



Introduction to Family History

Student Manual

Religion 261

Introduction to Family History

Student Manual

Religion 261

Comments and corrections are appreciated. Please send them to:

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Curriculum

50 E North Temple Street

Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0008 USA

E-mail: ces-manuals@ldschurch.org

Please list your complete name, address, ward, and stake. Be sure to give the title of the manual. Then offer your comments.

FamilySearch is a trademark of Intellectual Reserve, Inc., and is registered in the United States of America and other countries.

© 2012 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

English approval: 1/11

Contents

- Introduction1
- 1. The Family Is Central to the Plan of Salvation3
- 2. The Mission of Elijah13
- 3. Getting Started with Family History Research.....21
- 4. Gathering and Recording Family History Information.....29
- 5. Personal Revelation and Family History.....39
- 6. Computers and Family History Research.....49
- 7. Submitting Names for Temple Ordinances57
- 8. The Abrahamic Covenant67
- 9. The Spirit World and the Redemption of the Dead.....75
- 10. Covenants, Ordinances, and Temples in the Plan of Salvation85
- 11. Research in Family History93
- 12. Finding and Creating Personal and Family Histories101
- 13. Index.....111



Introduction

Religion 261, Introduction to Family History, is a one-semester course in which you will learn gospel doctrines and principles essential to the work of redeeming the dead and how to find information about your ancestors that is needed to perform saving ordinances for them. The Lord has revealed that a great missionary effort is under way in the spirit world (see D&C 138:28–37). You become part of this great work when you identify your ancestors who did not receive the essential gospel ordinances in this life. It is your privilege to be baptized, confirmed, endowed, and sealed in their behalf in the temple, and males may receive the Melchizedek Priesthood for deceased males there. In this way all of our Heavenly Father’s children can come unto Christ and be perfected in Him.

President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) spoke about the significance of the work of redeeming the dead: “I wish many times that the veil were lifted off the face of the Latter-day Saints. I wish we could see and know the things of God as they do who are laboring for the salvation of the human family who are in the spirit world; for if this were so, this whole people, with very few, if any, exceptions, would lose all interest in the riches of the world, and instead thereof their whole desires and labors would be directed to redeem their dead, to perform faithfully the work and mission given us on earth; so that when we ourselves should pass behind the veil and meet with Joseph and the ancient apostles, and others who are watching over us and who are deeply interested in our labors, we might feel satisfied in having done our duty” (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham [1946], 152).

The Purpose of This Manual

This manual will help you learn gospel doctrines and principles associated with redeeming the dead and what you can do to participate in this glorious work. It uses the scriptures and words of latter-day prophets to explain doctrines and principles related to the plan of

salvation, the Atonement, the central role of the family, the mission of Elijah, the Abrahamic covenant, the spirit world, and the importance of ordinances and covenants. It also explains how to conduct family history research and how to prepare names for temple work so saving ordinances can be performed on behalf of those who died without having received them.



St. George Utah Temple

How This Manual Is Organized

Each chapter of this student manual has five parts:

1. Introduction
2. Commentary
3. Questions to Ponder
4. Suggested Assignments
5. Additional Resources

Introduction

Each chapter begins with a brief introduction focusing on the central topics found in the chapter.

Commentary

A list of supporting scriptures to study and ponder often follows the main headings in the “Commentary” section. Teachings of latter-day prophets and apostles are the primary sources used to help clarify the doctrines and principles associated with the given topic. As you carefully study and ponder this commentary, you will have many opportunities for the Holy Ghost to increase your understanding and testimony of the work of redeeming the dead. **Elder Russell M. Nelson** of the Quorum

of the Twelve Apostles affirmed that pondering will bring valuable results: “As you ponder and pray about doctrinal principles, the Holy Ghost will speak to your mind and your heart” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 18).

Questions to Ponder

The “Questions to Ponder” section will help you analyze and reflect on ways to apply what you have come to understand. As you think of answers to the questions, the Spirit may direct your thoughts to specific things you may do or learn that will further your efforts in family history.

Suggested Assignments

Each chapter concludes with assignments that encourage personal application. Working on these assignments is one way to exercise your faith and apply your righteous desires. The assignments will help you develop your family history skills, accomplish worthwhile goals, and prepare for further instruction in succeeding chapters.

As you study the “Questions to Ponder” and “Suggested Assignments” sections of this manual, you may find it helpful to use a study journal or notebook in which to record questions, thoughts, goals, and impressions. **Elder Richard G. Scott** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles encouraged us to write down impressions from the Spirit: “It is through the repeated process of feeling impressions, recording them, and obeying them that one learns to depend on the direction of the Spirit more than on communication through the five senses” (*Helping Others to be Spiritually Led* [CES symposium on the D&C and Church history, Aug. 11, 1998], 3).

Additional Resources

The “Additional Resources” section lists talks, articles, and other resources to study for additional insights.

Information for Those with Disabilities

If you have difficulty using this manual due to a disability, please contact your instructor for additional resources. Alternative formats of this student manual may be available at institute.lds.org/courses.

Comments and Suggestions

Your comments and suggestions about this manual’s strengths and areas of potential improvement would be appreciated. Please send them to:

Seminaries and Institutes
of Religion Curriculum
50 E North Temple Street
Salt Lake City UT 84150-0008
USA
E-mail:
ces-manuals@ldschurch.org

Please list your complete name, address, ward, and stake. Be sure to give the title of the manual. Then offer your comments and suggestions.

The Family Is Central to the Plan of Salvation

1

Introduction

In the premortal world you were a member of Heavenly Father's family. Now you are a member of an additional family, a mortal family. Because of Heavenly Father's plan of salvation, it is possible for you to become like Him. It is also possible to secure your mortal family in an eternal bond, allowing you to be together as a family after death. This chapter focuses on the importance of individuals and families and their potential in the plan of salvation. As you study this chapter, you will gain a deeper understanding of the eternal significance of the family and its role in Heavenly Father's plan of salvation. This knowledge will help you lay the foundation for doing family history work and resist worldly efforts to minimize the importance of the family and to disregard individual worth.

Commentary

"The Worth of Souls Is Great in the Sight of God"

[1.1]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Matthew 10:29–31
- 2 Nephi 26:33
- Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–16
- Moses 1:39

The Atonement of Jesus Christ helps us understand our worth in the sight of God. [1.1.1]

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught how the worth of each person is best understood through the Atonement of Jesus Christ:

"I believe that if we could truly understand the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, we would realize how precious is *one* son or daughter of God. I believe our Heavenly Father's everlasting purpose for His children is generally achieved by the small and simple things we do for one another. At the heart of the English word

atonement is the word *one*. If all mankind understood this, there would never be anyone with whom we would not be concerned, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, or social or economic standing. . . .

"If we truly understood the Atonement and the eternal value of each soul, we would seek out the wayward boy and girl and every other wayward child of God. We would help them to know of the love Christ has for them. We would do all that we can to help prepare them to receive the saving ordinances of the gospel. . . .



The Atonement of Jesus Christ helps us understand our worth in the sight of God.

“Brothers and sisters, never, never underestimate how precious is the *one*” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 88–89; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 86–87).

“The worth of a soul is its capacity to become as God.”
[1.1.2]

President Thomas S. Monson related an experience when he was reminded of the worth of a soul:

“Paul C. Child, then of the Priesthood Welfare Committee, and I attended a stake conference together. At the priesthood leadership session, when it was his turn to speak, he took his scriptures in hand and walked from the stand into the congregation. . . . He quoted from the Doctrine and Covenants, including section 18 concerning the worth of a soul, indicating that we should labor all our days to bring souls unto the Lord. He then turned to one elders quorum president and asked, ‘What is the worth of a soul?’

“The stunned quorum president hesitated as he formulated his reply. I had a prayer in my heart that he would be able to answer the question. He finally responded, ‘The worth of a soul is its capacity to become as God.’

“Brother Child closed his scriptures, walked solemnly and quietly up the aisle and back to the stand. As he passed by me, he said, ‘A most profound reply’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 58; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 56).

We do not lose value to God. [1.1.3]

Sin, discouragement, a view of our own weaknesses, and a multitude of other factors can sometimes bring us to question our value in the sight of God. **President**



Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency used a simple analogy to teach that our trials and challenges in this life do not cause us to lose value in the sight of our Father in Heaven: “We know from modern revelation that ‘the worth of souls is great in the sight of God’ [D&C 18:10].

We cannot gauge the worth of another soul any more than we can measure the span of the universe. Every person we meet is a VIP [very important person] to our Heavenly Father. Once we understand that, we can begin to understand how we should treat our fellowmen.

“One woman who had been through years of trial and sorrow said through her tears, ‘I have come to realize that I am like an old 20-dollar bill—crumpled, torn, dirty, abused, and scarred. But I am still a 20-dollar bill. I am

worth something. Even though I may not look like much and even though I have been battered and used, I am still worth the full 20 dollars’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2010, 70; or *Ensign*, May 2010, 69).

Before Our Birth, We Lived in the Premortal World

[1.2]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Jeremiah 1:5
- Doctrine and Covenants 38:1
- Doctrine and Covenants 93:29
- Doctrine and Covenants 138:53–56
- Abraham 3:22–23

We prepared for life on earth. [1.2.1]

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles summarized conditions and key events of our premortal life:

“What occurred in this first estate is dimly understood, but we do know that we lived there as spirits, children of our Heavenly Father, and we made certain steps of advancement to prepare for the opportunity of housing our eternal spirits in earthly bodies. We also know that our Father held a great council to explain the purpose of earth life. We had the opportunity of accepting or rejecting the plan of salvation. It was not forced upon us. The essence of the plan was that man would have an opportunity of working out his own salvation on earth, with God’s help. A leader was selected to teach us how to follow the plan and to redeem us from sin and death. As the Lord explained to Moses, ‘Behold, my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me—Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever’ (Moses 4:2).

“Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother, became the leader in advocating the plan designed by the Father, and we accepted the plan and its conditions. With that choice we earned the right to come to earth and enter our second estate” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 74; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 70).

Premortal life gives meaning to mortality. [1.2.2]

Many persons on earth are confused about life’s purposes because they lack essential spiritual knowledge. **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how knowledge of our premortal life clarifies our perspectives on mortality and the purpose of life:

“There is no way to make sense out of life without a knowledge of the doctrine of premortal life.

“The idea that mortal birth is the beginning is preposterous. There is no way to explain life if you believe that.

“The notion that life ends with mortal death is ridiculous. There is no way to face life if you believe that.

“When we understand the doctrine of premortal life, then things fit together and make sense. We then know that little boys and little girls are not monkeys, nor are their parents, nor were theirs, to the very beginning generation.

“We are the children of God, created in his image.

“Our child-parent relationship to God is clear.

“The purpose for the creation of this earth is clear.

“The testing that comes in mortality is clear.

“The need for a redeemer is clear” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 22; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 18).

In the Premortal Life We Lived as Spirit Children of Heavenly Parents [1.3]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Numbers 16:22
- Acts 17:29
- Hebrews 12:9
- Doctrine and Covenants 76:23–24
- Articles of Faith 1:1

We are spirit children of heavenly parents. [1.3.1]

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that we began our existence as children of heavenly parents: “The gospel teaches us that we are the spirit children of heavenly parents. Before our mortal birth we had ‘a pre-existent, spiritual personality, as the sons and daughters of the Eternal Father’ (statement of the First Presidency, *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1912, p. 417; also see Jeremiah 1:5)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 96; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 72).



In the premortal world we all lived as beloved spirit children of Heavenly Father.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles added these details about our premortal family: “We worship the great God who created the universe. He is our Father in heaven. We came into being because of him; we are his spirit children. We dwelt with him in a premortal life in a family relationship. We knew him as intimately and as well as we know our mortal fathers in this sphere of existence” (*How to Worship*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [July 20, 1971], 2).

The family is eternal. [1.3.2]

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that our understanding of the doctrine of the family begins with the knowledge that we lived in Heavenly Father’s family in the premortal life:



“The doctrine of the family begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them. The Apostle Paul taught that God is the father of our spirits (see Hebrews 12:9). From the proclamation we read, ‘In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and

worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life.’ . . .

“From the earliest beginnings, God established the family and made it eternal” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 86; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 64).

You anticipated being born into a family. [1.3.3]

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of our anticipation and joy at the prospect of being born into a family in mortality: “You anticipated being born into a home where parents would be expected to love, nurture, strengthen, and teach you truths. You knew that in time you would have the opportunity to form your own eternal family as husband or wife, father or mother. Oh, how you must have rejoiced at that prospect” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 5; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 6).

Mortality Is a Time for Us to Be Tested and Prepare to Meet God [1.4]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- 2 Nephi 2:11–13, 25–27
- Alma 34:32–34
- Doctrine and Covenants 58:2–4
- Doctrine and Covenants 101:3–5
- Abraham 3:25–26

It is necessary to receive a physical body. [1.4.1]

In the premortal world we knew that it was necessary to receive a physical body and experience mortality in order to progress toward becoming like our Heavenly Father.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained: “We had progressed as far as we could without a physical body and an experience in mortality. To realize a fulness of joy, we had to prove our willingness to keep the commandments of God in a circumstance where we had no memory of what preceded our mortal birth” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 97; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 72).

We eagerly awaited mortality. [1.4.2]

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) explained that in the premortal world we were each willing to come to the earth to be tested: “We knew before we were born that we were coming to the earth for bodies and experience and that we would have joys and sorrows, ease and pain, comforts and hardships, health and sickness, successes and disappointments, and we knew also that after a period of life we would die. We accepted all these eventualities with a glad heart, eager to accept both the favorable and unfavorable. We eagerly accepted the chance to come earthward even though it might be for only a day or a year. Perhaps we were not so much concerned whether we should die of disease, of accident, or of senility. We were willing to take life as it came and as we might organize and control it” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 20).

Mortal life is full of challenges. [1.4.3]

Elder Richard G. Scott taught that we were excited about the opportunity to come to earth:

“One of the most exhilarating moments of your life—when you were filled with anticipation, excitement, and gratitude—you are not able to remember. That experience occurred in the premortal life when you were informed that finally your time had come to leave the spirit world to dwell on earth with a mortal body.

“You knew you could learn through personal experience the lessons that would bring happiness on earth—lessons that would eventually lead you to exaltation and eternal life as a glorified, celestial being in the presence of your Holy Father and His Beloved Son.

“You understood that there would be challenges, for you would live in an environment of both righteous and evil influences. Yet surely you resolved that no matter what the cost, no matter what the effort, suffering, and testing, you would return victorious.

“You had been reserved to come when the fulness of the gospel is on earth. You arrived when His Church and the priesthood authority to perform the sacred temple ordinances are in place” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 5; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 6).

Families Are Central to Heavenly Father’s Plan for Our Mortal Life [1.5]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Genesis 1:27–28
- Genesis 2:24
- Psalm 127:3–5
- Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3
- Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–17
- Doctrine and Covenants 93:43–44, 47–48, 50



The plan of salvation was created for families. [1.5.1]

Sister Julie B. Beck, who served as Relief Society general president, taught that the family was an intentional part of God’s plan from the beginning:

“In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have a theology of the family that is based on the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement. The Creation of the earth provided a place where families could live. God created a man and a woman who were the two essential halves of a family. It was part of Heavenly Father’s plan that Adam and Eve be sealed and form an eternal family.

“The Fall provided a way for the family to grow. Adam and Eve were family leaders who chose to have a mortal experience. The Fall made it possible for them to have sons and daughters.

“The Atonement allows for the family to be sealed together eternally. It allows for families to have eternal growth and perfection. The plan of happiness, also called the plan of salvation, was a plan created for families” (“Teaching the Doctrine of the Family,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2011, 12).



We all eagerly awaited birth into a mortal family.

Important lessons are learned through family relationships. [1.5.2]

Though doctrinal truths can be learned in many environments, **President Boyd K. Packer** taught that he learned important truths from being a member of a family:

“I have studied much in the scriptures and have taught from them. I have read much from what the prophets and apostles have spoken. They have had a profound influence upon me as a man and as a father.

“But most of what I know about how our Father in Heaven really feels about us, His children, I have learned from the way I feel about my wife and my children and their children. This I have learned at home. I have learned it from my parents and from my wife’s parents, from my beloved wife and from my children, and I can therefore testify of a loving Heavenly Father and of a redeeming Lord” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 24).

The greatest happiness comes through families. [1.5.3]

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) emphasized the central nature of the family by pointing out that our greatest happiness and joy comes through families: “God is the designer of the family. He intended that the greatest of happiness, the most satisfying aspects of life, the deepest joys should come in our associations together and our concerns one for another as fathers and mothers and children” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 98; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 74).

The family pattern comes from God. [1.5.4]

Good families are the ideal models. No matter what your family background, you have the opportunity and the ability to prepare for a future that will include a gospel-centered family. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles offered the following counsel to those who come from a less than ideal family:

“I hope . . . you understand why we talk about the pattern, the ideal, of marriage and family when we know full well that not everyone now lives in that ideal circumstance. It is precisely because many don’t have, or perhaps have never even seen, that ideal and because some cultural forces steadily move us away from that ideal, that we speak about what our Father in Heaven wishes for us in His eternal plan for His children.



Following physical death, we all enter the spirit world.

“Individual adaptations have to be made as marital status and family circumstances differ. But all of us can agree on the pattern as it comes from God, and we can strive for its realization the best way we can” (“General Patterns and Specific Lives,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Feb. 9, 2008, 3).

Physical Death Is Not the End of Our Existence [1.6]*Scriptures to Study and Ponder*

- Ecclesiastes 12:7
- John 5:25
- 1 Corinthians 15:20–22
- Alma 11:41–45
- Alma 40:11–13

Death is part of Heavenly Father’s plan. [1.6.1]

The Church has published on the Internet this concise explanation of life after death: “From an earthly perspective, physical death may seem like an end, though it is really a step forward in Heavenly Father’s plan. At the time of physical death, your spirit will leave your body and go to the spirit world, where you will continue to learn and progress. In the spirit world, your memories of this life and the knowledge you have gained on Earth will remain with you.

“Death will not change your personality or your desire for good or evil. If you choose to follow Jesus Christ during your life on Earth, you will be at peace in the spirit world. Those who choose not to follow Christ and do not repent will be unhappy.

“Heavenly Father knew that many of His children would never have an opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ during their lives and that others would choose not to follow Him. Because He loves His children and is just, God provided a way for those in the spirit world to learn about His plan, have faith in Jesus Christ, and repent. Those who choose to accept and follow Jesus Christ will have peace and rest.

“Sometime after your death, your spirit and your body will be reunited—never to be separated again. This reuniting is called resurrection, and it was made possible by the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. You will remain in the spirit world until you are resurrected” (“Life after Death,” <http://old.mormon.org/mormonorg/eng/basic-beliefs/heavenly-father-s-plan-of-happiness/life-after-death>; see also *The Plan of Salvation* [pamphlet, 2005], 12).

In Our Heavenly Father's Plan, Families Are Meant to Be Eternal [1.7]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Matthew 19:3–8
- 1 Corinthians 11:11
- Doctrine and Covenants 130:2
- Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4
- Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–25

The plan of happiness enables families to be eternal. [1.7.1]

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declared the doctrine of the eternal nature of the family: “The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129).



No sacrifice is too great to have an eternal family. [1.7.2]

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the great joy that comes through eternal families:

“Are all our sympathies and love for each other only temporary—to be lost in death? No! Can family life endure beyond this period of mortal probation? Yes! God has revealed the eternal nature of celestial marriage and the family as the source of our greatest joy.

“Brethren and sisters, material possessions and honors of the world do not endure. But your union as wife, husband, and family can. The only duration of family life that satisfies the loftiest longings of the human soul is forever. No sacrifice is too great to have the blessings of an eternal marriage. To qualify, one needs only to deny oneself of ungodliness and honor the ordinances of the temple. By making and keeping sacred temple covenants, we evidence our love for God, for our companion, and our real regard for our posterity—even those yet unborn. Our family is the focus of our greatest work and joy in this life; so will it be throughout all eternity” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 86; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 71).

Sacred covenants enable families to be eternal. [1.7.3]

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency taught that making and keeping covenants is essential for families to continue in the next life: “We believe that families may continue in the next life if they have kept the special covenants made in one of the sacred temples under the authority of God. We believe that our deceased ancestors can also be eternally united with their families when we make covenants in their behalf in the temples. Our deceased forebears may accept these covenants, if they choose to do so, in the spirit world” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 58; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 54).

An eternal family is possible. [1.7.4]

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency testified that with the help of Heavenly Father, each of us can attain our highest potential in His plan of salvation:



Families are meant to be eternal.

“Eternal life means to become like the Father and to live in families in happiness and joy forever, so of course we know that what he wants for us will require help beyond our powers. And if we have feelings of inadequacy, they can make it easier for us to repent and to be ready to rely on the Lord’s help. . . . Whoever we are, however difficult our circumstances, we can know that what our Father requires of us if we are to qualify for the blessings of eternal life will not be beyond our ability. . . .

“ . . . We can picture ourselves as we were [in our premortal life], for longer than we can imagine, sons and daughters associating in our heavenly home with Parents who knew and loved us. . . . But now that we are here [on earth] we can picture ourselves home again with our Heavenly Parents in that wonderful place, not only as sons and daughters but as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, grandsons and granddaughters, bound together forever in loving families” (“The Family,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1998, 10, 12–13).

Questions to Ponder

- How does knowing that you are a child of Heavenly Father and part of an eternal family affect your sense of self-worth?
- How does the view of the family according to the plan of happiness compare with the world’s view?
- What happy or sacred experiences have you had in your family that have helped you to know that the greatest happiness available in mortality and in eternity comes in family relationships?

Suggested Assignments

- Draw a simple diagram (with labels) outlining our journey from premortality through the Resurrection. Briefly write about how the family is central to premortal life, mortal life, life in the spirit world, and resurrection and the degrees of heavenly glory.
- Visit with and express your appreciation to your father, mother, or other family member.

Additional Resources

- “Death, Physical,” *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 46–47.
- “Plan of Salvation,” *True to the Faith*, 115–17.

THE FAMILY

A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

WE, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness,

to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

WE WARN that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

WE CALL UPON responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.



The Mission of Elijah

Introduction

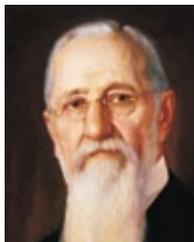
Elijah was an Old Testament prophet who ministered to the northern kingdom of Israel about 900 B.C. An account of his life is found in 1 Kings 17–2 Kings 2. He held the keys of the sealing power of the priesthood by which saving ordinances become valid on earth and in heaven. Elijah played a prominent role in restoring those priesthood keys in New Testament times and in our latter-day dispensation.

Because of the sealing power restored through Elijah, family members of all generations may be joined in eternal relationships. This chapter will help you better understand the keys of the sealing power of the priesthood and the importance of the coming of Elijah to the success of family history work. In our day, interest in family history work is flourishing around the world, and temples are being built to accommodate an ever-increasing need to perform temple ordinances for all of Heavenly Father's children.

