in your wards and branches. You are great examples of sharing the gospel, serving missions, sending children on missions, and welcoming new members. You reach out in kindness to those around you, lifting and blessing them through inspired service. So much of what is done in the Church today could not be done without your efforts.

Influencing and serving family members

More importantly, as a first-generation member, you occupy an important place in your family. You are an example to your family of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Whether they are members of the Church or not, as you live the gospel at home, those around you will feel the Savior's love through you. They know that you are engaged in something good, even if they do not understand it or have enough faith to accept it. Be patient and kind, pray each day to know how you can serve them, and the Lord will help you and bless you to influence your family for good. By being consistently good and upright, you will establish patterns of faithfulness and righteousness. Those patterns will shape your life, but more importantly, they will become a standard for your family and posterity.

As the first generation, you are also the key to opening the Lord's blessings to family members who died without hearing the gospel and receiving saving ordinances. Yours is the unique opportunity and privilege to begin this work on their behalf. They are anxious for you to identify them and will help you in your search for their records. Once they are identified, your worthy life will permit you to attend the temple and perform essential ordinances for them. These ordinances will bind you to your ancestors and bring great spiritual power into your life.

Importance of small decisions

Because you are a first-generation member, each choice you make is important. Seemingly small, insignificant decisions will impact past and future generations, as well as your own life. One young first-generation member, Chris, was offered a drink of alcohol at work the day after his baptism. His friends were all there and were drinking. There was considerable pressure. No one else knew that the day before, he had been baptized and made promises to the Lord. He made the decision not to drink and was treated poorly. Reflecting on that event later, he wrote: "It is now forty years since I made those [baptismal] promises and I can truthfully say that I have . . . kept the Word of Wisdom. . . . I believe if I had accepted [that] drink that I would, perhaps, never have been able to keep the Word of Wisdom."⁴

But Chris kept his baptismal promises. Later he met and married a faithful member. Together they raised eight children in the gospel. Now in the sixth generation, his faithful descendants number in the hundreds. Dozens have served missions and introduced the gospel to others. His efforts in family history opened the blessings of the gospel to hundreds more. One small decision by a first-generation member made a difference for thousands.

Can you see now why the first generation is so important? Can you understand the position you occupy and the influence you can have for good? Please never underestimate who you are and the power that you have to affect others. Satan understands who you are and will do all possible to entice you to make wrong choices. At times, despite our best efforts, we all make mistakes. Fortunately, Heavenly Father has prepared a way for us to overcome them through repentance and reliance on the Atonement of His Son. Do

not be discouraged if you make a mistake. Repenting and continuing to press forward are perhaps the most important patterns to develop in the first generation. Be patient and move forward in obedience.

Pioneer legacy

In the Church we read and speak much about pioneers in early Church history. They were first-generation members just like you. They lived each day meeting the challenges of family, work, and faith. They lived good, ordinary lives and were faithful, serving in the Church and blessing their families. When they fell down, they got back up and moved on. Now those of us who are their descendants look back with reverence and gratitude for their faithfulness.

Their legacy can be yours as fellow members of the first generation. Be faithful, serve your fellowman, bless your family, and make proper choices. You are the first generation, a chosen generation to bless past, present, and future generations. We honor you. Past and future generations will honor you. But most importantly, God will honor you for being faithful in the first generation. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Articles of Faith 1:4; Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
2. See 1 Peter 2:9.
3. According to the Church's Member and Statistical Records Division, first-generation members made up 64 percent of total Church membership as of July 2006.
4. *History of Heinrich Friedrich Christian Pieper and Emma Frieda Alber and Their Family* (1987), 29.

The choir and congregation sang
"Redeemer of Israel."
