

By Tracey Grow

The temple has always been a part of my life. Back when I was growing up there was only the Salt Lake Temple in the valley and my mother went regularly to the temple. I was baptized in the Tabernacle baptistery at temple square. We went to see the Christmas lights at temple square every year. We took youth trips to the visitor centers there each year. I went on youth group baptism trips monthly. When I attended Snow College, my roommates and I studied on the upper lawn of the Manti Temple. When I lived in New York a few years after high school, my two friends drove 5 hours with me to Washington DC where we stayed overnight so we could spend 2 days in the temple – 2 of us doing baptisms and once several endowment sessions. We didn't go to see the sights, we went to the temple. I will never forget the sight of that temple as we rounded the belt route. The temple has always been a focal point in my life..

When I turned 18, for Christmas my mother gave me a temple packet. That packet, though not used for 16 years, was always there reminding me of the temple.

I took that packet with me when I received my temple ordinances in 1991. I was 36 years old and would soon be sealed to Ray in the Salt Lake Temple. On the way there, my sister-in-law said, "Keep an open mind". Instead my mind was opened to the love of my Heavenly Father. When I received the initiatory ordinance much of what concerned me was washed away. For the first time I really knew Heavenly Father loved me, that I had value. I was filled with joy, peace, comfort and love. Initiatory work became my lifeline to heaven. Every week for years I would spend an hour in the temple performing initiatory ordinances. It was a time of numerous sacred moments. It was a time of spiritual growth and eternal vision. It was a time to know for a surety that Heavenly Father loves me as his daughter and cares about my needs. The veil is very thin in initiatory. There have been times when I felt I could push back the curtain and see heaven. I love doing initiatory work. This previous Wednesday I was able to spend some time in initiatory and found myself transported to that beautiful place of pure joy: Joy for me, Joy for those who were having their work done and joy for those who were providing the ordinances.

I have also found joy doing sealing ordinances. Ray and I were sealed together on December 6, 1991, then we spent a few years doing monthly sealings with a group from our ward. To hear those blessings over and over filled me with an eternal perspective. The temple brings families together and unites them forever. This has been especially important for me as our four boys are adopted. Six months after Sam was born we went to the temple and sealed him to us forever. Nearly seven years later Jon, Preston & Dyllan were sealed to us. The day we went to the temple we gather around the piano and sang,

“I Love to see the Temple,
I’m going there today.
I’ll cov’nant with my Father;
I’ll promise to obey.
For the temple is a holy place
Where we are sealed together.
As a child of God, I’ve learned this truth:
A fam’ly is forever.

Participating in temple ordinances has increased my love for those that have gone before and my desire to share with them the joy I feel in the gospel. Our ancestors who have passed away want their temple work done for them. They are anxiously waiting to receive baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost and then to receive their other ordinances.

In section 128 of the D&C Joseph Smith asks, “What is the welding link that will keep the earth from being cursed as written in the last chapter of Malachi? He answers: ...It is the baptism for the dead. For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect. Neither can they nor we be made perfect without those who have died in the gospel also.

“Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth; glad tidings for the dead; a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy.”

“Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. Let the earth break forth into singing. Let the dead speak forth anthems of eternal praise to the King Immanuel, who hath ordained, before the world was, that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison; for the prisoners shall go free.”

“...and let all the sons of God shout for joy! And let the eternal creations declare his name forever and ever! And again I say, how glorious is the voice we hear from heaven, proclaiming in our ears, glory, and salvation, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life; kingdoms, principalities, and powers!”

Wow! What a declaration. I have had some tender experiences of extended family members prompting me to find them and do their work. One time in the temple I heard a voice tell me to look at my father’s family line. This is a line that has been worked on by many and I didn’t see what I could find. I heeded the prompting and when I got home went to the computer and opened family search. I asked, “Okay I’m here what do you want me to find?” Within a few moments my cousin, Gary’s, name came into my mind. He had died 3 years previously and wasn’t active. No one in his family was going to do his work. I called his brother for permission and received it. After his work was done, he was sealed to his parents and I acted as proxy for his mother (someone I dearly love). It was a glorious experience with an outpouring of the

spirit. He, his mother and his father were in that room with us overjoyed to have their work done.

I am closer to the Savior and Heavenly Father when I go to the temple. I learn more about them, gain more understanding, and feel heaven close. My knowledge has especially been increased by the endowment ordinance. Going through the veil is a very sacred experience for me. My gratitude has increased very much because of the temple. I see God's hand in everything and thank Him for all His works on this earth. He talks to me more frequently and I hear Him more often because of the temple. In the temple, His voice is easier to hear without the distractions of the world and the influence of Lucifer. There has been many times I have gone to the temple to have a serious talk with Heavenly Father. It is there I can hear answers. It is there I can feel peace.

Elder Renlund, in the April 2018 general conference said, "When God directs us to do one thing, He often has many purposes in mind. Family history and temple work is not only for the dead but blesses the living as well." He listed many blessings of participating in family history and temple work:

- Increased understanding of the Savior and His atoning sacrifice;
- Increased influence of the Holy Ghost⁷ to feel strength and direction for our own lives;
- Increased faith
- Increased ability and motivation to learn and repent⁸ because of an understanding of who we are, where we come from, and a clearer vision of where we are going;
- Increased refining, sanctifying, and moderating influences in our hearts;
- Increased joy through an increased ability to feel the love of the Lord;
- Increased family blessings
- Increased love and appreciation for ancestors and living relatives
- Increased power to discern that which needs healing and thus, with the Lord's help, serve others;
- Increased protection from temptations and the intensifying influence of the adversary; and
- Increased assistance to mend troubled, broken, or anxious hearts and make the wounded whole.

The temple is simply amazing. It is a treasure on earth. To have one 2 miles from my home is a heavenly blessing. I love mountains and lived in Salt Lake for nearly 46 years where I could see the mountains daily. My kitchen window where I grew up faced Mt. Olympus and our house was near its base. I climbed those mountains, camped in those mountains, skied in those mountains and played in those mountains. When we moved here it was hard to leave them behind. Several years ago we went to Salt Lake and attended the Oquirrh Mountain Temple. When we came out of the temple we could look across the valley to the East mountains and my beloved Mt. Olympus. It was ablaze with color and the most beautiful I had ever seen it. I kept saying over and over, 'look at that mountain, It is so beautiful'. After about the 10th time I heard a voice say in my mind, "Will you give up this mountain for the mountain in Nauvoo?" I paused, the tears flowed and I said yes.

I love the temple. I love the temple. I love the temple!