Commentary

Priesthood Keys of Authority [2.1]

The exercise of priesthood authority in the Church is governed by those who hold priesthood keys (see D&C 65:2; 124:123). They have the right to preside over and direct the Church within their administrative jurisdiction (see D&C 107:9–10). **President Joseph F. Smith** (1838–1918) explained: “It is necessary that every act performed under this authority shall be done at the proper time and place, in the proper way, and after the proper order. The power of directing these labors constitutes the *keys* of the Priesthood. In their fulness, the keys are held by only one person at a time, the prophet and president of the Church. He may delegate any portion of this power to another, in which case that person



holds the keys of that particular labor. Thus, the president of a temple, the president of a stake, the bishop of a ward, the president of a mission, the president of a quorum, each holds the keys of the labors performed in that particular body or locality. His Priesthood is not increased by this special appointment; . . . the president of an elders' quorum, for example, has no more Priesthood than any member of that quorum. But he holds the power of directing the official labors performed in the . . . quorum, or in other words, the *keys* of that division of that work” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 141).

The Sealing Keys of the Priesthood Enable Ordinances to Be Binding beyond the Grave [2.2]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Matthew 16:19
- Matthew 18:18
- Doctrine and Covenants 128:16–18
- Doctrine and Covenants 132:7, 46–49
- Doctrine and Covenants 138:47–48

The sealing keys have effect on earth and in heaven. [2.2.1]

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) summarized the power and authority associated with the sealing keys of the priesthood:

“This priesthood holds the keys of binding and sealing on earth and in heaven of all the ordinances and principles pertaining to the salvation of man, that they may thus become valid in the celestial kingdom of God.

“During the days of his ministry Elijah held this authority, and the Lord gave him power over all things on earth and that through his ministry whatever was done should be ratified, or sealed, in the heavens and recognized of full force by the Eternal Father. This power effects and vitalizes every ordinance performed by duly commissioned officers holding divine power on the earth.

“It is by virtue of this authority that ordinances are performed in the temples for both the living and the dead. It is the power which unites for eternity husbands and wives, when they enter into marriage according

to the eternal plan. It is the authority by which parents obtain the claim of parenthood, concerning their children, through all eternity and not only for time, which makes eternal the family in the kingdom of God” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:117).

The sealing powers represent the consummate gift from God. [2.2.2]

The sealing powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood validate the saving ordinances of the gospel both on earth and in heaven, as **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained:

“There are relatively few men who have been delegated this sealing power upon the earth at any given time—in each temple are brethren who have been given the sealing power. . . .



Sealing room in the Vancouver British Columbia Temple

“In the Church we hold sufficient authority to perform all of the ordinances necessary to redeem and to exalt the whole human family. And, because we have the keys to the sealing power, what we bind in proper order here will be bound in heaven. Those keys—the keys to seal and bind on earth, and have it bound in heaven—represent the consummate gift from our God. With that authority we can baptize and bless, we can endow and seal, and the Lord will honor our commitments” (*The Holy Temple* [1980], 85, 151).

Ordinances are given validity beyond the grave. [2.2.3]

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the sealing power makes all essential priesthood ordinances valid for both the living and the dead: “All things gain enduring force and validity because of the sealing power. So comprehensive is this power that it embraces ordinances performed for the living and the dead, seals the children on earth up to their fathers who went before, and forms the enduring patriarchal chain that will exist eternally among exalted beings” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 683).

Elijah Was the Last Old Testament Prophet to Hold the Keys of the Sealing Power of the Melchizedek Priesthood [2.3]

Elijah used the sealing powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood. [2.3.1]

The Old Testament records how Elijah used the sealing powers of the priesthood to seal the heavens—the sky—resulting in a famine in the land (see 1 Kings 17:1). By that same power he later unsealed the heavens (see 1 Kings 18:41–45). The same priesthood authority seals, or binds, families together. The Bible Dictionary states, “Elijah held the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood and was the last prophet to do so before the time of Jesus Christ” (“Elijah”; see also Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:211; 6:251–52). **President Henry B. Eyring** of the First Presidency described the power Elijah held as “the greatest power God gives to His children” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 80; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 78).

Elijah was translated. [2.3.2]

As Elijah’s ministry drew to a close, he and Elisha, his successor, crossed the Jordan River, “and it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind

into heaven” (2 Kings 2:11). Elijah was translated, or taken to heaven without experiencing death—the separation of his spirit from his body. As the last Old Testament prophet to hold the keys of the sealing power of the priesthood, Elijah needed to retain his physical body in order to later confer those priesthood keys on Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1–3).

Malachi Prophesied about Elijah’s Return [2.4]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

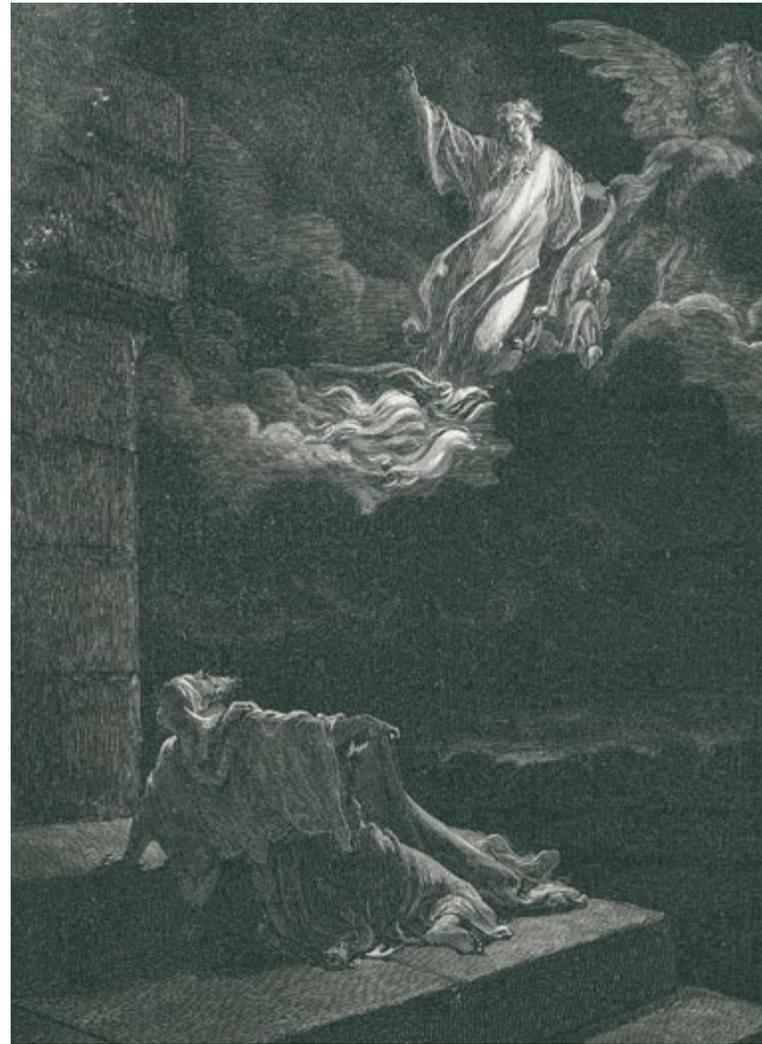
- Malachi 4:5–6
- 3 Nephi 25:5–6
- Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3
- Doctrine and Covenants 27:9
- Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16
- Doctrine and Covenants 128:16–18
- Doctrine and Covenants 138:46–48
- Joseph Smith—History 1:36–39

Elijah’s return turned the hearts of the children to their fathers. [2.4.1]

About 430 B.C. the prophet Malachi prophesied that Elijah would return to the earth “before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Malachi 4:5). This prophecy is of such importance that it is found in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price (see Malachi 4:5–6; 3 Nephi 25:5–6; D&C 2:1–3; Joseph Smith—History 1:37–39). This prophecy records that a purpose of Elijah’s return would be to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers. **President Joseph Fielding Smith** explained some ways this is being done:

“The fathers are our dead ancestors who died without the privilege of receiving the gospel, but who received the promise that the time would come when that privilege would be granted them. The children are those now living who are preparing genealogical data and who are performing the vicarious ordinances in the temples.

“The turning of the hearts of the children to the fathers is placing or planting in the hearts of the children that feeling and desire which will inspire them to search out the records of the dead. Moreover the planting of the desire and inspiration in their hearts is necessary. This they must have in order that they might go into the house of the Lord and perform the necessary labor for their fathers, who died without a knowledge of the gospel, or without the privilege of receiving the fulness of the gospel” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:127–28).



Elisha witnessed Elijah being taken into heaven (see 2 Kings 2:11).

Promises made to the fathers are planted in the hearts of the children. [2.4.2]

Doctrine and Covenants 2:2 records that Elijah “shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers.” What are “the promises made to the fathers”? **President Joseph Fielding Smith** taught: “This expression has reference to certain promises made to those who died without a knowledge of the gospel, and without the opportunity of receiving the sealing ordinances of the Priesthood in matters pertaining to their exaltation. According to these promises, the children in the latter days are to perform all such ordinances in behalf of the dead” (“The Promises Made to the Fathers,” *Improvement Era*, July 1922, 829). Through the sealing ordinances of the temple the promises of eternal family relationships may be obtained.



In fulfillment of prophecy, Elijah appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple (pictured here) on April 3, 1836.

The earth would be wasted if Elijah did not return. [2.4.3]

In the Lord's plan of redemption, one of the earth's purposes is to be the final celestial abode for those who have made and kept their covenants with Heavenly Father. It will be a place where families can live together forever. The sealing power of the priesthood makes possible the welding together of husbands and wives, parents and children, a work essential for exaltation to the living and the dead. Without the sealing power restored through Elijah, God's children could not receive the full blessings of exaltation and this purpose of the earth's creation would not have been fulfilled.

In Fulfillment of Prophecy, Elijah Restored the Keys of the Sealing Power of the Melchizedek Priesthood to the Earth in This Dispensation [2.5]

Elijah returned in fulfillment of prophecy. [2.5.1]

On April 3, 1836, in the temple at Kirtland, Ohio, Elijah returned in fulfillment of prophecy (see D&C 110 section heading; verses 13–16). Though Elijah was a translated being when he conferred the keys of the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood upon Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, he was a resurrected being when he conferred those sealing powers upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple (see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:119).

In the unfolding Restoration, the Prophet Joseph Smith had received the Melchizedek Priesthood from Peter, James, and John in 1829, but he still needed the priesthood keys given to him by Elijah in order to seal families together for eternity.

Elijah returned during the Jewish Passover. [2.5.2]

In Jewish households that observe the traditional meal at Passover, Elijah “is still an invited guest . . . , for whom a vacant seat is reserved and the door is opened” in anticipation of his return (Bible Dictionary, “Elijah”). It is interesting to note that the actual return of Elijah, which occurred in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836, was not only Easter Sunday that year but also coincided with the Jewish Passover.

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained: “It was, I am informed, on the third day of April, 1836, that the Jews, in their homes at the Paschal feast, opened their doors for Elijah to enter. On that very day Elijah did enter—not in the home of the Jews to partake of the Passover with them, but he appeared in the House of the Lord, erected to his name and received by the Lord in Kirtland, and there bestowed his keys to bring to pass the very things for which these Jews, assembled in their homes, were seeking” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1936, 75; see also John P. Pratt, “The Restoration of Priesthood Keys on Easter 1836, Part 2: Symbolism of Passover and of Elijah’s Return,” *Ensign*, July 1985, 59; Stephen D. Ricks, “The Appearance of Elijah and Moses in the Kirtland Temple and the Jewish Passover,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 23, no. 4 [1983]: 483–86).

The sealing power continues with the President of the Church. [2.5.3]

President Henry B. Eyring testified concerning the priesthood keys given to Joseph Smith, which include those received from Elijah in the Kirtland Temple: “The keys of the priesthood were restored by heavenly messengers to the Prophet Joseph Smith. They have been passed in an unbroken line to [the current President of the Church]. Those keys are held by each of the living Apostles” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2010, 63; or *Ensign*, May 2010, 63).

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) shared a similar testimony: “That same authority which Joseph held, those same keys and powers which were the very essence of his divinely given right to preside, were by him conferred upon the Twelve Apostles with Brigham Young at their head. Every president of the Church since then has come to that most high and sacred office out of the Council of the Twelve. Each of these men has been blessed with the spirit and power of revelation from on high. There has been an unbroken chain from Joseph Smith, Jr., to [the current President of the Church]. Of that I bear solemn witness and testimony before you this day” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 27–28; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 22).

*The restoration of sealing keys is a pinnacle of the Restoration.* [2.5.4]**President James E. Faust**

(1920–2007) of the First Presidency explained one reason why we should all rejoice that the keys held by Elijah have been restored in this last dispensation: “No other religion claims to have the keys to bind family relationships eternally. . . . Those who cherish their family have a compelling reason to claim the transcendent blessing of being sealed for eternity in the temples of God. For all grandparents, parents, husbands, wives, children, and grandchildren, this sealing power and authority is a crowning principle, a pinnacle in the restoration ‘of all things’ [Acts 3:21] through the Prophet Joseph Smith” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 21).

The Spirit of Elijah, by Definition, Is the Holy Ghost as His Directing Influence Guides Those Who Participate in Family History and Temple Work [2.6]*“The Spirit of Elijah” is a manifestation of the Holy Ghost.* [2.6.1]

Latter-day Saints often talk about “the Spirit of Elijah.” This phrase refers to the workings of the Holy Ghost upon individuals that creates an excitement and desire “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers” (D&C 110:15) and to be involved in the work of family history. **Elder Russell M. Nelson** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “What is sometimes called the Spirit of Elijah [is] a manifestation of the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family. Hence, people throughout the world, regardless of religious affiliation, are gathering records of deceased relatives at an ever-increasing rate” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 43; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 34).

Commenting on this statement by Elder Nelson, **Elder David A. Bednar** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated: “This distinctive influence of the Holy Ghost draws people to identify, document, and cherish their ancestors and family members—both past and present” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2011, 25; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 25).

The sealing power reveals itself in family relationships. [2.6.2]

The sealing power not only motivates individuals to pursue family history work, it also enhances the bonds

of love found within righteous family relationships. **President James E. Faust** taught: “Perhaps we regard the power bestowed by Elijah as something associated only with formal ordinances performed in sacred places. But these ordinances become dynamic and productive of good only as they reveal themselves in our daily lives. Malachi said that the power of Elijah would turn the *hearts* of the fathers and the children to each other. The heart is the seat of the emotions and a conduit for revelation (see Malachi 4:5–6). This sealing power thus reveals itself in family relationships, in attributes and virtues developed in a nurturing environment, and in loving service. These are the cords that bind families together” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 47; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 37).

“The Spirit of Elijah” strengthens family relationships. [2.6.3]

Elder Richard H. Winkel of the Seventy noted the positive influence of “the Spirit of Elijah” and the temple on his family: “When you come to the temple you will love your family with a deeper love than you have ever felt before. The temple is about families. As my wife . . . and I have increased our temple service, our love for each other and for our children has increased. And it doesn’t stop there. It extends to parents, brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, forebears, and especially our grandchildren! This is the Spirit of Elijah, which is the spirit of family history work; and when inspired by the Holy Ghost, it prompts the turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. Because of the priesthood, husbands and wives are sealed together and children are sealed to their parents for eternity, so the family is eternal and will not be separated at death” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 7–8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 9).

After Elijah’s Return, Interest in Family History Began to Accelerate around the World [2.7]

Millions are working on family history. [2.7.1]

President Gordon B. Hinckley noted the worldwide interest in family history that took root after the return of Elijah in 1836 and testified of the divine purpose in that increased interest:

“There are today many genealogical and family history societies in the world. I think they all have come into existence subsequent to the visit of Elijah. One of the oldest and most prestigious is the New England Historic Genealogical Society, organized in 1844, the year of



the Prophet’s death. Since then, and in more recent years particularly, there has been a tremendous surge of interest in family history. With that surge, the Family History Department of the Church has grown to be able to accommodate it. . . .

“There are millions across the world who are working on family history records. Why? Why are they doing it? I believe it is because they have been touched by the spirit of this work, a thing which we call the spirit of Elijah. It is a turning of the hearts of the children to their fathers. Most of them do not understand any real purpose in this, other than perhaps a strong and motivating curiosity.

“There has to be a purpose in this tremendous expenditure of time and money. That purpose, of which we bear solemn witness, is to identify the generations of the dead so that ordinances may be performed in their behalf for their eternal and everlasting blessing and progress.

“The real fruit of this identification finds expression only in the House of the Lord, the temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And as the work of family history research goes on and grows, there is a concomitant flowering of temples” (“A Century of Family History Service,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1995, 61–62).

Family history research has become a leading hobby. [2.7.2]

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Ronald T. Halverson** shared the following experience:

“Genealogy or family history has become one of the leading hobbies in America and around the world. I had an experience while I was serving in New Zealand. Because of some back problems I went to a physical therapist. While receiving treatment the therapist said to me, ‘Aren’t you a member of the Mormon Church?’

“My answer was, ‘Yes.’

“‘Isn’t that the Church that preserves the history and records of our ancestors?’ he said.

“‘Yes,’ I responded, ‘we are noted for that and are blessed to have a Family History Library.’

“He then told me that he and his daughter had spent several years collecting the names of his ancestors and doing family research and had accumulated many generations. He was concerned and wanted to know if he could share that with the Church. He was concerned that all of the work and effort that he had put into accumulating this sacred work could be lost and he wanted to preserve it for future generations. I was happy to share with him the e-mail address and the means by which he could contact the Family History Department and I am confident by this time that he has transferred the information.

“Although he does not know why, it is obvious, upon him as upon many others throughout the world the spirit of Elijah is working. To my knowledge prior to the coming of Elijah in 1836 there were no endeavors or any support to search the records of the dead, but what has happened since is miraculous. Laws have been passed in countries compelling the preservation of the records of the dead. In Norway where records were scattered and difficult to find, they have constructed a records vault near the city of Morirana similar to the Church’s vault. They are very proud of it. You can now find family history libraries or locations to find your records in almost every major city or county” (“An Offering, Worthy of All Acceptation” [address at Conference on Family History and Genealogy, Brigham Young University, July 26, 2005], 2–3).

Questions to Ponder

- Since you are taking a family history class, is it fair to assume you have felt some turning of your heart to your ancestors at least to some degree? In what ways has the Holy Ghost encouraged you to participate in family history? What are your specific interests in family history?
- In what ways have the sealing keys restored by the prophet Elijah affected your life?
- In what ways have the hearts of your family members been turned to each other?
- Do any names in your family ancestry keep coming to mind? If so, have you written these names and these experiences in your journal? What are you going to do about it?

Suggested Assignments

- Answer the question: What is meant by “the Spirit of Elijah”?
- Explain to a person or group or in writing the significance of Elijah’s mission for the latter days.
- Study the scriptures in this chapter that refer to Elijah and his mission. Record what you learn in a study journal.

Additional Resources

- Mark E. Petersen, “The Mission of Elijah,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1981, 64–65.
- Russell M. Nelson, “The Spirit of Elijah,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 84–86.
- Chapter 26, “Elijah and the Restoration of the Sealing Keys,” in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 307–14.



Getting Started with Family History Research

3

Introduction

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency declared: “It is a joy to become acquainted with our forebears who died long ago. Each of us has a fascinating family history. Finding your ancestors can be one of the most interesting puzzles you . . . can work on” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 57; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 53).

When you first begin to work on your family history puzzle, start with the closest and most familiar pieces: individuals in and information about your own immediate family. You will be doing something that literally millions of people around the world enjoy doing. However, you will have a higher purpose; you will be participating in the Lord’s work designed for the salvation of His children.

The Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) proclaimed that as we seek to perform necessary ordinances in behalf of our deceased forebears, we fulfill a prophecy by the Old Testament prophet Obadiah: “And now as the great purposes of God are hastening to their accomplishment, and the things spoken of in the Prophets are fulfilling, as the kingdom of God is established on the earth, and the ancient order of things restored, the Lord has manifested to us this duty and privilege, and we are commanded to be baptized for our dead, thus fulfilling the words of Obadiah, when speaking of the glory of the latter-day: ‘And saviors shall come upon Mount Zion’ [see Obadiah 1:21]” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 409).

Commentary

We Become “Saviors on Mount Zion” When We Provide Saving Ordinances for Our Deceased Ancestors [3.1]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Isaiah 42:6–7
- Obadiah 1:17, 21

Jesus Christ is the only name by which we are saved. [3.1.1]

Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, the One who atoned for all mankind. Teaching what an angel had told him, King Benjamin testified: “There shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:17; see also Acts 4:12; 2 Nephi 31:21). **Elder Dallin H. Oaks** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reaffirmed that testimony in our day: “We love the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Messiah, our Savior and our Redeemer. His is the only name by which we can be saved” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 78; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 65).



Only through the Lord Jesus Christ can we be saved.

Temple work is like the spirit of the Savior’s sacrifice. [3.1.2]

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) associated the vicarious temple work done in behalf of the dead with the Savior’s atoning sacrifice: “That which goes on in the house of the Lord, and which must be preceded by research, comes nearer to the spirit of the sacrifice of the Lord than any other activity of which I know. 21

Why? Because it is done by those who give freely of time and substance, without any expectation of thanks or reward, to do for others that which they cannot do for themselves" ("A Century of Family History Service," *Ensign*, Mar. 1995, 62–63).

We can become "saviors on Mount Zion." [3.1.3]

The prophet Obadiah prophesied that "saviours shall come up on mount Zion" (Obadiah 1:21). You can help fulfill that prophecy for those who have passed on. **The Prophet Joseph Smith** explained: "But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples, erecting their baptismal fonts, and going forth and receiving all the ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations and sealing powers upon their heads, in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead, and redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection and be exalted to thrones of glory with them" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, 473).



Baptismal font in the Washington D.C. Temple

This work rests upon the Latter-day Saints. [3.1.4]

President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) testified that just as we could not redeem ourselves but were dependent upon the Savior, so are our ancestors dependent upon our vicarious work for them in the temples: "You



have had laid before you . . . some things pertaining to the redemption of our dead, and some things in regard to the building of temples. These, brethren and sisters, are important works. They are works which we do for others that they cannot do for themselves. This is

what Jesus Christ did when He laid down His life for our redemption, because we could not redeem ourselves. We have fathers and mothers and kindred in the spirit world, and we have a work to perform in their behalf. As an individual I have had great interest in this work of redeeming the dead, and so have my brethren and sisters. . . . This is a work that rests upon the Latter-day Saints. Do what you can in this respect, so that when you pass to the other side of the veil your fathers, mothers, relatives and friends will bless you for what you have done, and inasmuch as you have been instruments in the hands of God in procuring their redemption, you will be recognized as Saviors upon Mount Zion in fulfillment of prophecy [see Obadiah 1:21]" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* [2004], 189).



We are in a partnership with the Lord. [3.1.5]

Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that we made a promise in our premortal existence to help in the salvation of others: "In our preexistent state, in the day of

the great council, we made a certain agreement with the Almighty. The Lord proposed a plan. . . . We accepted it. Since the plan is intended for all men, we became parties to the salvation of every person under that plan. We agreed, right then and there, to be not only saviors for ourselves but measurably saviors for the whole human family. We went into a partnership with the Lord. The working out of the plan became then not merely the Father's work, and the Savior's work, but also our work. The least of us, the humblest, is in partnership with the Almighty in achieving the purpose of the eternal plan of salvation" ("The Worth of Souls," *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Oct. 1934, 189).

We Can Begin Family History Work by Gathering Our Own Personal Information and Focusing on Our First Few Generations [3.2]

Assess where you are. [3.2.1]

Your starting point in doing family history work will depend upon your experience and your available family history information thus far. Assess where you are now in your research, and then decide where you want to go next. Move from the most readily available sources to the more difficult ones. It is important that you find out very early in your research what information the Church's family history website may already have on your family ancestry (see the section on FamilySearch.org (3.3.1) and chapter 6 of this manual).

Start with gathering and storing your research. [3.2.2]

President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of inspiration we can receive while doing family history research and then suggested a basic method to begin our efforts:



"It is a matter of getting started. You may come to know the principle that Nephi knew when he said, 'And I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do' (1 Nephi 4:6).

"If you don't know where to start, start with *yourself*. If you don't know

what records to get, and how to get them, start with what you have. . . .

"Here's what you might do:

"Get a cardboard box. Any kind of a box will do. Put it someplace where it is in the way, perhaps on the couch or on the counter in the kitchen—anywhere where it cannot go unnoticed. Then, over a period of a few weeks, collect and put into the box every record of your life, such as your birth certificate, your certificate of blessing, your certificate of baptism, your certificate of ordination, and your certificate of graduation. Collect diplomas, all of the photographs, honors, or awards, a diary if you have kept one, everything that you can find pertaining to *your* life; anything that is written, or registered, or recorded that testifies that you are alive and what you have done.

"Don't try to do this in a day. Take some time on it. Most of us have these things scattered around here and there. Some of them are in a box in the garage under that stack

of newspapers; others are stored away in drawers, or in the attic, or one place or another. Perhaps some have been tucked in the leaves of the Bible or elsewhere.

"Gather all these papers together and put them in the box. Keep it there until you have collected everything you think you have" ("Your Family History: Getting Started," *Ensign*, Aug. 2003, 15–16).

Begin by doing simple things. [3.2.3]

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency suggested simple ways to begin family history efforts in order to offer our ancestors the opportunity for salvation:



"You begin by doing simple things.

Write down what you already know about your family. You will need to write down the names of parents and their parents with the dates of birth or death or marriage. When you can,

you will want to record the places. Some of that you will know from memory. But you can also ask relatives. They may even have some certificates of births, marriages, or deaths. Make copies [or scan them] and organize them. If you learn stories about their lives, write them down and keep them. You are not just gathering names. Those you never met in life [those who have died] will become friends you love. Your heart will be bound to theirs forever.

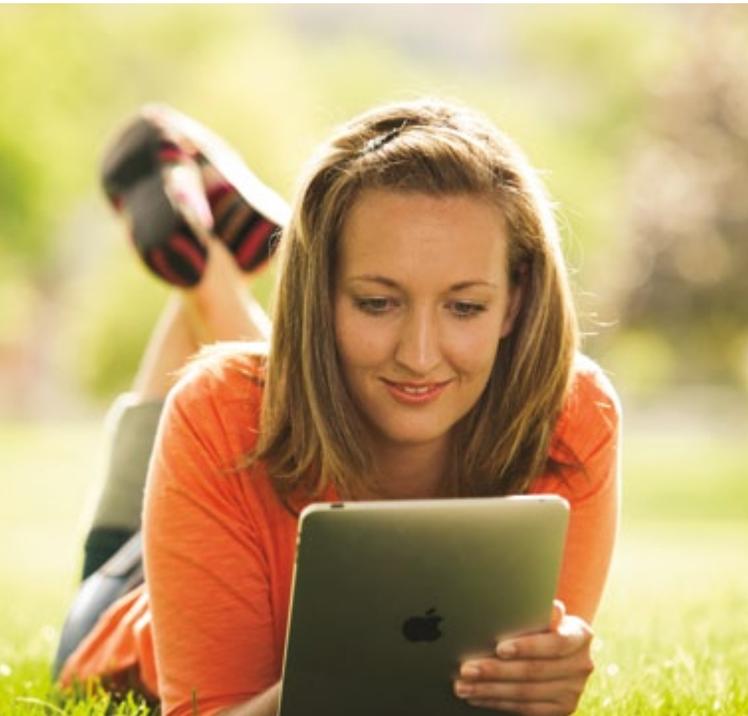
"You can start searching in the first few generations going back in time. From that you will identify many of your ancestors who need your help. Someone in your own ward or branch of the Church has been called to help you prepare those names for the temple. There they can be offered the covenants which will free them from their spirit prisons and bind them in families—your family—forever.

"Your opportunities and the obligations they create are remarkable in the whole history of the world. There are more temples across the earth than there have ever been. More people in all the world have felt the Spirit of Elijah move them to record the identities of their ancestors and facts of their ancestors' lives. There are more resources to search out your ancestors than there have ever been in the history of the world. The Lord has poured out knowledge about how to make that information available worldwide through technology that a few years ago would have seemed a miracle" (in Conference Report Apr. 2005, 82; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 79).

The Church's FamilySearch Website Is an Important Resource for Family History Records and Information [3.3]

Use the new FamilySearch.org website. [3.3.1]

There are currently three Church-sponsored FamilySearch websites providing access to information and technology that can greatly assist you in your family history work: FamilySearch.org and lds.org/familyhistoryyouth are accessible to the general public, and new.FamilySearch.org is primarily accessible to Church members. You will need an LDS Account in order to access membership or temple ordinance records. Having an LDS Account will make available over 500 million names of deceased people from around the world for your research. You will also be able to submit names for temple ordinances and add information about your family. (Ask your instructor or a family history specialist for the latest update information.)



Your instructor or a stake, ward, or branch family history consultant can help you create an LDS Account, or you can go to LDS.org, click on **Sign In**, click on **Register for an LDS Account**, and follow the instructions. You will need your membership record number and birth date to set up your LDS Account—you can get your membership record number from your ward or branch clerk or from your temple recommend.

You can save time and avoid duplication of work by looking for your family lineage on the Church's family history website. You may be surprised to find valuable information has already been entered for your ancestry. (See chapter 6 of this manual, "Computers and Family History Research," for more information.)

Technology has hastened the work. [3.3.2]

The Family History Department of the Church oversees FamilySearch. "To hasten the work of making important historical records available online, FamilySearch is continually trying to improve upon current technologies and find additional dedicated volunteers.

"Over time, the Church's Family History Department has developed new ways to preserve records not only as quickly as possible but at the highest quality possible. This has resulted in specially designed digital cameras, innovative scanning technology, and new computer software. . . .

"[There are] a number of new Web-based programs that have been developed to advance family history endeavors. . . .

"These and many other projects are making family history come alive more than ever. . . . 'That evolution of technology has been remarkable in getting everyone involved everywhere'" (Heather Whittle Wrigley, "Technology Helps FamilySearch Volunteers Hit Major Milestone," *Liahona*, Dec. 2009, N1, N3; see also *Ensign*, Dec. 2009, 76–78).

Procedures have been simplified. [3.3.3]

The Church's efforts to improve and increase family history research reflect the fundamental love we feel for



family members. **Elder Russell M. Nelson** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how the Church's efforts have made it easier for everyone to participate in family history research:

"Because of the importance of this work, the Church has built temples closer to the people, and family history research is being facilitated as never before. Methods to find and prepare names for temple ordinances are also improving. . . .

". . . Procedures have been simplified so that virtually every member of the Church can participate in temple and family history work" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2010, 90; or *Ensign*, May 2010, 92).

We Should Use Wisdom in Determining How Much Time and Effort to Invest in Family History Research

[3.4]

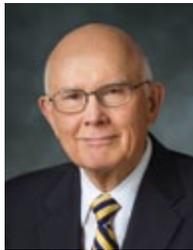
Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Mosiah 4:27
- Doctrine and Covenants 10:4

There are many tasks in the work of redeeming the dead.

[3.4.1]

There are various aspects to family history work that need to be done, including researching and gathering information and records, writing personal histories, and doing temple work. **Elder Dallin H. Oaks** encouraged us in our efforts to do family history work by giving some general principles to help us adapt our activities to our changing situations in life. He also encouraged a lifelong commitment to further the work of the Lord:



“I will suggest some general principles that should encourage all Latter-day Saints to receive their own ordinances and provide the ordinances of eternity for their ancestors. The linkage to ordinances is vital. . . .

“The first principle is that our efforts to promote temple and family history work should be such as to accomplish the work of the Lord, not to impose guilt on his children. Members of this church have many individual circumstances—age, health, education, place of residence, family responsibilities, financial circumstances, accessibility to sources for individual or library research, and many others. . . .

“The second principle is that we should understand that in the work of redeeming the dead there are many tasks to be performed, and that all members should participate by prayerfully selecting those ways that fit their personal circumstances at a particular time. This should be done under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord and with the guidance of priesthood leaders who issue calls and direct the Church-administered portions of this work. Our effort is not to compel everyone to do everything, but to encourage everyone to do something. . . .

“On the question of how much and what each member can do in individual efforts, in addition to his or her Church calling, we should be guided by the principle taught in King Benjamin’s great sermon. After teaching his people the things they should do to ‘walk guiltless before God,’ including giving to the poor, he concluded: ‘And see that all these things are done in wisdom and



Seeking the Spirit of the Lord can help you establish priorities regarding your family history work.

order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength.’ (Mosiah 4:27.) Similarly, as the Prophet Joseph Smith struggled through adversity to translate the Book of Mormon, the Lord told him: ‘Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided to enable you to translate; but be diligent unto the end.’ (D&C 10:4.)

“Guided by these inspired words, leaders should encourage members to determine, according to the promptings of the Spirit, what temple and family history work they can do ‘in wisdom and order’ consistent with their own ‘strength and means.’ In this way, if we are ‘diligent unto the end,’ the work will prosper. . . .

“In mapping out our personal efforts in temple and family history work, we need to take a view that is not only broad in scope but at least lifetime in duration. The total amount of time and resources we can spend on the mission of the Church—what we can and should do at a particular time of our life—will change with time as our circumstances change. . . .

“. . . Each member should think about the . . . mission of the Church . . . as a lifelong personal assignment and privilege. Each should gauge his or her personal participation from time to time according to his or her own circumstances and resources, as guided by the Spirit of the Lord and the direction of priesthood leaders” (“Family History: ‘In Wisdom and Order,’” *Ensign*, June 1989, 6–8).

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave the following counsel on Church service, which also applies to family history work:

“We need to thoughtfully allocate our resources of time, income, and energy. I would like to let you in on a little secret. Some of you have already learned it. If you haven’t, it’s time you knew. No matter what your family needs are or your responsibilities in the Church, there is no such thing as ‘done.’ There will always be more we can do. . . .

“The key, it seems to me, is to know and understand your own capabilities and limitations and then to pace



Gathering dates and other details helps in preparing names for temple ordinances.

yourself, allocating and prioritizing your time, your attention, and your resources to wisely help others, including your family, in their quest for eternal life” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 18–19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 19).

Inspiration opens doors in family history.^[3.4.2]



President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles related the following experience as an example of how inspiration can guide family history work and open paths for its accomplishment in individual lives:

“If we want a testimony of family history and temple work, we must do something about that work. Here is an example of what can happen when you do.

“I once attended a conference in the Hartford Connecticut Stake. An assignment had been made three months earlier to all members of the stake presidency to speak on this subject of family history work. One had been a counselor in the stake presidency but became stake patriarch at that conference. He told this interesting incident.

“He had not been able to get started in family history work, although he was ‘converted’ to it. He just didn’t know where to start. When he received the assignment to prepare a life history from his own records, he was unable to find anything about his childhood and youth except his birth certificate. He was one of 11 children born to Italian immigrants. He is the only member of his family in the Church.

“In fulfilling the assignment he tried to put together everything he could find on his life. At least he was starting, but there just didn’t seem to be anywhere to go. He could get his own life story put together from his own memory and from what few records he had.

“Then a very interesting thing happened. His aged mother, who was in a rest home, had a great yearning to return once more to her homeland in Italy. Finally, because she was obsessed with this desire, the doctors felt nothing would be gained by denying her this request, and the family decided to grant their mother her dying wish. And for some reason they all decided that this brother (the only member of the family in the Church) should be the one to accompany his mother to Italy.

“All at once, then, he found himself returning to the ancestral home. A door was opening! While in Italy he visited the parish church where his mother was baptized and also the parish church where his father was baptized.

He met many relatives. He learned that the records in the parish go back for 500 years. He visited the town hall to look into the records and found people very cooperative there. The town clerk told him that the previous summer a seminarian and a nun had been there together looking for records of this brother's family name, and they had said they were collecting the family history of the family. He was given the name of the city where they lived, and he now could follow that lead. He learned also that there is a city in Italy bearing the family name.

"But this is not all. When he came to Salt Lake City to general conference he returned by way of Colorado, where many of his family live. There, with very little persuasion, a family organization was effected and a family reunion was planned, which soon afterwards was held.

"And then, as always happens, some of his relatives—his aunts and uncles, his brothers and sisters—began to provide the pictures and information about *his* life that he never knew existed. And, as always happens, he learned that this is a work of inspiration."

President Packer then gave the following promise and testimony of divine guidance in his own family's efforts in family history:

"The Lord will bless you once you begin this work. This has been very evident to my family. Since the time we decided that we would start where we were, with what we had, many things have opened to us. . . .

"Things began to emerge once we got to work. We still are not, by any means, experts in family history research. We are, however, dedicated to our family. And it is my testimony that if we start where we are—each of us with ourselves, with such records as we have—and begin putting those in order, things will fall into place as they should" ("Your Family History: Getting Started," *Ensign*, Aug. 2003, 12–15).

You have an invitation and a promise from an Apostle.

[3.4.3]



As you engage in the great work of redeeming the dead, you will have a greater understanding of the Spirit of Elijah and the blessings promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **Elder David A. Bednar** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained:

"I invite the young people of the Church to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah. I encourage you to study, to search out your ancestors, and to prepare yourselves to perform proxy baptisms in the house of the Lord for *your* kindred dead (see D&C

124:28–36). And I urge you to help other people identify their family histories.

"As you respond in faith to this invitation, your hearts shall turn to the fathers. The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be implanted in your hearts. Your patriarchal blessing, with its declaration of lineage, will link you to these fathers and be more meaningful to you. Your love and gratitude for your ancestors will increase. Your testimony of and conversion to the Savior will become deep and abiding. And I promise you will be protected against the intensifying influence of the adversary. As you participate in and love this holy work, you will be safeguarded in your youth and throughout your lives" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2011, 26; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 26–27).

Questions to Ponder

- What does it mean to be a savior on Mount Zion?
- How does Elder Dallin H. Oaks's counsel on "wisdom and order" apply to your work in family history?

Suggested Assignments

- Write three or four goals for your own family history research, and prioritize them (what you want to do first, second, and so on).
- Set up an LDS Account so you can access membership and temple ordinance records on new.FamilySearch.org. You will need your Church membership record number and birth date—you can get your membership record number from your ward or branch clerk or from your temple recommend.
- Enlist the help of other family members in your efforts, such as digitally scanning records, taking pictures of artifacts, and helping you identify the information so you can connect it with the correct person in your family tree. You could create a family DVD so that there is a single place to look, and you could even make copies for family members.

Additional Resources

- Dallin H. Oaks, "Family History: 'In Wisdom and Order,'" *Ensign*, June 1989, 6–8.
- Boyd K. Packer, "Your Family History: Getting Started," *Ensign*, Aug. 2003, 12–17.
- David A. Bednar, "The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 24–27.



Gathering and Recording Family History Information

4

Introduction

As you progress in finding and recording names, dates, places, and relationships in your family history work, remember that the main objective is to help provide each individual and family in your ancestry the opportunity to receive the eternal happiness and joy available through the gospel of Jesus Christ. These are more than just names for research; they are people who live as spirits in the postmortal spirit world. **President Howard W. Hunter** (1907–95) testified: “The dead are anxiously waiting for the Latter-day Saints to search out their names and then go into the temples to officiate in their behalf, that they may be liberated from their prison house in the spirit world. All of us should find joy in this magnificent labor of love” (“A Temple-Motivated People,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 5).

When you gather and organize your family history records, there are guidelines for recording names, dates, relationships, and places. There are also standard forms—in written and electronic formats—for keeping records of lineage and family relationships. To simplify your research, you should become familiar with these guidelines and forms, as well as at least one of the record manager software programs.

During your life on the earth, your spirit [was] housed in your physical body, which was born of mortal parents. . . . “ . . . At the time of physical death, the spirit does not die. It separates from the body and lives in the postmortal spirit world” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 164).

Each name of a deceased ancestor on your family tree represents a person who has progressed through mortality and now lives as a spirit person in the postmortal spirit world. You are doing research on those names to provide the opportunity for them to progress toward the final phase of their existence, where they are assigned to a kingdom in the eternities, when the spirit is reunited with the body, “never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal” (Alma 11:45).



President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said: “I do not like to speak of them as ‘the dead.’ I believe that under the great plan of our Eternal Father and through the atonement of Christ, they are living. Though they have died as to their mortal bodies, they have retained their identity as individuals. They are personalities as much so as are we, and as entitled to the blessings that pertain to eternal life” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 73; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 59).

Each person is a member of a family. [4.1.2]

An article in the *New Era* magazine tells how a young person came to appreciate how each name represents a real family member:

“Imagine putting together a gigantic puzzle—not a puzzle of 500 pieces, but one of 10,000! However, this isn’t a puzzle made out of cardboard. It’s a puzzle of family names, real people who are more than just names on a chart.

“That’s exactly what the youth of the South Weber Utah Stake have done as they have gotten involved in their stake’s ‘Elijah Project,’ named after the prophet who restored the sealing keys. Participation in the project helped the teens research family names and then take them to the temple to perform baptisms for the dead. . . .

Commentary

The Name of Each Deceased Ancestor Represents a Child of Heavenly Father, a Real Person in the Postmortal Spirit World [4.1]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Doctrine and Covenants 137:5
- Doctrine and Covenants 138:38–50

Each name represents a real person. [4.1.1]

When you look at the name of a deceased ancestor, you may apply this declaration to him or her:

“You are a spirit child of Heavenly Father, and you existed as a spirit before you were born on the earth.

“Amanda Gardner of the Pioneer Ward . . . says, ‘One of my good friends had no names to submit, so she came to my grandpa and he helped her find about 175 names. At first she was like, “Oh, they’re just names on paper.” But I realized they’re not just names on paper; they’re family members’” (Sally Johnson Odekirk, “Putting the Puzzle Together,” *New Era*, Nov. 2006, 18, 20).

Accurate and Organized Records Facilitate the Gathering and Sharing of Family History Information [4.2]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Doctrine and Covenants 127:5–9
- Doctrine and Covenants 128:2–7, 24

Church records need to be complete and orderly. [4.2.1]

Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952) taught that the keeping of accurate records serves a divine purpose and was affirmed by revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith:



“Towards the end of Joseph’s life, a series of instructions were given the Prophet relative to the necessity of keeping records. It is on the basis of this revelation that the careful system of records is being followed in the temples. Every person is accounted for, huge volumes are stored, for the

Latter-day Saints believe literally that out of the books men shall be judged. The Lord may have other means of knowing, but it is the right and orderly way for us” (*The Message of the Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. G. Homer Durham [1969], 161).

Accurate record keeping begins with each of us. [4.2.2]

The practice of keeping accurate records increases the efficiency and accuracy of family history work. This begins with you in your own family history efforts. Determine a system for keeping track of what you have done, the information you currently have, and the direction you want to go next. If you started out by placing records in a box, as suggested by President Boyd K. Packer (see section 3.2.2), you will next need to organize them. Use a system that works best for you. You could

organize the records by family surnames and when they lived. Using file folders, either paper or digital, is one way to organize your system.

Computer technology and various family history software programs are available to help organize your family history records (for more information, see chapter 6 of this manual, “Computers and Family History Research”). Visit with your ward, branch, or stake family history consultant and others who are doing family history research to learn how they organize and store their records. Scanners and scanning programs, as well as genealogical record managers that let you attach scanned images to pedigree charts, are readily available and relatively inexpensive.

Learn more about the Church’s family history website and family history programs. You could also investigate commercially produced software for organizing records. Choose something that appeals to you, is easy to learn, and will likely serve your purposes for a long time. Organize your materials so that someone else could easily understand what you have done.

Before Temple Work Can Be Performed for Deceased Ancestors, Certain Information about Each Ancestor Must Be Obtained [4.3]

A minimum amount of information is required. [4.3.1]

You must provide at least the given name or the surname or your ancestor, the person’s gender, a locality for a qualifying event (such as birth, christening, marriage, death, or burial), and enough additional information to uniquely identify the person. Additional information may include dates, localities, and relationships of other family members. Remember that in order for temple ordinances to be performed, individuals must be deceased for at least one year, and if that individual was born within the last 95 years, permission from the closest living relative must be obtained before temple ordinances are to be performed.

In addition, for sealing to a spouse, you will need the minimum information of a given name or the surname of the spouse. For sealing to parents, you will need the minimum information of the given name or the surname of at least the father.

Minimum Information Needed to Perform Ordinances

Baptism and Endowments	Name
	Sex
	Event date (for example, a birth date)
	Event place (for example, a birthplace)
Sealing to Parents	Same information as for baptism and endowment
	First or last name of the father
Sealing to Spouse	Name of the husband
	Marriage date
	Marriage place

Obtain and preserve as much information as possible.
[4.3.2]

Although temple ordinances can be performed when only the minimum information is available, try to provide as much information about an ancestor as possible. More complete information reduces the chance that your ancestor will be confused with another person. With less information, ordinances might be done more than once for the same person, or someone may think the temple work has been done for an ancestor when it has not. Providing more information about a person greatly reduces the likelihood of error in identification and duplication of the temple work. However, there are instances when details are simply not available; therefore, if a minimum of information can be obtained, the temple work can be performed.

There Are Guidelines for Recording Family History Information [4.4]

Follow the guidelines for recording names. [4.4.1]

Provide names that are as complete as possible. Below are some examples of complete names:

- Elizabeth Blackenshaw
- Claus Cornelius Vanderhofen
- Gonzalez Espinoze y de Nunez y Sainz y Rodriguez
- Ah-Yueh Chen

If you do not know the complete name, provide what you do know. For ordinances to be performed, you need just one name for the person.

If a person was known by a nickname or called by more than one name, do not put this information in the name field, but include this information in a separate information field.

When neither the wife's given nor maiden names are known, write *Mrs.* plus the husband's name, for example: *Mrs. Miguel Eduardo Sanchez* or *Mrs. Alexander Smith*. This information will allow the child to be sealed to the father and the unknown mother.

When you have information about a child but don't know the child's given name, indicate the child's gender, and then include the father's surname in the name field.

Do not include descriptions or titles—*boy, girl, child, still-born, Miss, Mr., Jr., Dr.*, or such—as part of the person's name (*Mrs.* is the only exception, as explained above). Also avoid using explanations such as *unknown*. The software used to clear names for temple work may interpret titles or explanations as given names or surnames.

Follow the guidelines for recording dates. [4.4.2]

For ordinances to be performed for a person, you need to provide the date of an event in that person's life (such as a birth or death date). Record dates as completely as possible with the day, month, and year. If you do not know the exact date, use the words *before, after, or about*.

Record dates as day, month (use the first three letters of the month as an abbreviation), and year. If you do not have a complete date, provide what you know. If you have more than one date for the same event, separate the dates with a slash (/) or the word *or*. Some examples follow:

- Born: 23 Mar 1742
- Christened: Dec 1952
- Died: 14/16 Jul 1822
- Born: 2 Feb 1839/40
- Married: 1878 or 1881

If you record the dates in Chinese-based characters, FamilySearch correctly interprets dates from the lunar calendars used in China, Japan, and Korea.

Calculated dates. If you don't know a date, calculate one if possible. You must have at least the approximate year of an event for ordinances to be performed. You may calculate a date, such as a birth date, when you know the date of an event and the person's age at the time of the event. For example, if an 1860 census lists a person as two years old, you may calculate the birth year as 1858. You would thus list the calculated date as *Born 1858*.

Approximated dates. If an exact year is not known, you may estimate the year of an event based upon other information. In front of an approximated (estimated) year, put *before*, *after*, or *about* (abbreviated as *Abt*). Following are examples of how you might estimate a date.

- You may have information that an ancestor died during World War I. The death date could be approximated as *Abt 1914* (the starting date of the war; you could also list another year of the war if you knew the person died toward the middle or end of the war).
- You may have information that an ancestor died just prior to the start of World War I. The death date could be approximated as *Before 1914*.
- If you have a marriage date but not a birth date, you can approximate birth dates from the year of marriage. The general assumption used for such instances is that a man was married at age 25 and a woman at age 21. Thus, if you have a marriage date of 1875, you can list the husband's birth date as *Abt 1850* and the wife's birthday as *Abt 1854*. (Note that these are general rules and may vary slightly by culture, time frame, or country.)

- If you know a marriage date but not the birth dates of the couple's children, you can use an approximate year for the birth of those children. Estimate that the first child was born one year after the parents' marriage and that subsequent children were born every two years after that. For example, if a couple was married in 1800 and had two children, the first child's approximated year of birth would be *Abt 1801* and the second child's approximated year of birth would be *Abt 1803*.
- You may use family knowledge or tradition as sources for providing dates. For example, if family tradition says that an ancestor was 16 years old when she was married in 1876, you can approximate the birth year as *Abt 1860*.
- If you know the person was deceased but do not know the exact date, use the words *before*, *after*, or *abt* (about) in the death field.

Follow the guidelines for recording places. [4.4.3]

Provide a place name that is as complete as possible. For place names in English and other languages that use a Roman alphabet, record from the smallest to the largest geographical division, separating the divisions by commas. Some examples follow:

- Chicago, Cook, Illinois, United States
- St. Dunstan, Canterbury, Kent, England
- Azusa-mura, Minami Azumi-gun, Nagano-ken, Japan
- Maugerud, Flesbert, Buskeruf, Norway

For place names recorded in Asian writing systems, start with the largest geographical level, and then move to the smallest. (For example, start with the country and end with the village.)

Generally, you should avoid using brief postal abbreviations for states and provinces (such as *IL* for Illinois). These abbreviations are often misinterpreted. Whenever possible, use the complete name of the state or province.

If you do not know all the levels of a place name, FamilySearch will likely give a list of complete place names you can choose from. In any case, do the best you can with the information you have.

Assumed places. If you do not have the information about a location, you may assume places of residence based on a location where one member of a family was born, died, lived at some time, or was married. This place name can be used as a probable place of residence for other members of the family. For example, if the birthplace of a child was San Lorenzo, Chihuahua, Mexico, you can list

this town as the probable place for other family members for birth, marriage, and other events. In such a listing, you can indicate that a place may not be the actual location by preceding it with the word *of* (for example, *of San Lorenzo, Chihuahua, Mexico*).

For ordinances to be performed, you need at least a country of residence. For example, if the assumed place for an event is New Zealand, you would indicate *of New Zealand*.

Pedigree Charts and Family Group Sheets Are Standard Forms Used for Recording Family History Information [4.5]

Pedigree charts record a person's ancestral lines. [4.5.1]

A pedigree chart lists direct ancestors for several generations. Designs may vary a little, but basically the chart begins with one person, goes back to the parents of that person, then to their parents (the grandparents of the first person listed on the chart), and so forth.



Sample pedigree chart (see page 36)

Pedigree charts are available in various software programs in which you can electronically record your pedigree ancestral lines.

Pedigree charts show parental relationships. If a person had more than one spouse, provisions are made to refer to that information on the pedigree chart.

It is important to check the FamilySearch website early in your research to see if pedigree charts (and family group sheets) already exist for any of your ancestors.

Sample family group sheet (see page 37)

Family group sheets record relationships within individual families. [4.5.2]

Family group sheets are used to list all of the members of an ancestor's family, along with information such as dates and places of births, marriages, and ordinances. You should complete a family group sheet for each couple listed on your pedigree chart. If a person was married to more than one individual, complete a separate family group sheet for each spouse, listing any children that came from that particular marriage. In family history work, list the father and mother of a child, whether or not the parents were married at the time of that child's birth.

We Can Obtain Valuable Information by Contacting and Interviewing Other Family Members [4.6]

Expand your research to include other family members. [4.6.1]

After gathering family history information available in your own home, consider expanding your research by visiting with other family members, such as parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins. When you contact them, tell them who you are, your relationship to them (if not already known), and your purpose (such as gathering information for family history research). Before visiting personally, allow them time to locate any family history records they may have access to. During your visit, you may want to ask politely for permission to make copies of some of their records (be sensitive and



Much information can be gathered by interviewing elderly family members.

not imposing). You may want to offer to share any information you have gathered that may be of interest to the family member you are visiting.

Older family members will likely have valuable family history information and memories that can enhance and expand your gathered information; they may remember important events that have not been recorded. For this reason, if the person feels comfortable doing so, you may want to record the interview.

Family members are usually anxious to visit in person and share what they have with other family members. If a personal interview is not possible (such as with relatives who live far away), consider other ways you might make contact. A letter, phone call, e-mail, or other means of modern electronic communication may be helpful.

Consider the following success story: Jean-Marc Barr, a Church member in Salt Lake City, Utah, filled out as much information as he could on his four-generation pedigree chart. He was born in France and had a grandmother still living, but he did not know anything about her ancestors. Although she lived nearby, she was not a member of the Church and had never spoken much about her family. He prayed for guidance and felt impressed to visit her. They spent a wonderful afternoon together as she talked about her husband and other family members. He asked for her permission to write the information down, and she was able to recall names, dates, and places going back six generations.

Questions to Ponder

- What help do I need in order to learn how to use the Church's family history website for my personal family history work?
- What relative would I like to interview first regarding my family history?
- Is there a way to use social media to find out specific information?

Suggested Assignments

- Using pedigree charts and family group sheets, collect and fill in as much information as you can on your first four generations of ancestors. (You are encouraged to use computer technology and the FamilySearch website for this assignment.)
- Determine how you will store your family history information (in a filing system, a computer software program, or some other means).
- Make a list of interview questions you could use during visits with other family members.
- Interview a family member in order to gain additional family history information.

Additional Resources

- "Family History Work and Genealogy," *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 61–64.

Pedigree Chart

No. 1 on this chart is the same as no. _____ on chart no. _____.

Chart no. _____.

Mark boxes when ordinances are completed.

- B Baptized
- E Endowed
- SP Sealed to parents
- SS Sealed to spouse
- F Family Group Record exists for this couple
- C Children's ordinances completed

<p>1</p> <p>(Name) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> C</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When married Where</p> <p>When died Where</p> <hr/> <p>(Spouse) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS</p> <p>3</p> <p>(Mother) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When died Where</p>	<p>4</p> <p>(Father of no.2) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> C</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When married Where</p> <p>When died Where</p> <p>5</p> <p>(Mother of no. 2) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When died Where</p> <p>6</p> <p>(Father of no. 3) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> C</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When married Where</p> <p>When died Where</p> <p>7</p> <p>(Mother of no. 3) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When died Where</p>	<p>8</p> <p>(Father of no. 4) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> C</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When married Where</p> <p>When died Where</p> <p>9</p> <p>(Mother of no. 4) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When died Where</p> <p>10</p> <p>(Father of no. 5) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> C</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When married Where</p> <p>When died Where</p> <p>11</p> <p>(Mother of no. 5) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When died Where</p> <p>12</p> <p>(Father of no. 6) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> C</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When married Where</p> <p>When died Where</p> <p>13</p> <p>(Mother of no. 6) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When died Where</p> <p>14</p> <p>(Father of no. 7) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> C</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When married Where</p> <p>When died Where</p> <p>15</p> <p>(Mother of no. 7) <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SP <input type="checkbox"/> SS</p> <p>When born Where</p> <p>When died Where</p>
---	--	---

Your name and address

Telephone number	Date prepared
------------------	---------------

Family Group Record (Simplified Version)

Page _____ of _____

This form is for peoples or cultures that do not have birth, marriage, and death records for their ancestors.

Before temple work can be done, you must write information in each box marked with an asterisk (*). Please write all events, dates, and places that you know. If you do not know an exact place, write the country. Do not estimate dates if you have no date information.

Husband		Other marriages <input type="checkbox"/> (see notes)	LDS Temple Ordinances (date and temple) Baptized Endowed Sealed to spouse	
*Names				
Birth date	Birthplace			
*Death date	Death place			
Marriage date	Marriage place			
Other information				
Husband's father Names		<input type="checkbox"/> Deceased		
Husband's mother Names		<input type="checkbox"/> Deceased		
Wife		Other marriages <input type="checkbox"/> (see notes)	Baptized Endowed	
*Names				
Birth date	Birthplace			
*Death date	Death place			
Other information				
Wife's father Names		<input type="checkbox"/> Deceased		
Wife's mother Names		<input type="checkbox"/> Deceased		
Children				
1 *Names		Other marriages <input type="checkbox"/> (see notes)	Baptized Endowed Sealed to parents	
*Female	Birth date			Birthplace
*Death date	Death place			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Spouse's names			
Male	Marriage date	Marriage place		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other information			
2 *Names		Other marriages <input type="checkbox"/> (see notes)		Baptized Endowed Sealed to parents
*Female	Birth date		Birthplace	
*Death date	Death place			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Spouse's names			
Male	Marriage date	Marriage place		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other information			



Personal Revelation and Family History

5

Introduction

Seeking inspiration will increase your success in family history work. When you are striving to obey the commandments, you may ask the Lord for help in your family history efforts and trust that you may be aided by revelation through the power of the Holy Ghost. On occasion, the Holy Ghost may also help you sense the desires of your righteous ancestors in the spirit world to enter into gospel covenants.

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency explained: “The process of finding our ancestors one by one can be challenging but also exciting and rewarding. We often feel spiritual guidance as we go to the sources that identify them. Because this is a very spiritual work, we can expect help from the other side of the veil. We feel a pull from our relatives who are waiting for us to find them so their ordinance work can be done” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 59; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 55).

As you study this chapter, consider the efforts you are making to receive divine help from the Lord to assist you in your family history work.

Commentary

Effectively Seeking Out Our Kindred Dead Requires Us to Exercise Faith in Jesus Christ [5.1]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- James 1:5–6
- Mosiah 8:18
- Alma 32:37–41
- Ether 12:6
- Moroni 7:26, 32–33
- Doctrine and Covenants 18:18

Faith is a gift of God. [5.1.1]

Faith is a gift from God, a gift that is strengthened and increased as you put forth sincere efforts in righteous endeavors. True faith is shown through acts of obedience. **President Joseph Fielding Smith** (1876–1972) explained: “If we want to have a living, abiding faith, we must be active in the performance of every duty as members of this Church. I am as sure as I am that I am here that we would see more manifestations of the Spirit of God . . . if we would live just a little nearer to these fundamental truths” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:311).

Elder Kevin W. Pearson of the Seventy further emphasized the importance of obedience in the development of faith:

“Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: ‘*Faith is a gift of God bestowed as a reward for personal righteousness*. It is always given when righteousness is present, and the greater the measure of obedience to God’s laws the greater will be the endowment of faith’ (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 264; italics in original). If we desire more faith, we must be more obedient. . . . Faith requires an attitude of exact obedience, even in the small, simple things. . . .

“As patterns of obedience develop, the specific blessings associated with obedience are realized and belief emerges. Desire, hope, and belief are forms of faith, but faith as a principle of power comes from a consistent pattern of obedient behavior and attitudes. Personal righteousness is a choice. Faith is a gift from God, and one possessed of it can receive enormous spiritual power” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2009, 37; or *Ensign*, May 2009, 39).

Your efforts to pray with greater fervency, search the scriptures, keep the commandments, worthily attend the temple, fast, serve our fellowman—all of these result in greater faith in Jesus Christ and have a positive influence on your ability to search out the records of your kindred dead. In family history research, this also suggests that you spend the necessary time and energy to find available records and histories.



In the Sacred Grove, young Joseph Smith Jr. asked “in faith” which church he should join.

The First Vision is an example of asking in faith. [5.12]

Praying in faith implies not just fervor as you pray but also requires that you follow up your prayer with actions.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught the principle of asking in faith by citing the example of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who acted diligently after requesting help from God:

“The classic example of asking in faith is Joseph Smith and the First Vision. As young Joseph was seeking to know the truth about religion, he read the following verses in the first chapter of James:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering’ (James 1:5–6).

“Please notice the requirement to ask in faith, which I understand to mean the necessity to not only express but to do, the dual obligation to both plead and to perform, the requirement to communicate and to act. . . .

“I long have been impressed with the truth that meaningful prayer requires both holy communication and consecrated work. Blessings require some effort on our part before we can obtain them, and prayer, as ‘a form of work, . . . is an appointed means for obtaining the highest of all blessings’ (Bible Dictionary, “Prayer,” 753). We press forward and persevere in the consecrated work of prayer, after we say ‘amen,’ by acting upon the things we have expressed to Heavenly Father.

“Asking in faith requires honesty, effort, commitment, and persistence” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 94–95; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 94–95).

Faith opens doors. [5.1.3]

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) expressed his conviction that when we are trying to do all we can to locate necessary information about our kindred dead, the Lord will open doors for us to find the information we are searching for:



“[In our genealogical research] the Lord is not going to open any doors until we get as far as we can on our own. We have to go toward that blank wall and then we have to have enough faith to ask the Lord to help to make an opening so that we can take the next step. And there can be

information given to you from sources that reveal the fact that heaven and earth are not far away.

“Many of you have lived to a time in life where you have had loved ones who have gone on. You have had certainty of the nearness, sometimes, of those who have drawn very near to you. And sometimes they have brought to you information that you could not have otherwise had.

“I have a conviction born of a little experience to which I bear testimony that there are forces beyond this life that are working with us. . . .

“I have the simple faith that when you do everything you can, researching to the last of your opportunity, the Lord will help you to open doors to go further with your genealogies, and heaven will cooperate, I am sure” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 104).

As We Proceed in Faith, We Can Receive Inspiration from the Holy Ghost to Assist Us in Doing Family History Work [5.2]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- John 14:26
- John 16:13
- 2 Nephi 32:5
- Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3
- Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–9
- Doctrine and Covenants 11:12–14
- Doctrine and Covenants 88:63–64

Qualify for assistance from the Holy Ghost. [5.2.1]

Elder David A. Bednar explained what we must do to receive help from the Holy Ghost:

“These four words—‘Receive the Holy Ghost’—are not a passive pronouncement; rather, they constitute a

priesthood injunction—an authoritative admonition to act and not simply to be acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:26). The Holy Ghost does not become operative in our lives merely because hands are placed upon our heads and those four important words are spoken. As we receive this ordinance, each of us accepts a sacred and ongoing responsibility to desire, to seek, to work, and to so live that we indeed ‘receive the Holy Ghost’ and its attendant spiritual gifts. . . .

“What should we do to make this authorized admonition to seek for the companionship of the third member of the Godhead an ongoing reality? Let me suggest that we need to (1) sincerely desire to receive the Holy Ghost, (2) appropriately invite the Holy Ghost into our lives, and (3) faithfully obey God’s commandments” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2010, 94–95; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 95).

By following Elder Bednar’s counsel, you enable the Holy Ghost to provide you with inspiration to help you as you pursue family history objectives.



When you were confirmed a member of the Church, you were admonished to “receive the Holy Ghost.”



Revelation comes to the mind and the heart.

The gift of the Holy Ghost is sometimes called “the unspeakable gift.” [5.2.2]

We qualify for the direction of the Holy Ghost in our family history work by meeting the conditions for that sacred gift. **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles noted that when these conditions are met, the Holy Ghost can bless us in a number of ways:

“In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord calls the gift of the Holy Ghost ‘the unspeakable gift’ [D&C 121:26]. It is the source of testimony and spiritual gifts. It enlightens minds, fills our souls with joy [see D&C 11:13], teaches us all things, and brings forgotten knowledge to our remembrance [see John 14:26]. The Holy Ghost also ‘will show unto [us] all things what [we] should do’ (2 Nephi 32:5).’ . . .

“President Gordon B. Hinckley taught, ‘How great a blessing it is to have the ministering influence of a member of the Godhead’ [*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 259]. Think of what this means, the ability and the right to receive the ministrations of a member of the Godhead, to commune with infinite wisdom, infinite knowledge, and infinite power!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 27; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 26–27).

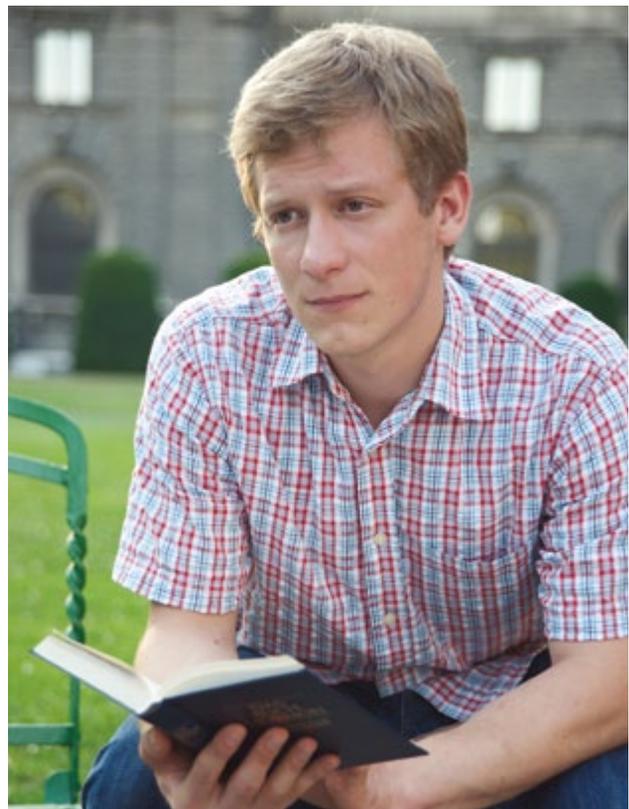
Revelation comes in different ways. [5.2.3]

As you search out records of your kindred dead, the Holy Ghost may communicate with you in various ways. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* lists some of the ways you may receive revelation from the Holy Ghost:

“*He speaks to the mind and heart in a still, small voice.* . . . Sometimes the Holy Ghost will help you understand a gospel truth or give you a prompting that ‘seems to occupy [your] mind, and press itself upon [your] feelings’ (D&C 128:1). Although such revelation can have a powerful effect on you, it almost always comes quietly, as a ‘still small voice’ (see 1 Kings 19:9–12; Helaman 5:30; D&C 85:6).

“*He prompts us through our feelings.* Although we often describe communication from the Spirit as a voice, that voice is one that we feel more than we hear. And while we speak of ‘listening’ to the whisperings of the Holy Ghost, we often describe a spiritual prompting by saying, ‘I had a feeling . . .’ . . .

“*He brings peace.* The Holy Ghost is often called the Comforter (see John 14:26; D&C 39:6). As He reveals the will of the Lord to you, He will ‘speak peace to your mind’ (D&C 6:23). The peace He gives cannot be counterfeited by worldly influences or false teachings” ([2004], 143–44).





Guidance of the Spirit helps us to do family history. [5.2.4]

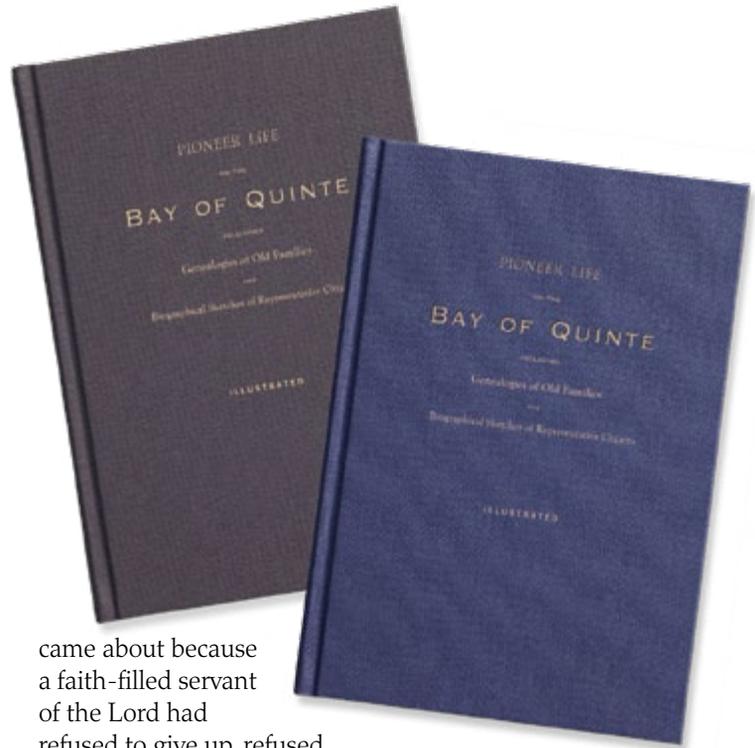
President Thomas S. Monson spoke of the mandate for family history work and illustrated how the guidance of the Spirit can help us fulfill that mandate:

“The work of seeking out our dead and ensuring that the ordinances of exaltation are performed in their behalf is a mandate from our Heavenly Father and his Beloved Son. They do not leave us to struggle alone but rather, in ways which are sometimes dramatic, prepare the way and answer our prayers. . . .

“When I served as president of the Canadian Mission, headquartered in Toronto, Canada, there was a devoted family history worker in the mission by the name of Myrtle Barnum. Oh, she was faithful in this sacred work. She had accumulated a lot of data on the St. Lawrence River area. She had come to the end of her line. She did not know where she might turn. She studied. She searched. She prayed. But she never gave up. And though she was frustrated for month after weary month, because of her apparent inability to find that which was needed, she never lost hope.

“One day she was walking by a secondhand store and felt compelled to go inside. Looking up and down the shelves, she noticed a set of books which drew her attention. Why, she will never be able to testify other than that the Lord was able to inspire her. The title of those two books: *Pioneer Life on the Bay of Quinte, volumes 1 and 2*. They sound like novels. She reached up and took those two dusty volumes down from the shelf, and as she opened them, she was amazed. . . . These books were genealogical records of all of the people that had lived near the Bay of Quinte from the time records could be maintained. She hurriedly searched through page after page, and there she found the information which opened up her family history lines once again, that her research might continue.

“An elders quorum in that area raised the considerable sum needed so that she might buy those two books. They were sent to Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, and I received a letter indicating that these same books had been the means of opening up the lines of connecting heritages for thousands of names of those who had gone beyond the veil. A large number of people rejoiced to learn of this treasure trove which connected to their family lines, including President Henry D. Moyle [a member of the First Presidency from 1959–63]. One of his grandfathers had come from that very area. All this



came about because a faith-filled servant of the Lord had refused to give up, refused to be discouraged, refused to say, ‘There is nothing that I as an individual can do’” (“Happy Birthday,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1995, 58, 60).

“Are you not on the Lord’s errand?” [5.2.5]

Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recorded this experience of being led by the Spirit to locate books containing important genealogical records:

“I know of no work that I have done in the Church which has been so filled with testimonies of the divinity of this work as the little I have done in behalf of the salvation of our dead. I could tell you a number of experiences, but the one that impressed me most happened a few years ago when I accompanied Brother Reed Smoot to Europe.

“We came to Stockholm; he had his work to do; I decided to see what I could do in the way of finding books on Swedish genealogy. I knew the names of the two big bookstores in Stockholm. I went to the one, made my selections, and then started across the city to the other bookstore in the hope that I might find some more suitable books. As I hurried along the street filled with people, I was stopped suddenly by some voice which said to me: ‘Go across the street and down that narrow side street.’ I looked across the street and saw a little narrow street. I had not been in Stockholm before. I thought: This is all nonsense, I have little time to spend here. I am not going down that street, I have to do my work, and I walked on.

“Almost at once the voice came again, as distinctly as any voice I have ever heard. Then I asked myself: What is your business in this city? Are you not on the Lord’s errand? And I crossed over; went down the little narrow street, and there, half-way down, found a little bookstore that I had known nothing about. When I asked for books on genealogy the lady said: ‘No, we do not carry books on genealogy. When we get such books we send them to the bookstore’—naming the store for which I was headed. Then, just as I was leaving in disappointment, she said: ‘Stop a minute. A leading book collector, a genealogist, died about a month ago, and we bought his library. Many of his genealogical books are in the back room ready to be sent to the bookstore, but if you want to buy them you may have them.’

“Thus we secured the foundation of Swedish genealogy in our library. I could relate many such experiences” (“Genealogical Activities in Europe,” *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, July 1931, 101; paragraphing added; also quoted in Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* [1980], 245–46).

“A stirring within my soul told me there was something more I could do.” [5.2.6]

The following story illustrates how the Holy Ghost may work gently within you to motivate and help you to do family history work:

“A couple of years ago in a Sunday school class, the teacher encouraged us to do our family history research. He directed the message to everyone in the class, but I felt singled out. I felt I had done my duty and more. My family lines were traced back as far as possible; there was no more I could do.

“I left the class upset. . . . I felt I had done enough, yet a stirring within my soul told me there was something more I could do.

“I knew I could not rationalize away my guilt. I was not at peace. As my mind raced back and forth, I recalled a friend with whom I had served on a family history committee. She had told me to set aside a specific time each week and dedicate it to family history research and that I would become more effective in the other things I did. I liked this sister, but I didn’t want to believe what she told me.

“Then, as I sat there stewing, I had a quiet and simple revelation: To do family history research I did not need to give up writing or painting. I just needed to spend each Monday morning from 8:00 a.m. until noon doing the work. That would still give me time to paint, write, perform my work as a temple sealer, and attend a temple endowment session each week.

“I decided it was time to give in and rid myself of this lingering guilt. I looked across the room and saw Brother Ricks, one of our ward family history consultants. He had



some experience in research and had offered to help me many times.

"I told him my feelings and desires, and he agreed to help me every Monday morning. As I drove home that Sunday, I remembered that my mother once sent money to a researcher in England to work on her family line, the Mayne line, but he never could find her third great-grandfather's marriage or birthplace. So I decided to begin my research there, determined to give it my best.

"At our first meeting I showed Brother Ricks the Mayne line. When we began searching, we knew my third great-grandfather, George, had lived many years in Wath, Yorkshire, England, but there was no record of his birth or marriage there. Parish records showed that William, my second great-grandfather, had a father named George, whose wife was named Mary, but we did not have her last name.

"We approximated a marriage date around 1785. We entered a general search for George Mayne and found a listing for a George Mayen married to a Mary Holdridge in 1781. Since Mayen is a common misspelling of Mayne, we pursued the lead. The record stated they had been married in Northallerton, Yorkshire. We looked at a map and found that Northallerton was within 20 miles of Wath. We were also intrigued because we knew George was married to a Mary.

"We then found a Mary Holdridge in the International Genealogical Index who had been christened in Wath and realized we had likely found our George and Mary.

"We learned that the Northallerton parish records had not yet been extracted, so the next Monday we went to the Church Family History Library in Salt Lake City and looked through the microfiche records, where I was thrilled to find the marriage of George Mayen to Mary Holdridge. Brother Ricks also searched christening records and found the births of George and four of his siblings to George Mayen and Catherine Aston. And then I found *their* marriage!

"I think these people are the ones who made me feel guilty when I refused to get involved! Now that they are found, other ancestors will probably leave me feeling a bit restless as well. But I will continue to devote my

Monday mornings to family history research. Somehow I just feel better about life and my self-worth. My guilt has been swept away, replaced by excitement and love" (George D. Durrant, "My Guilt Was Swept Away," *Ensign*, Jan. 2009, 34–35).

"The name almost leapt off the page." [5.2.7]

An example of someone receiving remarkable help from the Lord after exercising faith is related in this story of name extraction—now called "indexing"—in family history work:

"The page was faded and yellowed, and jagged, uneven holes punctuated the spidery script. It was the record of a christening that had taken place in Spain on the nineteenth of February 511 years ago.

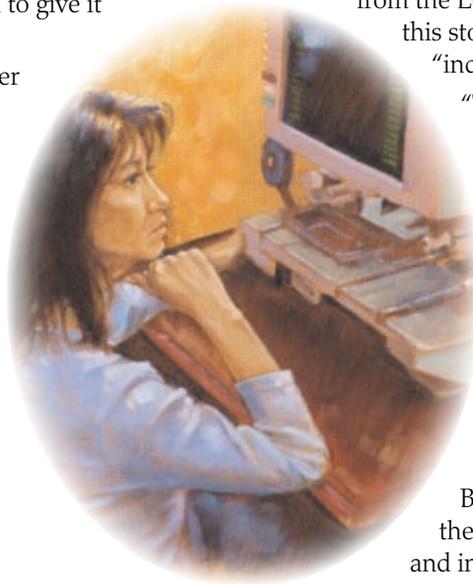
"The date had been fairly easy to decipher. A concerted effort, seasoned with years of experience and a fervent prayer, had eventually given the worker the name of the father, then the mother. But the child's name simply was not there. Years, mildew, and hungry mice and insects had gnawed away at the page, leaving it illegible.

"The extractor had come across the entry on the microfilm the day before, and after a diligent effort had gone home, resolving to return to it after a day of prayer and fasting. But today the record was still impossible to read. The worker had gone on, but was compelled to return to it often throughout the afternoon. Finally, she determined to give it one last try before forcing the unsettling entry out of her mind.

"As she turned the microfilm knob, the name almost leapt off the page. She stared unbelieving at the clearly formed letters.

"'Elena Gallegos, the name is Elena Gallegos,' she excitedly called aloud. A handful of workers, aware of her struggle, quickly clustered around, marveling at the name plainly displayed on the terminal.

"As she hurriedly copied the name, a warm closeness encircled her. 'I felt as though I was being hugged,' she explained afterward. Later when she returned to the entry to double-check her work, the words were once again illegible" (Derin Head Rodriguez, "More than Names," *Ensign*, Jan. 1987, 12).





The Righteous Desires of Our Ancestors in the Spirit World May Influence Our Family History Efforts [5.3]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Moroni 7:35–37
- Doctrine and Covenants 137:5–7

We can receive guidance from beyond the grave. [5.3.1]

Elder Melvin J. Ballard (1873–1939) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught of a guiding influence from our ancestors that can help us accomplish our family history goals: “There are thousands of them, hundreds of thousands and millions of them in the spirit world who long to receive this gospel and have been waiting hundreds of years for their deliverance. They are waiting on you. They are praying that the Lord will awaken your hearts in their interest. They know where their records are, and I testify to you that the spirit and influence of your dead will guide those who are interested in finding those records. If there is anywhere on the earth

anything concerning them, you will find it. That is my promise to you. But you must begin to work. You must begin to inquire after your dead. And the spirit of your heart turning towards them will come upon you, and the way will be opened in a marvelous manner, and if there is a scrap of evidence concerning them upon the earth, you will find it. When we have done all that we can do ourselves, the Lord will come to our rescue. . . . If we have done our best and have searched and have discovered all that is available, then the day will come when God will open and part the veil, and the records . . . will be revealed” (in Bryant S. Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin Joseph Ballard* [1949], 230). On another occasion, Elder Ballard said, “I want to say to you that it is with greater intensity that the hearts of the fathers and mothers in the spirit world are turned to their children than that our hearts are turned to them” (in Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin Joseph Ballard*, 249).

Work is being done on both sides of the veil. [5.3.2]

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) confirmed that as faith is exercised on both sides of the veil, ways for those in spirit prison to be delivered will be made possible: “My grandfather, being one of a family, searched all his life to get together his genealogical records; and when he died, in 1868, he had been unsuccessful in establishing his line back more than the second generation beyond him. I am sure that most of my family members feel the same as I do—that there was a thin veil between him and the earth, after he had gone to the other side, and that which he was unable to do as a mortal he perhaps was able to do after he had gone into eternity. After he passed away, the spirit of research took hold of men—his family in the West and two distant relatives, not members of the Church, in the East. For seven years these two men—Morrison and Sharples—unknown to each other, and unknown to the members of the family in the West, were gathering genealogy. After seven years, they happened to meet and then for three years they worked together. The family feels definitely that the spirit of Elijah was at work on the other side and that our grandfather had been able to inspire men on this side to search out these records; and as a result, two large volumes are in our possession with about seventeen thousand names” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 543).

“I have three volumes of names that are ready.” [5.3.3]

A. J. Graham recorded the following account of a visit from his deceased parents that illustrates the faith exercised by those waiting for their work to be done:

“One night while in the hospital after an operation and in the act of praying I felt someone present in my room. I opened my eyes and the room was light, the door closed and near my bed stood my mother. She smiled and said:

“‘I am glad to see you are better.’ She held in her hand a book. I asked what it was. She replied that it was a book of genealogies. Father then appeared with three books in his hand, saying, ‘I am glad you are better.’

“‘You must get well, for I have three volumes of names that are ready to have work done for in the Temple. We have connected up our family so you can do their work. Ways and means will open for you if you will.’

“I asked how I was to find these records. He said, ‘If you will work in the Temple, you shall know but it will take money.’ I said ‘Father, I haven’t any money and have been out of work since May 1.’

“He said, ‘never mind my boy, money will come to you if you are determined to work in the Temple for these poor people who are held back and can’t go on. They pray as earnestly for you, that you might have money and the necessities of life, and that your heart will be moved so that you will do this work for them, just as sincerely as you pray for things you need. Don’t forget, they can not go on until their work is done.’

“With a smile of confidence and content they both faded from my mortal vision” (“Bishop Graham Recounts Rare Genealogical Experience,” *Church News*, June 25, 1932, 2).

Questions to Ponder

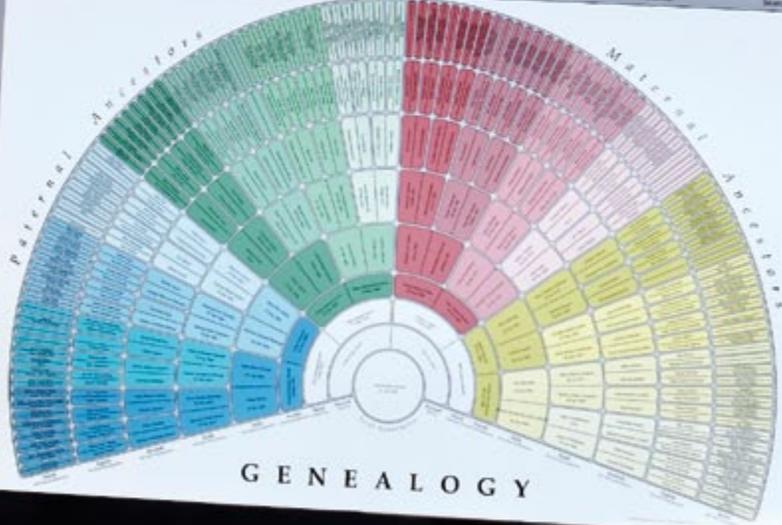
- How can a person demonstrate faith when doing family history work?
- In what ways can inspiration come to help you find necessary information?
- How have you been blessed thus far because of your efforts in family history?

Suggested Assignment

- Pray consistently for divine assistance in your family history work.

Additional Resources

- Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (1980), chapter 20, “Help from Beyond,” 241–55.
- L. Lionel Kendrick, “Personal Revelation,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1999, 6–13.
- “Revelation,” *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 140–44.
- David A. Bednar, “Ask in Faith,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 94–97.



JOURNAL



Computers and Family History Research

6

Introduction

Computers make millions of records readily accessible to you; among those records you may find information about many of your ancestors. In a sense, instead of traveling throughout the world to do research, computer technology brings the world to you. It also improves the speed and efficiency of the process of clearing names for temple ordinances to be completed.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the many individuals who were developing new and more efficient computer technology to simplify our work in family history: “Many brilliant minds and sensitive hearts have harnessed advanced technology to provide personal computer helps to simplify family history work” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 6).

This chapter will help you become more aware of the Lord’s influence in the ongoing development of new technology. The Church’s Family History Department (known publicly as FamilySearch) is using improved computer technology to provide you with the ability to seek out the names of your ancestors and provide saving ordinances for them. This chapter will inform you of several additional sources of help available through computer technology. As you read this chapter, identify the resources that will help you in your family history work.

Commentary

The Spirit of the Lord Has Influenced Technological Advancements to Further His Work, Including Family History ^[6.1]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Joel 2:28–29



Modern inventions accelerate family history work. ^[6.1.1]

Susa Young Gates, the daughter of President Brigham Young (1801–1877), once asked her father “how it would ever be possible to accomplish the great amount of temple work that must be done, if all are given a full opportunity for exaltation. He told her there would be many inventions of labor-saving devices, so that our daily duties could be performed in a short time, leaving us more and more time for temple work” (Archibald F. Bennett, “Put on Thy Strength, O Zion!” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1952, 720).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) echoed this sentiment when he expressed his belief that the Lord will inspire new inventions to help us in advancing His work: “I feel that when we have done all in our power that the Lord will find a way to open doors. That is my faith. . . . “ . . . I believe that the Lord is anxious to put into our hands inventions of which we laymen have hardly had a glimpse” (“When the World Will Be Converted,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 7, 10).

The Lord will provide the means. ^[6.1.2]

The Lord will never give us a commandment that we will be unable to obey (see 1 Nephi 3:7). Some may look at the command to perform temple ordinances for all of our kindred dead and wonder how we will ever accomplish it. **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that when the Lord gives a commandment and His servants commit to follow it, such as redeeming the dead, men will be inspired to create the technology that will aid in fulfilling the Lord’s purposes:

“We must redeem the dead, all of them, for we are commanded to do it [see D&C 124:32–34]. . . .

“When the servants of the Lord determine to do as He commands, we move ahead. As we proceed, we are joined at the crossroads by those who have been prepared to help us.

“They come with skills and abilities precisely suited to our needs. And we find provisions; information, inventions, help of various kinds, set along the way waiting for us to take them up.

“It is as though someone knew we would be traveling that way. We see the invisible hand of the Almighty providing for us. . . .

“When we are ready, there will be revealed whatever we need—we will find it waiting at the crossroads” (in *That They May Be Redeemed: A Genealogical Presentation* by Elder Howard W. Hunter and Elder Boyd K. Packer [regional representatives’ seminar, Apr. 1, 1977], 3).

Ancient prophecies are being fulfilled. [6.1.3]

Speaking of ancient prophecies being fulfilled in our day, **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) referred to scientific discovery as one of the ways the prophecy of Joel is unfolding today:

“From the day that [God] and His Beloved Son manifested themselves to the boy Joseph, there has been a tremendous cascade of enlightenment poured out upon the world. The hearts of men have turned to their fathers in fulfillment of the words of Malachi. The vision of Joel has been fulfilled wherein the Lord declared:



You live in a time when the vision of Joel is being fulfilled: “I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28).

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

“‘And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit’ [Joel 2:28–29]. . . .

“There has been more of scientific discovery during these years than during all of the previous history of mankind. Transportation, communication, medicine, public hygiene, the unlocking of the atom, the miracle of the computer, with all of its ramifications, have blossomed forth, particularly in our own era. During my own lifetime, I have witnessed miracle after wondrous miracle come to pass. We take it for granted” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 3; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 4–5).



Joel’s prophecy is being fulfilled. [6.1.4]

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also drew on the prophecy of Joel to teach that one result of the Lord pouring out His Spirit in these latter days has been the development of computers:

“Ultimately, the earth will become celestialized (see Revelation. 21:1; D&C 77:1; 88:25–26). But its *last* days must be preceded by its *latter* days!

“We live in those latter days, and they are really remarkable. The Lord’s Spirit is being poured out upon all inhabitants of the earth, precisely as the Prophet Joel foretold. His prophecy was of such significance that the angel Moroni reaffirmed it to the Prophet Joseph Smith (see Joel 2:28–32; Joseph Smith—History 1:41).

“For millennia, methods of farming, travel, and communication were largely unchanged from ancient techniques. Developments since the birth of Joseph Smith, however, have risen in remarkable contrast. . . .

“Computers have been developed that allow the Church to serve living members and to organize information relative to progenitors who live on the other side of the veil. People throughout the world, once little concerned with family history, now search for roots of their ancestral heritage using technologies unavailable a century ago” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 18–19; or *Ensign*, May 1990, 17).

Youth have skills to contribute. [6.1.5]

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that there is a purpose for advanced technology coming forth at this time in the history of the world:

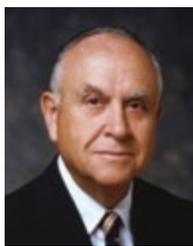
“Many of you [youth of the Church] may think family history work is to be performed primarily by older people. But I know of no age limit described in the scriptures or guidelines announced by Church leaders restricting this important service to mature adults. You are sons and daughters of God, children of the covenant, and builders of the kingdom. You need not wait until you reach an arbitrary age to fulfill your responsibility to assist in the work of salvation for the human family. . . .

“It is no coincidence that FamilySearch and other tools have come forth at a time when young people are so familiar with a wide range of information and communication technologies. Your fingers have been trained to text and tweet to accelerate and advance the work of the Lord—not just to communicate quickly with your friends. The skills and aptitude evident among many young people today are a preparation to contribute to the work of salvation” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2011, 26; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 26).

The Church’s Family History Department Develops and Maintains Computer Resources for Family History Research [6.2]

FamilySearch is a modern miracle. [6.2.1]

As computer programs have improved and become easier to use, the Church’s Family History Department has continually upgraded and made use of new programs and software. Shortly after the implementation of the



Church’s FamilySearch program as a tool for assisting family history work, **Elder David B. Haight** (1906–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of its development:

“This period of time in which we live, the dispensation of the fulness of times, will see the culmination of

all of God’s work on the earth. For this reason, we are anxiously engaged in the Lord’s work, which includes the performance of certain ordinances for all who have lived and will live upon the earth. . . .



“Genealogy has long been associated with tedium, painstaking research, and musty books. But no more! Now we have available a modern miracle called FamilySearch. FamilySearch is a powerful, innovative computer system. In response to your typing in a name of one of your ancestors at a keyboard, FamilySearch, in just moments, races through millions of names and finds any that match what you typed. It knows how to match names that are spelled differently but sound the same. It can guide you from one small fragment of sketchy information to full screens of information—dates and places of birth, marriage, and death; and names of parents, children, and spouses. . . .

“One of the most promising and helpful features of FamilySearch is Ancestral File. It has made the world much smaller because it has put total strangers with common ancestry in touch with each other. Suddenly, Church members and nonmembers alike are finding new cousins and thousands of deceased ancestors at the press of a computer key. . . .

“We know that God our Father is our greatest teacher, and nothing that we might read or hear should quicken our attention like His instructions and counsel. These marvelous new technological developments have been revealed in this dispensation in greater fulness and greater plainness than ever before in the history of the world as far as we know so that His purposes might be speedily brought to pass. The Church, in establishing family history centers, is now bringing these marvelous developments directly to you” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 99, 101, 103; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 75–77).



FAMILYSEARCH

FamilySearch includes databases and research options.
[6.2.2]

FamilySearch contains the largest free collection of records, resources, and services for family history in the world. As you become familiar with FamilySearch and use it to search for names of your deceased ancestors, you will discover generations of your ancestors already linked together, and some (perhaps all) of them may need temple ordinances.

FamilySearch includes:

1. Hundreds of millions of records about individuals. This information comes from many different sources, including:
 - Information that users enter directly into the system or contribute with a GEDCOM file.

- Ancestral File and Pedigree Resource File. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints published these computerized databases to help Church members and other family history enthusiasts coordinate family history research.
 - The International Genealogical Index (IGI)—a database of about 250 million names submitted to the Church or extracted from microfilmed records from around the world.
 - Numerous other records collections from around the world, such as birth, marriage, death, census, and other family history records.
2. Forums where user communities can discuss products, research techniques, hints and tips, and even families or surnames in specific locations.
 3. The Research Wiki—a community tool that lists research hints, tips, and techniques based on geographical locations.
 4. The Family History Library Catalog—an online catalog of records and materials in the Family



The Church's Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah

History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. These materials can be loaned to local family history libraries operated by the Church.

5. Online training courses—both live and recorded classes from experts in genealogical topics.

The FamilySearch programs are constantly being expanded, updated, and improved.

Technology makes collecting and preserving records easier. [6.2.3]

A December 2009 *Ensign* article reported the use of new and efficient technology to make copies of historical documents from all over the world:

“One of the most significant advancements for FamilySearch in recent years was put into place in 2005, when 15 high-speed scanners were developed to convert images previously contained on microfilm into digital images. These scanners are converting 2.5 million rolls of microfilm from the Church’s Granite Mountain Records Vault into tens of millions of ready-to-index digital images.

“The scanners are like a camera: as the microfilm unwinds, the images on the microfilm are converted into a long ribbon of high-quality digital images. A computer program quality-checks the ribbon and uses special algorithms to break it up into individual images.

“These rolls of microfilm include images of important historical documents gathered from all over the world—birth and death records, hospital records, family histories, immigration forms, historical books, and more.

“. . . ‘The records FamilySearch contains currently, when digitized, would equal 132 Libraries of Congress or 18 petabytes ([18,000] terabytes) of data—and that doesn’t include our ongoing acquisition efforts’” (Heather Whittle Wrigley, “Technology Helps FamilySearch Volunteers Hit Major Milestone,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2009, 77).

FamilySearch works with other organizations around the world. [6.2.4]

FamilySearch and various agencies around the world cooperate with each other to allow the copying and preservation of important historical records. “Representatives of the Church’s Family History Department [FamilySearch] oversee the effort to acquire records, beginning with prioritizing what records would be most valuable to the public and matching limited human resources to gather them.

“Employees of [FamilySearch] then work with various churches, municipalities, archives, and governments to acquire or create copies of those records. Most

© Gryffindor



The central archives building of the Austrian State Archives in Vienna-Erdberg, Austria

institutions welcome the Church’s efforts. ‘We have a good reputation as an organization that cares about the records as much as the archivists do,’ said Steven L. Waters, strategic relations manager for Europe. ‘In general, they are thankful to have an organization like ours that puts so many resources into preserving history.’ . . .

“Once a project is complete, up to a terabyte (1,000 gigabytes) of images and information is sent to Salt Lake City, where the images will be processed, preserved, copied, and distributed based on the contract specifications. Many images are published on FamilySearch.org; some are published on commercial genealogical Web sites; sometimes the archive itself publishes the work” (Wrigley, “Technology Helps FamilySearch,” 76–77).

Anyone can help with the Church’s indexing program. [6.2.5]

To help FamilySearch expand its collection of family history records and “to make all of these digitized records available to the public, the Family History Department developed [an online indexing program]. There, anyone can download images of historical documents to a computer and transcribe the information to help create a database of names, dates, locations, and other information—free for all to search online at FamilySearch.org” (Wrigley, “Technology Helps FamilySearch,” 77).



Much more information is now available and searchable at the touch of a finger.

Other Sources Are Available to Help You Progress in Your Family History Research [6.3]

FamilySearch tutorials can help. [6.3.1]

After you sign in at the new.FamilySearch.org website, click on **Learn How to Use FamilySearch** to access available tutorials and guides. In them you will find helpful videos, lessons, and documents explaining how to proceed. If you have not yet registered for an LDS Account, you may do so by clicking **Register for the new FamilySearch** on the opening screen and following the instructions. You will need your Church membership record number (available from your ward or branch clerk or printed on your temple recommend) and birth date.

Tutorials and help screens are easy to access and provide valuable information for users to make their tasks simpler and easier to understand. As you continue in your family history work on the Internet site, there will always be help options available, with labels such as “Help,” “Help Center,” or “Help with this page.”

Educational sites and commercial programs can help. [6.3.2]

Since so many people around the world are interested in family history work, educational and commercial websites and software products have been developed by groups other than the Church. One educational website was developed at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. This website has online lessons, assignments, and

links to other helpful family history sites that can teach you how to do family history. It is free and available to anyone with Internet access. You may access this website at familyhistorylab.byu.edu/261.php.

Several commercial programs exist that can be synchronized with the FamilySearch website in order to submit names for temple work. If you are interested in commercial software, check with your instructor or a family history consultant who may have current information about good commercial programs. Remember, however, that it is not necessary to purchase any software to be successful in family history work.



Family history consultants can help. [6.3.3]

Church family history consultants can help with family history tasks and learning. As part of their responsibility, Church family history consultants have the following basic responsibilities:

1. Reach out to Church members to help them individually with their family history.
2. Focus on helping those individuals and families suggested by the priesthood executive committee and ward council.
3. Meet with new members of the Church to help them identify deceased ancestors and go to the temple to be baptized and confirmed for their ancestors.

Elder Russell M. Nelson stated that individuals without access to computers, or who prefer not to use computers, can ask a family history consultant for help: “Now, what about those of you who have no access to a computer or prefer not to use this technology? Don’t worry! Take one step at a time. . . . Avail yourself of assistance from your ward or branch family history consultant. The new FamilySearch system enables a consultant to perform all needed computer functions for you, including preparing names for the temple. About 60,000 consultants serve throughout the world. One in your ward or branch can be very helpful to you” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2010, 90; or *Ensign*, May 2010, 93).

Questions to Ponder

- In what ways have you seen technology help further the work of the Lord?
- In what ways could you take more advantage of the computer and the Internet in your family history work?

Suggested Assignments

- Practice navigating through the new.FamilySearch.org website, and read some of the help options available.
- Begin (or continue) to search for your ancestors in FamilySearch.

Additional Resources

- David B. Haight, “Linking the Family of Man,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 75–77.
- Heather Whittle Wrigley, “Technology Helps FamilySearch Volunteers Hit Major Milestone,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2009, 76–78.
- Scott D. Whiting, “Digital Detachment and Personal Revelation,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2010, 16–21.
- Russell M. Nelson, “Generations Linked in Love,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2010, 91–94.



Submitting Names for Temple Ordinances

7

Introduction

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “The purpose of family history work is to obtain the names and data of our ancestors so that temple ordinances can be performed in their behalf” (“Young Adults and the Temple,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2006, 15). **Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander**, an emeritus member of the Seventy, said: “Family history work leads us to the temple. Family history and temple work are one work. . . . Family history research should be the primary source of names for temple ordinances, and temple ordinances are the primary reason for family history research” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 111, or *Ensign*, May 1999, 84–85).

Submitting names for temple ordinances is an option that appears automatically as part of the FamilySearch program. Until the mid-1970s, clearance of names for temple ordinances required the submission of request forms by mail to Church headquarters. **Elder Monte J. Brough**, formerly of the Seventy, stated that to appreciate the current name submission process, “we need to talk about the past when members sent the information about each of their ancestors to Church headquarters. It was a slow, complex process to clear a name for temple ordinances. It could take as long as nine months. In fact, often people submitted a name to be cleared, and by the time it actually cleared, they had forgotten about it” (in “Everyone’s Blessing,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1994, 19). Thanks to modern computer technology and family history software, a name with the required minimum information can be cleared almost instantly.

This chapter discusses the urgency expressed by latter-day prophets regarding family history work. It will also help acquaint you with guidelines for submitting names to temples.

Commentary

Latter-day Prophets Have Expressed Urgency for Us to Perform Saving Ordinances for the Dead [7.1]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Doctrine and Covenants 128:8, 15–19

Angels need our help. [7.1.1]

At the dedication of the lower story of the St. George Utah Temple on January 1, 1877, **President Brigham Young** (1801–77) indicated that some in the spirit world have waited thousands of years for their temple work to be done: “What do you suppose the fathers would say if they could speak from the dead? Would they not say, ‘We have lain here thousands of years, here in this prison house, waiting for this dispensation to come?’ . . . What would they whisper in our ears? Why, if they had the power the very thunders of heaven would be in our ears, if we could realize the importance of the work we are engaged in. All the angels in heaven are looking at this little handful of people, and stimulating them to the salvation of the human family” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 309).

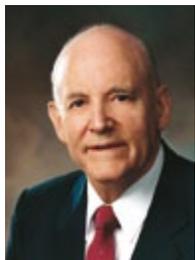


More temples mean more work to be done. [7.1.2]

Temple building was accelerated during the administration of President Spencer W. Kimball. When he became President of the Church in December 1973, there were 15 temples in operation. When he died in November 1985, there were 36 temples in operation. On one occasion **President Kimball** (1895–1985) discussed the urgency to construct more temples: “There now begins the most intensive period of temple building in the history of the Church. We look to the day when the sacred ordinances of the Church, performed in the temples, will be available to all members of the Church in convenient locations around the globe.

“The building of these temples must be accompanied by a strong emphasis on genealogical [family history] research on the part of members of the Church.

“We feel an urgency for this great work to be accomplished and wish to encourage the Saints to accept their responsibility of performing temple ordinances, writing their personal and family history, participating in the name extraction program when called to do so, completing their four-generation research, and then continuing their family research to ensure the redemption of their kindred dead” (“We Feel an Urgency,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1980, 2).



The work of redeeming the dead must accelerate. [7.1.3]

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) often testified of the urgency of family history and temple work:

“From Joseph Smith the Prophet to our present-day prophet, seer, revelator, and president . . . we have been admonished to seek after our dead and perform for them those ordinances which are needed for their exaltation in the celestial kingdom of God. . . .

“Man was not given a choice to do this work when and if he pleased, or when he had time, but the work was given as an obligation to be filled. . . .

“Our dead are anxiously waiting for this people to search out their names and then go into the temples of God to officiate for them, that they may be liberated from their prison house in the spirit world. The keys of this great power given to the Prophet Joseph Smith are with us today. This power, to officiate for the dead, breaks down the barriers of the grave. All of us should find the joy of this magnificent labor of love. . . .

“With regard to temple and family history work, I have one overriding message: This work must hasten. The work waiting to be done is staggering and escapes human comprehension. . . .

“We know that our responsibility is for every son and daughter of God even though they have left mortality. No one really dies. The great work of the temples, and all that supports it, must expand. It is imperative!” (*The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter* [1997], 231–34).



The Lord has prepared a way. [7.1.4]

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency taught that the Lord prepared a way from the beginning for us to help our ancestors:

“Many of your ancestors died never having the chance to accept the gospel and to receive the blessings and promises you have received. The Lord is fair, and He is loving. And so He prepared for you and me a way for us to have the desire of our hearts to offer to our ancestors all the blessings He has offered us.

“The plan to make that possible has been in place from the beginning. The Lord gave promises to His children long ago. The very last book of the Old Testament is the book of the prophet Malachi. And the last words are a sweet promise and a stern warning:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

“‘And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse’ [Malachi 4:5–6].

“Some of those words are crucial to understand. The great and dreadful day of the Lord is the end of the world. Jehovah, the Messiah, will come in glory. The wicked will all be destroyed. We live in the last days. Time could be running out for us to do what we have promised to do” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 80; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 77–78).

Church Family History Databases Help Determine Which Gospel Ordinances Are Needed for Known Ancestors [7.2]

Technology makes submitting names simpler. [7.2.1]

Elder Russell M. Nelson explained that a newly updated FamilySearch computer program facilitates family history work and helps Church members determine what temple ordinances have or have not been performed for each individual ancestor: “The Prophet Joseph Smith said, ‘The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead’ [*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 475]. New technology makes it easier than ever to fulfill that responsibility. Temple and family history work is now facilitated by [FamilySearch]. This Internet-based system helps members identify their ancestors,



determine what ordinance work needs to be done for them, and prepare their names for the temple. It can be accessed from home, a family history center, or wherever the Internet is available. The steps are easy to follow” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2010, 90; or *Ensign*, May 2010, 92–93).

FamilySearch helps prepare names for temple ordinances.
[7.2.2]

FamilySearch can help you during the process of preparing your ancestors’ names to receive their ordinances in the temple. Once you have found family members and added them to your family tree on FamilySearch, temple ordinance information will be displayed for those individuals. FamilySearch has tutorials and helps on the website to help you through the process. Since the process, symbols, and explanations in the computer program are improved and updated regularly, the following information illustrates the basic

concepts for determining the status of ordinance work and then preparing the names of an individual or family for the temple:

1. *Determine which gospel ordinances have been done and which may still need to be done.* A symbol close to the name of the head of a family indicates the status of that family’s ordinances. More detailed information may be found by clicking on the symbol. FamilySearch indicates which ordinances have been done, which still need to be done, which are in progress (someone has reserved them—meaning only the person who submitted the name may perform the ordinance), and in some cases which ordinances are not needed (such as baptism for children who died before the age of eight).



2. *Of the ancestors who still need ordinances, determine which of them are eligible for their temple work to be done.* FamilySearch informs you when permission from the nearest living family member of the individual you want to do ordinances for is needed. It also informs you when more information is needed before ordinances may be performed for certain individuals. See the following sections in this chapter for more information about which people you may perform ordinances for and how certain special circumstances affect how you prepare the names for the temple.
3. *Reserve names for the temple.* After determining that you may perform ordinances for a certain individual or family, follow the directions to reserve the name for temple ordinances (try clicking on the status of the individual's ordinances and following the directions). Reserving the name will add it to your **Temple Ordinances** list and will make the status of the temple work appear as "in progress."
4. *Submit names to the temple.* You may serve as proxy for your ancestors, or you may choose to allow someone else to serve as proxy. Go to the **Temple Ordinances** tab to print off a Family Ordinance Request to take to the temple. When you get to the temple, the temple workers will scan in the request sheet and print off the family ordinance cards (the pink, blue, and yellow cards). You may decide to ask the temple workers to ask someone else to serve as proxy. You may also choose to assign names to the temple. That means that the names will be sent to a temple and temple patrons there will perform the ordinances for those people. See the last section in this chapter for more information about acting as proxy for your ancestors.

Follow the Guidelines for Submitting Names for Temple Ordinances [7.3]

Understand whose names you can submit. [7.3.1]

The Church has given the following guidelines regarding names you may submit for temple ordinances:

"Generally, you may perform temple ordinances for deceased persons one year or more after the date of death without regard to the person's worthiness or cause of death. If you have questions, please contact your bishop or branch president.

"Before you perform ordinances for a deceased person born within the last 95 years, obtain permission from the closest living relative. Relatives may not want the ordinances performed or may want to perform the



Cards like these are printed and taken to the temple when performing temple ordinances for our ancestors.

ordinances themselves. The closest living relatives are, in this order: a spouse, then children, then parents, then siblings.

"You are responsible to submit names of the following individuals for temple work (the individuals must have been deceased for at least one year):

- Immediate family members.
- Direct-line ancestors (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and so on, and their families).

"You may also submit the names of the following individuals who have been deceased for at least one year:

- Biological, adoptive, and foster family lines connected to your family.
- Collateral family lines (uncles, aunts, cousins, and their families).
- Your own descendants.
- Possible ancestors, meaning individuals who have a probable family relationship that cannot be verified because the records are inadequate, such as those who have the same last name and resided in the same area as your known ancestors.

"Do not submit the names of persons who are not related to you, including names of famous people or names gathered from unapproved extraction projects, such as victims of the Jewish Holocaust.

"You may submit the names of individuals with whom you shared a friendship. This is an exception to the

general rule that members should not submit the names of individuals to whom they are not related. Before performing ordinances for a deceased individual who was a friend, you should obtain permission from the individual's closest living relative" (*Member's Guide to Temple and Family History Work* [2009], 30).

Determine when ordinances may not be needed. [7.3.2]

FamilySearch indicates when ordinances are not needed, such as in the following situations:

- Children born after their mother was sealed to her husband in a temple are born in the covenant. They do not need to receive the ordinance of sealing to parents.
- No baptism or endowment is performed for a child who died before age eight (see Moroni 8:8–12; see also Merlin R. Lybbert, "The Special Status of

Children," *Ensign*, May 1994, 31–32). Only a sealing to parents is performed for such children. If the child was sealed to parents while he or she was living or if the child was born in the covenant, no vicarious ordinances are performed.

There Are Guidelines for Submitting Names to the Temple When There Are Unusual Circumstances [7.4]

Couples whose marriage cannot be documented may be sealed. [7.4.1]

If you have a couple in your ancestry who lived together as husband and wife, but you cannot find any information to document their marriage, you may still have their temple sealing performed by preparing their names in FamilySearch for that ordinance and submitting it to the temple.



The Gila Valley Arizona Temple



Fukuoka Japan Temple

There are specific guidelines concerning stillborn children. [7.4.2]

No temple ordinances are performed for stillborn children (those who are considered dead at the time of birth). They may be listed, however, in family records (the child may be listed simply as “Stillborn”).

In some locations, such as Europe, children who were *not* stillborn but who died shortly after birth were often listed as “stillborn.” Since these children were alive for a short period of time, they may be sealed to their parents. FamilySearch will let you know if a sealing ordinance may be performed for a child listed as “stillborn.” (The computer will sort such information by time period and probability, or the likelihood that a brief live birth might have been recorded “stillborn” during a particular era.)

Persons who are presumed dead may have ordinances performed for them. [7.4.3]

Persons who are presumed dead because they are missing in action (for example, in times of war), lost at

sea, declared legally dead, or who disappeared under circumstances where death is apparent but no body was ever recovered may have their temple ordinances performed after 10 years have passed since the time of presumed death.

In all other cases of missing persons, the temple ordinances may *not* be performed until after 110 years have passed from the time of a person’s *birth* (an assumption that if the person was missing but alive, he or she would have died within 110 years).

There is a sealing guideline for women who were married more than once. [7.4.4]

If a woman was legally married more than once (such as after the death of a husband), you may have a sealing ordinance performed for her and each husband. This will avoid the situation of having to make judgments for which we are not qualified. Remember, if an ordinance is performed on earth, it does not become binding until accepted in the spirit world by the worthy person for whom the ordinance was performed.

Individuals with mental disabilities may have all ordinances performed for them. [7.4.5]

All temple ordinances may be performed for individuals with mental disabilities if they died when they were eight years of age or older. If they died before age eight, only the ordinance of sealing to parents is needed.

Ask concerning guidelines for other unusual circumstances. [7.4.6]

Ask your family history consultant about the guidelines for temple ordinances for other unusual circumstances. If your family history consultant does not know the answer, ask your priesthood leader (bishop or branch president), and he will help you find the answer.

If You Have a Current Temple Recommend and Have Been Endowed, You May Serve as Proxy for Those Persons of the Same Gender Whose Names You Have Cleared for Temple Ordinances, or You May Allow Others to Serve as Proxy for Persons You Have Cleared for Temple Ordinances [7.5]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Psalm 24:3–4



Authorized priesthood leaders help to certify worthiness to attend the temple.

Worthiness is essential for temple worship. [7.5.1]

“To enter the temple, you must be worthy. You certify your worthiness in two interviews—one with a member of your bishopric or your branch president and another with a member of your stake presidency or the mission president. Your priesthood leaders will keep these interviews private and confidential. In each of the interviews, the priesthood leader will ask you about your personal



conduct and worthiness. You will be asked about your testimony of Heavenly Father and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and you will be asked whether you support the general and local leaders of the Church. You will be asked to confirm that you are morally clean and that you keep the Word of Wisdom, pay a full tithe, live in harmony with the teachings of the Church, and do not maintain any affiliation or sympathy with apostate groups.

“If you give acceptable answers to the questions in the interviews and if you and your priesthood leaders are satisfied that you are worthy to enter the temple, you will receive a temple recommend. You and your priesthood leaders will sign the recommend, which will allow you to enter the temple for the next two years, as long as you remain worthy.



Copenhagen Denmark Temple

“Temple recommend interviews offer a great opportunity for you to examine your worthiness and the pattern of your life” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 172).

After you have received your endowment, when you attend the temple again, you will serve as proxy for a person on the other side of the veil. Through temple work for the dead, Church members have the opportunity to worship in the temple regularly and remember the covenants made and blessings promised in these sacred ordinances.

For those members not yet endowed but who are at least 12 years of age or who are recently baptized converts to the Church, a limited-use recommend may be issued by the bishop or branch president in order to do baptisms and confirmations for the dead. Males must be priesthood holders. You may serve as proxy only for persons of your own gender.

Others may perform ordinances for names you have prepared. [7.5.2]

You and your family do not have to personally be the proxies for the ancestors whose names you have prepared for temple ordinances. You may choose to give the name cards you print out to others, such as ward or branch members, for them to act as proxy for the ordinances. There is also an option in FamilySearch for you to forward names of your ancestors to temples and allow the ordinances for those persons to be performed by others.

Questions to Ponder

- What are two or three reasons why work for the dead is urgent?
- What are the immediate needs in your own family history work?

Suggested Assignment

- Find information for another individual or family to submit for temple ordinance work.

Additional Resources

- Spencer W. Kimball, “We Feel an Urgency,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1980, 2–3.
- Howard W. Hunter, “A Temple-Motivated People,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 38–44.
- Russell M. Nelson, “Young Adults and the Temple,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2006, 12–17.



The Abrahamic Covenant

Introduction

Abraham was an Old Testament prophet born about 2000 B.C. He grew up in a family that had turned away from the gospel, but Abraham “sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto [he] should be ordained to administer the same” (Abraham 1:2). The blessings he sought were those of the priesthood held by the heads of dispensations who preceded him—Adam, Enoch, and Noah, and their righteous posterity. Abraham received the priesthood from the prophet Melchizedek (see Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:25, in Bible appendix; D&C 84:14). The Lord spoke to Abraham and established a covenant with him. This covenant is known as the Abrahamic covenant. All who accept the gospel and are baptized are the seed of Abraham, either literally or by adoption, and are entitled to the same blessings he was promised through their faithfulness.

Because of the Great Apostasy following the ministry of Jesus Christ and His Apostles, the Abrahamic covenant was no longer available to man; it required a Restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith to return the promises associated with the Abrahamic covenant back to the earth. Today the gospel is being spread throughout the world, just as the Lord promised Abraham. And, as explained in this chapter, through family history work the blessings and promises made to Abraham are also made available to inhabitants of the spirit world, many of whom lived during times of apostasy or did not have the opportunity to receive the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ while on the earth. In this way, the opportunity for exaltation in Heavenly Father’s kingdom is extended to all of Heavenly Father’s children.

Commentary

Jehovah Made a Covenant with Abraham That Included Promises of Gospel Blessings to Abraham and the Entire World through Abraham’s Posterity

[8.1]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Genesis 12:1–3
- Genesis 17:1–9
- Genesis 22:15–18
- 3 Nephi 20:25–27
- Doctrine and Covenants 132:29–32
- Abraham 1:18–19
- Abraham 2:6–11

Abraham was a prophet of God. [8.1.1]

Jehovah changed Abram’s name to Abraham, which means “father of many nations” or “father of a multitude” (see Genesis 17:5; Bible Dictionary, “Abraham”). Abraham was privileged to see the Lord several times (see Genesis 12:7; 17:1; Abraham 2:6, 19; 3:11). He rescued Lot (his nephew) from captivity (see Genesis 11:27; 14:14–16); paid tithes to Melchizedek, king of Salem (see Genesis 14:18–20); and obediently submitted to God’s command to sacrifice his son Isaac (see Genesis 22:1–13).

Abraham “was greatly blessed with divine revelation concerning the planetary system, the creation of the earth, and the premortal activities of the spirits of mankind. As one of the most valiant spirits in the premortal life, he was chosen to be a leader in the kingdom of God before he was born into this world (Abr. 1–5). We also learn from latter-day revelation that because of Abraham’s faithfulness he is now exalted and sits upon a throne in eternity (D&C 132:29, 37)” (Bible Dictionary, “Abraham”).



Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek.

Abraham covenanted with the Lord. [8.1.2]

Abraham desired to become a worthy priesthood holder and to make covenants with the Lord (see Abraham 1:1–4). The Bible Dictionary describes the covenant Abraham entered into with the Lord: “Abraham first received the gospel by baptism (which is the covenant of salvation). Then he had conferred upon him the higher priesthood, and he entered into celestial marriage (which is the covenant of exaltation), gaining assurance thereby that he would have eternal increase. Finally he received a promise that all of these blessings would be offered to all of his mortal posterity (D&C 132:29–50; Abr. 2:6–11)” (“Abraham, Covenant of”).

When the Savior visited the descendants of Lehi on the American continent, He told them that they were children of the prophets, members of the house of Israel, and heirs to the promises made to Abraham. They were favored through the blessings of the Atonement as promised to Abraham (see 3 Nephi 20:25–27). The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith that the members of the Church in these latter days are also heirs of Abraham’s promised blessings (see D&C 132:29–32).

There are blessings promised through the Abrahamic covenant. [8.1.3]

The blessings of the Abrahamic covenant can be summarized as follows:

Lands of inheritance. God gave the land of Canaan (Israel) to Abraham and his posterity (see Genesis 13:14–15; 15:18; 17:8; Abraham 2:6). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about the inheritance of land in the Abrahamic covenant: “It [the land of Canaan] is their land, in time and in eternity. It is their land now whenever they are worthy to tread its blessed surface. And it shall be theirs again in that everlasting eternity that lies ahead. ‘It is decreed that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it,’ in that celestial day when it shall be crowned with the presence of God, even the Father. (D&C 88:17–19.)” (*The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man* [1982], 322). Ultimately, this promise of an everlasting inheritance of land is fulfilled when the righteous shall inherit the earth in its glorified, celestial state (see D&C 45:57–59; 63:20; 88:17–20).



Abraham was promised posterity as numerous “as the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Genesis 22:17).

Posterity. The Lord promised Abraham that because of his faithfulness he would become the father of “a great nation” (Abraham 2:9; see also Genesis 17:4–6). He told Abraham, “I will multiply thee, and thy seed [descendants] after thee . . . ; and if thou canst count the number of sands, so shall be the number of thy seeds” (Abraham 3:14). He promised that Abraham’s descendants would be “as the dust of the earth” (Genesis 13:16), and that they would be as numerous as the stars in the heavens (see Genesis 15:5). Referring to God’s promise to Abraham that his seed would be as the “dust of the earth,” **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained:

“This has reference to eternal increase, for no man’s seed could exceed in number the dust particles of the earth. . . .

“What, then, is the Abrahamic covenant? It is that Abraham and his seed (including those adopted into his family) shall have all of the blessings of the gospel, of the priesthood, and of eternal life. The gate to eternal life is celestial marriage, which holy order of matrimony enables the family unit to continue in eternity, so that the participating parties may have posterity as numerous as the sands upon the seashore or the stars in heaven. The Abrahamic covenant enables men to create for themselves eternal family units that are patterned after the family of God our Heavenly Father” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 504–5; see also D&C 132:30).

Included in the promise of posterity to Abraham is that “kings shall come out of thee” (Genesis 17:6). The most important descendant of Abraham was the King of kings, even Jesus Christ, who came through the royal lineage of Judah (see Matthew 1:1–16; see also Revelation 19:16). Additionally, those who receive the Abrahamic covenant and are faithful to it are promised they may become “kings and priests [or queens and priestesses] unto God” (Revelation 1:6; see also D&C 76:56).



The Abrahamic covenant enables families to continue throughout eternity.

Priesthood and gospel blessings. The Lord promised Abraham that he would receive the Lord’s name, “even the Priesthood” (Abraham 1:18; see also Abraham 2:11). This blessing was fulfilled in Abraham’s life when he received the priesthood under the hands of Melchizedek (see Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:25, 37, in Bible appendix; D&C 84:14; Abraham 1:2–4). Because Abraham also received the promise that his posterity would have the right to the priesthood from his day until the end of the world, all who desire the blessings of the saving priesthood ordinances receive them at the hand of Abraham and his descendants. This blessing is fulfilled when those who bear the same priesthood that Abraham held administer ordinances, such as baptism, the sacrament, and temple ordinances.

Salvation and eternal life. The Lord promised Abraham that through his descendants “shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abraham 2:11). Families are specifically blessed through the Abrahamic covenant because the crowning blessing of the gospel covenant is eternal marriage. Through priesthood ordinances, which include celestial marriage, or temple marriage, for the living and the dead, families can be eternally bound together. The posterity of Abraham today may also perform ordinances in the temples for their deceased ancestors and others. Ultimately, the greatest way families of the earth are blessed is through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, a descendant of Abraham. Because of His Atonement, it is possible to receive all the blessings of eternal life.

There are responsibilities associated with the Abrahamic covenant. [8.1.4]

What must you do to receive and share the promised blessings of the Abrahamic covenant? As with all eternal covenants, the conditions are established by the Lord. The Lord commanded Abraham to “walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Genesis 17:1). He also told Abraham: “Through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever. . . .

“ . . . And thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations” (Abraham 1:19; 2:9).

Abraham and his posterity offer the blessings of the gospel and of salvation to all the families of the earth (see Abraham 2:11). The Lord affirmed that Abraham “obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Genesis 26:5) and has “entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne” (D&C 132:29).

The Abrahamic Covenant Has Been Restored in Our Day [8.2]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- 1 Nephi 15:13–18
- 1 Nephi 22:7–9
- 3 Nephi 29:1–3
- Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–34
- Doctrine and Covenants 110:12
- Doctrine and Covenants 124:58

The Abrahamic covenant was restored with the gospel. [8.2.1]

The blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, which are administered by the priesthood of God, were lost from the earth because of apostasy; consequently, a restoration was required to once again offer these blessings to mankind. The Bible Dictionary states: “To fulfill the covenant God made with Abraham—having particular reference to the fact that the literal seed of his body would be entitled to all of the blessings of the gospel (Abr. 2:10–11)—a number of specific and particular

things must take place in the last days. The gospel must be restored, the priesthood must be conferred again upon man, the keys of the sealing power must be given again to mortals, Israel must be gathered, and the Holy Ghost must be poured out upon the gentiles. All this has already taken place or is in process of fulfillment” (“Abraham, Covenant of”).



Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles noted the fulfillment of a Book of Mormon prophecy regarding the establishment of the Abrahamic covenant in our day:

“I quote from a prophecy given nearly 600 years B.C.: ‘Our father

hath not spoken of our seed alone, but also of all the house of Israel, pointing to the covenant which should be *fulfilled in the latter days*; which covenant the Lord made to our father Abraham’ [1 Nephi 15:18; italics added].

“Precisely as promised, the Master appeared in these latter days to renew the Abrahamic covenant. To the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord declared: ‘Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins—from whose loins ye are, . . . my servant Joseph. . . This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham’ [D&C 132:30–31; see also D&C 124:58]” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 42; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 33).

Promises to the fathers have been restored. [8.2.2]

When the angel Moroni appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith on September 21, 1823, Moroni referred to the “[planting] in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers” (D&C 2:2; Joseph Smith—History 1:39). The phrase “promises made to the fathers” includes the blessings and promises made to Abraham, which were later renewed to Isaac and Jacob (see Genesis 26:24; 28:10–15). **President Joseph Fielding Smith** (1876–1972) taught, “*The fathers* are our dead ancestors who died without receiving the gospel, but who received the promise that the time would come when that privilege would be granted them” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:127).

Elder Russell M. Nelson spoke of the restoration of the promises made to the fathers:

“We are also children of the covenant. We have received, as did they of old, the holy priesthood and the everlasting gospel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are our ancestors. We are of Israel. We have the right to receive



Peter, James, and John restored the Melchizedek Priesthood to the earth, preparing the way for the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant to once more be received.



Moroni quoted the words of Malachi to Joseph Smith Jr. concerning Elijah (see Joseph Smith—History 1:38).

the gospel, blessings of the priesthood, and eternal life. Nations of the earth will be blessed by our efforts and by the labors of our posterity. The literal seed of Abraham and those who are gathered into his family by adoption receive these promised blessings—predicated upon acceptance of the Lord and obedience to his commandments.

“Elijah the prophet came to plant a knowledge of these promises made to the fathers [see D&C 2:1–3]. Later the Book of Mormon came forth as a sign that the Lord had commenced to gather children of the covenant [see 3 Nephi 29:1–9]. This book, written for our day, states:

“Then ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel . . . is already beginning to be fulfilled. . . .

“For behold, the Lord will remember his covenant which he hath made unto his people of the house of Israel’ [3 Nephi 29:1, 3]” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 42–43; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 33).

Blessings of the Abrahamic covenant are conferred in temples. [8.2.3]

Elder Russell M. Nelson testified of the importance of the temple and the Atonement of Jesus Christ in receiving the greatest blessings of the Abrahamic covenant:

“Brothers and sisters, you may also claim the supernal blessings promised to the faithful lineage of Abraham. The Lord explained that blessings and responsibilities of His priesthood are yours because of your faith, works, and lineage—the lineage declared in your patriarchal blessings. You ‘are lawful heirs,’ He said. ‘Your life and

the priesthood have remained, and must needs remain through you and your lineage’ (D&C 86:9–10).

“The ultimate blessings of the Abrahamic covenant are conferred in holy temples. These blessings allow us to come forth in the First Resurrection and inherit thrones, kingdoms, powers, principalities, and dominions, to our ‘exaltation and glory in all things’ (D&C 132:19). The fulfillment of the ancient Abrahamic covenant is feasible only because of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He who has made it possible for us to dwell with God, with Him, and with our families eternally” (in “Special Witnesses of Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2001, 7).

All Who Accept the Gospel and Are Baptized Are the Seed of Abraham and, through Faithfulness, Inherit the Promised Blessings [8.3]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Romans 9:6–8
- Galatians 3:26–4:7
- 2 Nephi 30:2
- Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–34
- Abraham 2:10



Those who are faithful to their baptismal covenant may receive the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant.

Are you of the seed of Abraham? [8.3.1]

Patriarchal blessings identify Church members’ lineage to Abraham through one of the twelve tribes of Israel. In addition to those who are literal blood-lineage descendants, Abraham’s descendants are all those who make the same gospel covenants as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When those who may not be literal descendants

of Abraham are converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ and are baptized, they are adopted into the family of Abraham. Because of their conversion, they may receive all the blessings promised to Abraham and his descendants (see Galatians 3:26–29; 4:5–7). The oath and covenant of the Melchizedek Priesthood teaches that those who are faithful and receive the priesthood “become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham” (D&C 84:34).

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency taught: “Any man or woman can claim the blessings of Abraham. They become his seed and heirs to the promised blessings by accepting the gospel, being baptized, entering into temple marriage, being faithful in keeping their covenants, and helping to carry the gospel to all the nations of the earth” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 57; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 54).

We have a responsibility to do the works of Abraham. [8.3.2]

President James E. Faust taught about our responsibility to do the works of Abraham: “As the seed of Abraham, we have some obligations. We are commanded to come to Christ by doing ‘the works of Abraham’ [John 8:39; see also John 8:32–50]. These works include obeying God, receiving and keeping priesthood and temple ordinances and covenants, preaching the gospel, building a family unit and teaching our children, and being faithful to the end” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 57; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 55).



The Abrahamic covenant helps define us. [8.3.3]

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles indicated that our identity as the seed of Abraham helps define who we are:

“Truly, great responsibility rests upon the seed of Abraham in these latter days.

“How do these promises and blessings relate to us today? . . . We are the seed of Abraham. One of the primary reasons we receive a patriarchal blessing is to help us more fully understand who we are as the posterity of Abraham and to recognize the responsibility that rests upon us. . . .

“You may enjoy music, athletics, or be mechanically inclined, and someday you may work in a trade or a profession or in the arts. As important as such activities and occupations can be, they do not define who we are. First and foremost, we are spiritual beings. We are sons [and daughters] of God and the seed of Abraham. . . .

“. . . We have been given much, and much is required of us. . . . May all of us rise up . . . and bless the nations of the earth with greater testimony and spiritual power than we ever have before” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2005, 49–50; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 47).

Family History Work and Vicarious Temple Ordinances Extend the Blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant to Individuals in the Spirit World [8.4]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Doctrine and Covenants 137:5–8
- Doctrine and Covenants 138:32–34, 57–59

The dead are invited to come unto Christ. [8.4.1]

The invitation is extended to all of God’s children “to come unto [Christ] and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth



the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (2 Nephi 26:33; see also Alma 5:33; 3 Nephi 9:13–14). **Elder Russell M. Nelson** taught: “Mercifully, the invitation to ‘come unto Christ’ [Jacob 1:7; Omni 1:26; Moroni 10:30, 32; D&C 20:59] can also be extended to those who died without a knowledge of the gospel [see D&C 137:6–8]. Part of their preparation requires earthly efforts of others. We gather pedigree charts, create family group sheets, and do temple work vicariously to gather individuals unto the Lord and into their families [see 1 Corinthians 15:29; 1 Peter 4:6]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 85; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 80–81).

We help extend the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant to those in the spirit world by offering them the sealing ordinances that bind them together and link them to the faithful Saints of all ages. In this fashion all are given the opportunity to receive eternal families and exaltation in God’s kingdom.



We can extend the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant to our ancestors. [8.4.2]

Elder Bruce R. McConkie noted that our receiving the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant inspires us to extend those blessings to our ancestors: “The promises [made to the fathers] are the provisions of the Abrahamic covenant whereby the seed of the ancient patriarchs are entitled to receive the priesthood, the gospel, and eternal life (including celestial marriage). We are the children, and after we receive these blessings for ourselves, our attention turns almost by instinct to the well-being of our ancestors who died without a knowledge of the gospel. We are Abraham’s seed, and they were Abraham’s seed—through Isaac, through Jacob, and through the house of Israel. It thus becomes our privilege, on the basis of salvation for the dead, to search out our ancestors—to whom the same blessings have been promised as have come to us—and to make these blessings available to them through the vicarious ordinances of the house of the Lord” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 508–9).

Questions to Ponder

- From what you’ve learned about Abraham, how did he qualify to be chosen by the Lord to be “the father of the faithful”? (D&C 138:41).
- How do your efforts in family history help extend the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant to individuals in the spirit world?

Suggested Assignments

- Explain to another person how the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant are available to all people—include Galatians 3:26–29 in your explanation.
- Prepare an outline for a lesson on how family history work contributes to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. Give the presentation in a family home evening or other appropriate gathering.

Additional Resources

- Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (1985), 503–9.
- Russell M. Nelson, “Children of the Covenant,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 32–35.
- *The Pearl of Great Price Student Manual* (Church Educational System manual, 2000), 93–98.
- David A. Bednar, “Becoming a Missionary,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 44–47.
- Russell M. Nelson, “The Gathering of Scattered Israel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 79–82.



EMELINE S.
HANSEN
JAN. 20, 1919
FEB. 13, 2004

ELAINE
23 MAR
19 DEC

LANDERS

WALKER

The Spirit World and the Redemption of the Dead

9

Introduction

Jesus Christ opened the doors for the preaching of the gospel in the spirit world (see 1 Peter 3:18–20; D&C 138:16–19). While the gospel may be accepted by spirits in the spirit world, the ordinances of salvation must be performed for them here on earth. Latter-day prophets have revealed that many in the spirit world are anxious for those ordinances to be performed in their behalf. As you study the material in this chapter and renew your efforts to help in the work of salvation for the dead, contemplate the blessings and joy that accompany the work of bringing others to Christ (see D&C 18:15–16).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “The central fact, the crucial foundation, the chief doctrine, and the greatest expression of divine love in the eternal plan of salvation—truly a ‘plan of happiness,’ as Alma called it [Alma 42:8]—is the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Much goes before it and much comes after, but without that pivotal act, that moment of triumph whereby we are made free from the spiritual bondage of sin and the physical chains of the grave, both of which are undeniable deaths, there would be no meaning to the plan of life, and certainly no ultimate happiness in it or after it” (*Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* [1997], 197).

Commentary

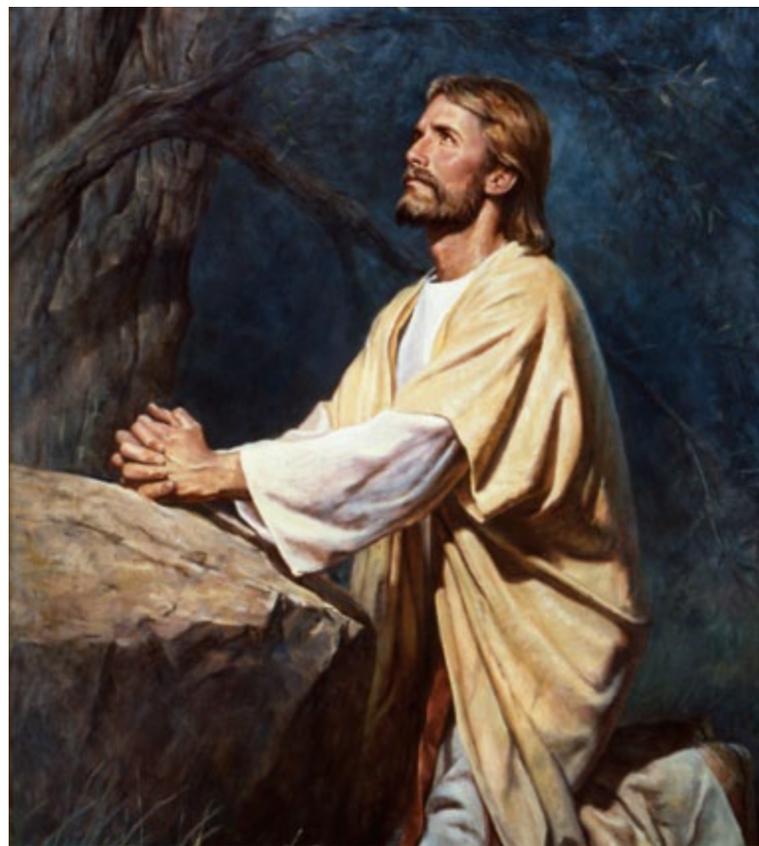
Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, All of God’s Children May Be Saved by Obedience to the Laws and Ordinances of the Gospel ^[9.1]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Acts 2:37–38
- Acts 4:10–12
- 1 Peter 3:18–20
- 1 Peter 4:6
- 2 Nephi 9:20–23
- Doctrine and Covenants 18:22–25
- Doctrine and Covenants 138:30–35, 58–59
- Moses 6:50–53
- Articles of Faith 1:3–4

The Atonement of Jesus Christ is central to the plan of salvation. ^[9.1.1]

Our Heavenly Father’s plan for the redemption of His children is known by various titles in the scriptures, such as “the plan of salvation” (Moses 6:62), “the great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8), and “the plan of redemption” (Alma 39:18). The Creation and the Fall are both essential parts of our Heavenly Father’s plan, but the focal point is the Atonement of Jesus Christ.



“Through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel” (Articles of Faith 1:3).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also taught about the importance of the Atonement to the plan:

“We say, with justifiable pride and complete verity, that we have the everlasting gospel, God’s eternal plan of salvation, the plan devised by the great Elohim to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of all his spirit children, those on this little dot of a planet and those on all the infinite worlds that his hands have made. (Moses 1:29–39.) . . .

“. . . The Only Begotten came to ransom fallen man and atone for the sins of the world—all to the end ‘that as many as would believe and be baptized in his holy name, and endure in faith to the end, should be saved’ [D&C 20:25]. The plan of salvation, designed by the Father, was thus made operative through the atonement of his Son” (*The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* [1978], 284, 287–88).

“Strait is the gate . . . which leadeth unto life.” [9.1.2]

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles testified that Jesus, as our Redeemer, has the authority to set the conditions for salvation and there are no exceptions to His conditions:

“Jesus confirmed that ‘strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life’ [Matthew 7:14]. Specifically, He said, ‘Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God’ [John 3:5].

This means we must ‘repent, and be baptized every one . . . in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and . . . receive the gift of the Holy Ghost’ [Acts 2:38]. . . .

“There are no exceptions granted; none are needed. As many as will believe and be baptized—including by proxy—and endure in faith shall be saved, ‘not only those who believed after [Christ] came in the meridian of time, in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even



Salvation is administered on the same terms and conditions in all ages. Men and women must have faith in Jesus Christ, repent of their sins, be baptized in Jesus Christ’s name by one holding the proper authority, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and endure faithfully to the end.

as many as were before he came’ [D&C 20:26]. It is for this reason that the gospel is preached ‘also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit’ [1 Peter 4:6]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 11).

The requirements of salvation are the same for all. [9.1.3]

One result of God being “no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34; see also Romans 2:11; D&C 1:35) is that the terms and conditions of salvation are the same for all of God’s children, no matter when they lived. **Elder David B. Haight** (1906–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the consistency of the plan of salvation and listed some of the conditions on which it is administered:

“We believe that Christ came into the world to ransom mankind from the temporal and spiritual death brought into the world by the fall of Adam, that through the shedding of His innocent blood all mankind are raised in immortality and that those who believe and obey His laws are raised unto eternal life.

“Salvation is administered on the same terms and conditions in all ages. Men must have faith in him, repent of their sins, be baptized in his name, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and remain steadfast to gain life eternal.

“The Lord God has sent his holy prophets among all men in all ages to declare these things, even as he does today (see Mosiah 3:13)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 24–25; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 22).

The ordinances of the gospel are vital for salvation. [9.1.4]

The requirements for salvation include receiving the necessary ordinances. **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles encouraged us to qualify for all of the ordinances available to us at this point in our lives and then to seek to make them available to members of our family—both living and deceased:

“To explain something of the significance of the ordinances, I begin with the third article of faith: ‘We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.’ . . .

“Each Latter-day Saint needs to ask himself or herself the questions: Is my life in order? Do I have all of the ordinances of the gospel that I should possess by this time in my life? Are they valid?

“If you can answer these questions affirmatively, and if the ordinances come under the influence of the sealing power and authority, they will remain intact eternally.

In that case your life, to this point, is in proper order. You then would do well to think of your family, living and dead, with the same questions in mind” (“Come to the Temple,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2007, 20).

Between the Death and Resurrection of the Physical Body, the Spirit Lives in the Spirit World and Has the Opportunity to Continue to Progress toward Perfection [9.2]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Luke 23:43
- 2 Nephi 9:10–17
- Alma 40:11–14, 21
- Moroni 10:34

Our spirit continues to live. [9.2.1]

Death is an important part of the plan of salvation, a necessary step in returning home to our Heavenly Father. “When the physical body dies, the spirit continues to live. In the spirit world, the spirits of the righteous ‘are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall



rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow' (Alma 40:12). A place called spirit prison is reserved for 'those who [have] died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets' (D&C 138:32)" (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 46).

The spirit world is close to this world. [9.2.2]

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) used the words of Brigham Young to help teach regarding the relationship between the spirit world and this world:

"The spirit world is not far away. From the Lord's point of view, it is all one great program on both sides of the veil. Sometimes the veil between this life and the life beyond becomes very thin. This I know! Our loved ones who have passed on are not far from us.

"One Church President asked, 'Where is the spirit world?' and then answered his own question: 'It is right here. . . . Do [spirits] go beyond the boundaries of this organized earth? No, they do not. They are brought forth upon this earth, for the express purpose of inhabiting it to all eternity.' He also said, '. . . If the Lord would permit it, and it was His will that it should be done, you could see the spirits that have departed from this world, as plainly as you now see bodies with your natural eyes.' (Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:369, 368.)" ("Because I Live, Ye Shall Live Also," *Ensign*, Apr. 1993, 4).

The spirit resembles the body. [9.2.3]

When Jesus Christ appeared to the brother of Jared, He appeared in His premortal spirit body. He said to the brother of Jared at that time:

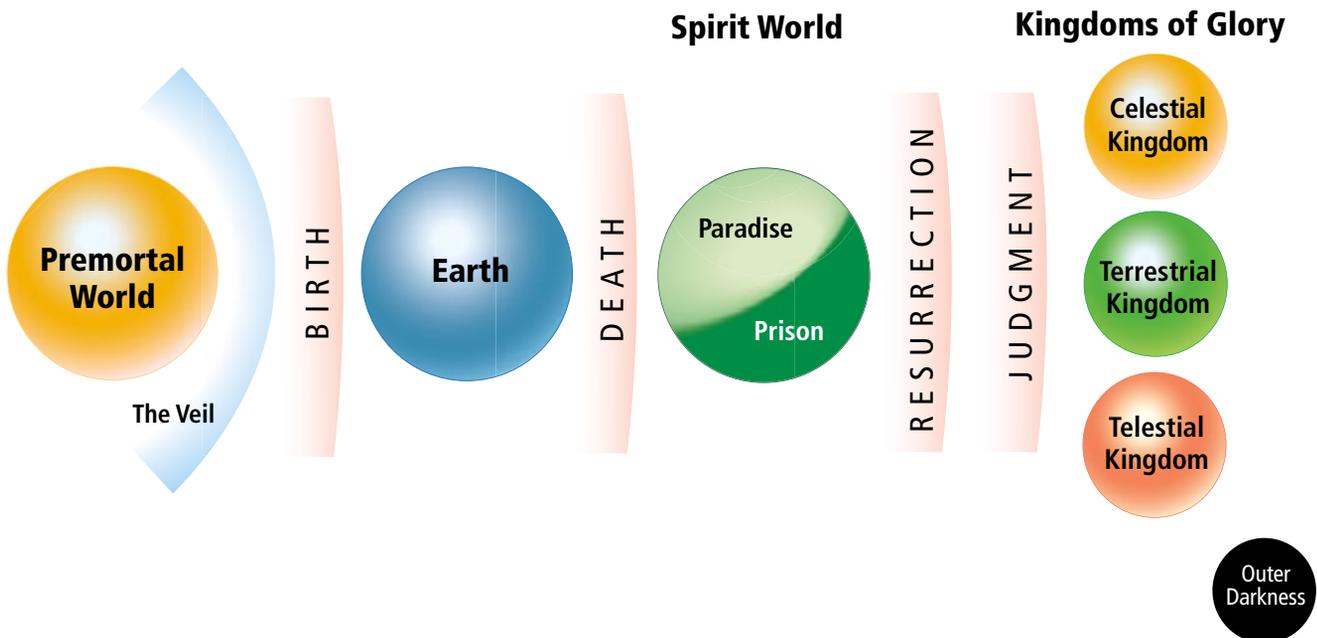
"Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image.

"Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh" (Ether 3:15–16).

Elder Mark E. Petersen (1900–1984) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that the physical body and our spirit are similar in appearance: "Every one of us is a spirit, and our spirit occupies a body of flesh and bone. The spirit is the real person. Our spirit resembles our body, or rather our body was 'tailored' to fit our spirit. The spirit bears the image and likeness of God, and the body, if normal, is in the image and likeness of the spirit" (*The Way of the Master* [1974], 124; see also 1 Nephi 11:11).

Our attitudes and inclinations do not change. [9.2.4]

Teaching about the importance of repentance during mortality, the Book of Mormon missionary Amulek taught, "That same spirit which doth possess your bodies



at the time that ye go out of this life . . . will have power to possess your body in that eternal world” (Alma 34:34).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles further explained: “Life and work and activity all continue in the spirit world. Men have the same talents and intelligence there which they had in this life. They possess the same attitudes, inclinations, and feelings there which they had in this life. They believe the same things, as far as eternal truths are concerned; they continue, in effect, to walk in the same path they were following in this life” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 762).

Progress toward exaltation takes time. [9.2.5]

One purpose of our mortal existence is that we might progress to become like our Father in Heaven. Though we enter the spirit world with the same tendencies we exhibited in mortality, opportunities for growth and progress are available in the spirit world. **The Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) explained the incremental nature of our growth after we die: “When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 268).



Trials and testing continue. [9.2.6]

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that our time of probation and testing continues after death:

“Sometimes in the Church we speak imprecisely . . . as if individuals who die go immediately to the celestial kingdom and are at once in the full presence of God. We tend to overlook the reality that the spirit world and paradise are part, really, of the second estate. The work of the Lord, so far as the second estate is concerned, is completed before the Judgment and the Resurrection. . . .

“The veil of forgetfulness of the first estate apparently will not be suddenly, automatically, and totally removed at the time of our temporal death. This veil, a condition of our entire second estate, is associated with and is part of our time of mortal trial, testing, proving, and overcoming

by faith—and thus will continue in some key respects into the spirit world. . . .

“Thus, if not on this side of the veil, then in the spirit world to come, the gospel will be preached to all, including all transgressors, rebels, and rejectors of prophets, along with all those billions who died without a knowledge of the gospel (D&C 138)” (*The Promise of Discipleship* [2001], 119, 122).

Jesus Christ Initiated the Preaching of the Gospel to Those in Spirit Prison [9.3]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- John 5:25, 28
- John 20:17
- 1 Peter 3:18–19
- 1 Peter 4:6
- Doctrine and Covenants 138

President Joseph F. Smith received a vision of the redemption of the dead. [9.3.1]

When Jesus Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene after His Resurrection, He said that He had “not yet ascended to [His] Father” (John 20:17). While Jesus’s body lay in the tomb, His spirit visited the spirit world. We learn details of the Savior’s visit to the spirit world in Doctrine and Covenants 138, a vision given to President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918).



President Smith became very acquainted with death during his lifetime. His father, Hyrum Smith, was martyred with the Prophet Joseph Smith in Carthage Jail when young Joseph F. was five years old. His mother, Mary Fielding Smith, died when he was 13. And 10 of his children died in infancy. The death of his children brought extreme sorrow to President Smith, as his son Joseph Fielding Smith recorded: “When death invaded his home, as frequently it did, and his little ones were taken from him, he grieved with a broken heart and mourned, not as those mourn who live without hope, but for the loss of his ‘precious jewels’ dearer to him than life itself” (*Life of Joseph F. Smith* [1938], 455).

At the beginning of 1918 a worldwide influenza epidemic was well underway, which would result in the deaths of many millions of people. World War I was also in process and would take 16 million lives. Then, on January 23, 1918, Elder Hyrum Mack Smith, a beloved son of President Joseph F. Smith and a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, died of a ruptured appendix at



While the body of Jesus Christ lay in the tomb, His spirit entered the spirit world.

the age of 45. President Smith, who was 80 years old at the time of his son's death, grieved deeply at the loss and became critically ill himself. He spent much of his time confined to his room. He said the following about this time of trial: "I have not lived alone these five months. I have dwelt in the spirit of prayer, of supplication, of faith and determination; and I have had my communication with the Spirit of the Lord continuously" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1918, 2).

On October 3, 1918, during his illness, President Smith was pondering upon the Atonement and the love of Heavenly Father and the Savior (see D&C 138:1–3). As he pondered, he beheld a "vision of the redemption of the dead" (D&C 138:60), which adds insight and clarification about salvation for the dead. President Smith learned that after the Savior's death, He appeared to "the spirits of the just, who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality" (see D&C 138:12–18) and "organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness" (D&C 138:30).

President Smith died six weeks after he received this revelation, which we now have as section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

The Savior opened the door to salvation for the dead. [9.3.2]

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) explained that until the Savior initiated the preaching of the gospel to those in bondage in the postmortal spirit world, there was no redemptive work for the dead:

"The Savior opened the door for the salvation of the dead. Before that time the unworthy dead were shut up in prison and were not visited. (Moses 7:38–39; Isaiah 24:22.) We have good reason to believe that the righteous spirits in paradise did not mingle with the unrighteous spirits before the visit of our Lord to the spirit world. He declared that there was a gulf fixed that could not be crossed which separated the righteous from the unrighteous [see Luke 16:26], therefore there was no sound of the voice of prophets and the Gospel was not declared among the wicked until Christ went into that world before his resurrection. He it was who opened the prison doors.—Isaiah 42:6–7; 61:1.

“President Brigham Young declared that ‘Jesus was the first man that ever went to preach to the spirits in prison, holding the keys of the Gospel of salvation to them. Those keys were delivered to him in the day and hour that he went into the spirit world, and with them he opened the door of salvation to the spirits in prison.’ (J. D. 4:285.) This is in full accord with the scriptures. President Joseph F. Smith, in the vision he beheld of the spirit world, confirmed this view [see D&C 138]. In that world Christ taught the righteous spirits and commissioned them to carry his message and sent them forth among the un-baptized dead. In this way he fulfilled his promise made to Isaiah that he would preach to the spirits of the dead and open their prison doors that they might go free” (*The Way to Perfection*, 6th ed. [1946], 315–16).

There is perfect order and structure in the spirit world.
[9.3.3]

Doctrine and Covenants 138:30 teaches that while the Savior was in the world of spirits, He “organized his forces” so that the gospel message might be preached “to all the spirits of men.” Shortly before his death, President Jedediah M. Grant (1816–56) of the First Presidency shared with **President Heber C. Kimball** (1801–68), also of the First Presidency, an experience that illustrates the order and structure established in the spirit world.

At President Grant’s funeral, President Kimball said: “[Brother Grant] said to me, [Brother] Heber, I have been into the spirit world two nights in succession, and, of all the dreads that ever came across me, the worst was to have to again return to my body, though I had to do it. But O, says he, the order and government that were there! When in the spirit world, I saw the order of righteous men and women; beheld them organized in their several grades, and there appeared to be no obstruction to my vision; I could see every man and woman in their grade and order. I looked to see whether there was any disorder there, but there was none; neither could I see any death nor any darkness, disorder or confusion. He said that the people he there saw were organized in family capacities; and when he looked at them he saw grade after grade, and all were organized and in perfect harmony” (“Remarks at the Funeral of President Jedediah M. Grant, by President Heber C. Kimball; Tabernacle, Thursday, December 4, 1856,” *Deseret News*, Dec. 10, 1856, 316).

“Not one soul shall be overlooked.” [9.3.4]

President Joseph Fielding Smith pointed out that in our Heavenly Father’s perfect plan, not one soul shall be left out or denied an opportunity for salvation:

“In the justice of the Father, he is going to give to every man the privilege of hearing the gospel. Not one soul shall be overlooked or forgotten [see D&C 1:1–3]. This being true, what about the countless thousands who have died and never heard of Christ, never had an opportunity of repentance and remission of their sins, never met an elder of the Church holding the authority? Some of our good Christian neighbors will tell you they are lost forever, that they cannot believe in the grave, for there is no hope beyond.

“Would that be fair? Would it be just? No! The Lord is going to give to every man the opportunity to hear and to receive eternal life, or a place in his kingdom. We are very fortunate because we have had that privilege here and have passed from death unto life.

“The Lord has so arranged his plan of redemption that all who have died without this opportunity shall be given it in the spirit world” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:132).

Many in the Spirit World Anxiously Await the Blessings of Gospel Ordinances [9.4]

“It is accounted unto them the same.” [9.4.1]

While the gospel may be taught and accepted by spirits in the spirit world, the saving ordinances must be performed by those here in mortality in behalf of those who died without receiving them. **President Joseph Fielding Smith** explained:

“Baptism is an ordinance belonging to this life, as also are confirmation and ordination to the priesthood, and the man who does not receive these blessings here cannot receive them in the spirit world. There he may repent and believe and accept the truth, but he cannot be baptized, confirmed, or ordained, or endowed, for these ordinances belong here. What is to be done in the matter?

“We are going to take substitutes who will act vicariously, which means one acting for another, and in the temples they will stand for those who are dead and there, in the behalf of the dead, receive all these blessings for them. When they do this, if the dead accept the labor performed, it is accounted unto them the same as if they had acted for themselves” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:161–62).

Many spirits anxiously await gospel ordinances. [9.4.2]

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught about the anticipation of many in the spirit world who desire to receive gospel ordinances:

“The spirit world is full of spirits who are anxiously awaiting for us to perform these earthly ordinances for them. . . .

“Some of us have had occasion to wait for someone or something for a minute, an hour, a day, a week, or even a year. Can you imagine how our progenitors must feel, some of whom have perhaps been waiting for decades and even centuries for the temple work to be done for them?” (“The Things of Eternity—Stand We in Jeopardy?” *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 1, 7).

President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) related an experience he had when he was visited by the spirits

of the founding fathers of the United States of America and other early leaders while he served as the first president of the St. George Utah Temple, the first temple completed after the Saints had migrated to the West:

“Two weeks before I left St. George, the spirits of the dead gathered around me, wanting to know why we did not redeem them. Said they, ‘You have had the use of the Endowment House [a temporary structure in Salt Lake City used for performing temple ordinances before the Salt Lake Temple was completed] for a number of years, and yet nothing has ever been done for us. We laid the foundation of the government you now enjoy, and we never apostatized from it, but we remained true to it and were faithful to God.’

“These were the signers of the Declaration of Independence [of the United States of America], and they waited on me for two days and two nights. . . .



St. George Utah Temple

“I straightway went into the baptismal font and called upon Brother McAllister to baptize me for the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and fifty other eminent men, making one hundred in all, including John Wesley, Columbus, and others” (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham [1990], 160–61).

Very few will not accept the gospel. [9.4.3]

Some may wonder if many in the spirit world will accept the gospel message when it is presented to them. **President Wilford Woodruff** gave the following assurances:

“I tell you when the prophets and apostles go to preach to those who are shut up in prison, and who have not received the gospel, thousands of them will there embrace the gospel. . . .

“There will be very few, if any, who will not accept the gospel. Jesus, while his body lay in the tomb, went and preached to the spirits in prison, who were destroyed in the days of Noah. After so long an imprisonment, in torment, they doubtless gladly embraced the gospel, and if so they will be saved in the kingdom of God. The fathers of this people will embrace the gospel” (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 152, 158).

During the October 1893 general conference, **President Lorenzo Snow** (1814–1901) shared similar thoughts:

“The great bulk of those who are in the spirit world for whom the work has been done will receive the truth. The conditions for the spirits of the dead receiving the testimony of Jesus in the spirit world are a thousand times more favorable than they are here in this life” (*Millennial Star*, Oct. 6, 1893, 718).

“A wonderful work is being accomplished in our temples in favor of the spirits in prison. I believe, strongly too, that when the Gospel is preached to the spirits in prison, the success attending that preaching will be far greater than that attending the preaching of our Elders in this life. I believe there will be very few indeed of those spirits who will not gladly receive the Gospel when it is carried to them. The circumstances there will be a thousand times more favorable” (*Millennial Star*, Jan. 22, 1894, 50).

Spirits know of and accept our temple work. [9.4.4]

An experience of **Elder Melvin J. Ballard** (1873–1939) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles helps us understand that those in the spirit world are aware of the work we do for them in the temples:

“Elder Ballard sat at our baptismal font [in the Logan Utah Temple] one Saturday while nearly a thousand

baptisms were performed for the dead. As he sat there, he contemplated on how great the temple ceremonies were, and how we are bringing special blessings to the living and the dead. His thoughts turned to the spirit world, and he wondered if the people there would accept the work we were doing for them.

“Brother Ballard said: ‘All at once a vision opened to me, and I beheld a great congregation of people gathered in the east end of the font room. One by one, as each name was baptized for, one of these people climbed a stairway over the font to the west end of the room. Not one soul was missing, but there was a person for every one of the thousand names done that day.’

“Brother Ballard said that he had never seen such happy people in all his life, and the whole congregation rejoiced at what was [being] done for them” (Nolan Porter Olsen, *Logan Temple: The First 100 Years* [1978], 170).

Questions to Ponder

- How are family history work and temple ordinances for the dead examples of Heavenly Father’s love for all His children?
- President Wilford Woodruff and President Lorenzo Snow both explained that preaching the gospel would be easier in the spirit world than in this mortal life. Why do you think this is so?
- Why do you think our Heavenly Father requires the same ordinances for the dead as He does for the living? What does this teach us about Him and the plan of salvation?

Suggested Assignments

- Carefully study and ponder Doctrine and Covenants 138. Write a paragraph or two explaining how this revelation motivates or inspires you in doing family history and temple work.
- Prepare a family home evening lesson on the Church’s unique doctrine of redemption for the dead. Use scriptures and quotations you have studied in this chapter as part of your lesson.

Additional Resources

- *Gospel Principles* [2009], 241–44.
- D. Todd Christofferson, “Why Do We Baptize for the Dead?” *New Era*, Mar. 2009, 2–5.



Covenants, Ordinances, and Temples in the Plan of Salvation

10

Introduction

President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about the importance of covenants and ordinances:

“Life is a homeward journey for all of us, back to the presence of God in his celestial kingdom.

“Ordinances and covenants become our credentials for admission into His presence. To worthily receive them is the quest of a lifetime; to keep them thereafter is the challenge of mortality” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 27; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 24).

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke about the importance of temples and temple ordinances: “A temple is literally the house of the Lord, reserved for ordinances of eternal significance. Those ordinances include baptisms, marriages, endowments, and sealings. . . .

“ . . . Ordinances of the temple are absolutely crucial. We cannot return to God’s glory without them” (“Prepare for Blessings of the Temple,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2002, 17–18).

This chapter contains an overview of the ordinances of salvation and the covenants associated with them. It will help you better understand the importance of these ordinances and covenants for yourself and for your family members. It is hoped that these teachings will reinforce your desire to make and keep your covenants with God and further motivate you to pursue these ordinances in behalf of deceased family members.

Commentary

A Covenant Is a Solemn Agreement between God and Man According to God’s Terms ^[10.1]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Exodus 19:5–6
- Jeremiah 31:31–33
- Mosiah 5:5–8
- Mosiah 18:8–10
- Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–39

A covenant is a sacred agreement. ^[10.1.1]

“A covenant is a sacred agreement between God and a person or group of people. God sets specific conditions, and He promises to bless us as we obey those conditions. When we choose not to keep covenants, we cannot receive the blessings, and in some instances we suffer a penalty as a consequence of our disobedience.

“All the saving ordinances of the priesthood are accompanied by covenants” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 44).



God determines our covenants with Him. ^[10.1.2]

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander, an emeritus member of the Seventy, taught that saving covenants originate with God and are validated by His authority:

“Eternal covenants are extended or offered to us only by God. He is the originator of all such covenants, as He is the only one who has authority and power to guarantee their validity beyond the grave.

“‘And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God’ [D&C 132:13].

“We cannot originate such covenants because we do not possess the power to guarantee them. Consequently, we can only enter into covenants that are offered to us by God, and we can enter them only in the way He prescribes” (“Ordinances and Covenants,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2001, 24).



Keeping covenants is the crucial test of life. [10.1.3]

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency explained the crucial nature of our covenants with God: “The Latter-day Saints are a covenant people. From the day of baptism through the spiritual

milestones of our lives, we make promises with God and He makes promises with us. He always keeps His promises offered through His authorized servants, but it is the crucial test of our lives to see if we will make and keep our covenants with Him” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 40; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 30).

Covenants and Ordinances of Salvation Are Necessary for Exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom

[10.2]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–22
- Doctrine and Covenants 97:8–9
- Doctrine and Covenants 98:13–15
- Doctrine and Covenants 132:5–7, 19–21

Ordinances and covenants help us return to God. [10.2.1]

“In the Church, an ordinance is a sacred, formal act performed by the authority of the priesthood. Some ordinances are essential to our exaltation. These ordinances are called saving ordinances. They include baptism, confirmation, ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood (for men), the temple endowment, and the marriage sealing. With each of these ordinances, we enter into solemn covenants with the Lord. . . .

“Ordinances and covenants help us remember who we are. They remind us of our duty to God. The Lord has provided them to help us come unto Him and receive eternal life. When we honor them, He strengthens us” (*True to the Faith*, 109–10).

Ordinances and covenants are essential for exaltation. [10.2.2]

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) summarized the crucial nature of temple ordinances and covenants:

“In the ordinances of the temple, the foundations of the eternal family are sealed in place. The Church has the responsibility—and the authority—to preserve and protect the family as the foundation of society.

“All of these priesthood temple ordinances are essential for the salvation and exaltation of our Father in Heaven’s children. . . .

“All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. This is because the temple ordinances are absolutely crucial; we cannot return to God’s presence without them” (“A Temple-Motivated People,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 40, 43).

Eternal covenants have an accompanying ordinance. [10.2.3]

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander taught about the importance of the ordinances associated with the covenants of salvation:

“Sacred ordinances and the divine authority to administer them did not begin with the Restoration of the gospel and the founding of the modern Church in 1830. The sacred ordinances of the gospel as requirements for salvation and exaltation were ‘instituted from before the foundation of the world’ [D&C 124:33]. They have always been an immutable part of the gospel. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: ‘Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles’ [*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 308]. . . .

“. . . Sacred gospel ordinances are the gateway to solemn covenants with God. Ordinances and covenants can hardly be understood apart from each other. By ordinances we enter into covenants, and by covenants we receive the ordinances. Though there may be ordinances that do not have an associated covenant—such as the blessing and naming of children, anointing of the sick, or blessings of comfort—there is no eternal covenant that is not connected to an ordinance. Our important steps toward God are introduced by sacred ordinances and are governed by the conditions of the covenants associated with those ordinances” (“Ordinances and Covenants,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2001, 22–24).



Baptism is the foundational covenant we make with God.

Baptism is our first covenant with God. [10.2.4]

Baptism is the first covenant we make with God on the pathway to exaltation. **Elder D. Todd Christofferson** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained:

“We enter into covenants by priesthood ordinances, sacred rituals that God has ordained for us to manifest our commitment. Our foundational covenant, for example, the one in which we first pledge our willingness to take upon us the name of Christ, is confirmed by the ordinance of baptism. It is done individually, by name. By this ordinance, we become part of the covenant people of the Lord and heirs of the celestial kingdom of God.

“Other sacred ordinances are performed in temples built for that very purpose. If we are faithful to the covenants made there, we become inheritors not only of the celestial kingdom but of exaltation, the highest glory within the heavenly kingdom, and we obtain all the divine possibilities God can give (see D&C 132:20)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2009, 17; or *Ensign*, May 2009, 20).

In the Temple, We Participate in Sacred Ordinances and Make Covenants Essential for Exaltation [10.3]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Doctrine and Covenants 124:37–40
- Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4

The primary purpose of temples is to provide saving ordinances. [10.3.1]

Though temples serve various purposes in our lives, **Elder Robert D. Hales** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles pointed out their primary purpose:

“The opportunity to enter the temple and to take upon ourselves the sacred covenants therein is one of the greatest blessings available to us in mortality. . . .

“The primary purpose of the temple is to provide the ordinances necessary for our exaltation in the celestial kingdom. Temple ordinances guide us to our Savior and give us the blessings that come to us through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Temples are the greatest university of learning known to man” (“Blessings of the Temple,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2009, 46, 48).

Ordinances are essential for the dead. [10.3.2]

All saving ordinances, whether for the living or the dead, are performed under proper priesthood authority. Baptism, confirmation, and ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood for the living are performed outside of temples, usually in ward or stake buildings. All saving ordinances for the dead are performed in temples. Following are brief summaries of the essential ordinances performed in temples today:

Baptism and confirmation. The saving ordinances of the gospel on behalf of the dead begin with vicarious baptism by immersion and confirmation as a member of the Church, for the gift of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of hands (see Articles of Faith 1:4–5). Baptism and confirmation for the living is performed outside of the temple (usually in a stake center baptismal font or in another location approved by proper priesthood authority). Baptisms for the dead are performed by living proxies only in a temple baptismal font.

Ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood. Melchizedek Priesthood ordinations for males who are dead are vicariously performed in the temple.

Washing and anointing. References to washing and anointing are found in the Old Testament (see Exodus 28:2–3, 41; 29:4–7; 40:12–13; Leviticus 8:6). “The ordinances of washing and anointing are referred to often in the temple as initiatory ordinances [because they begin the endowment]. It will be sufficient for our purposes to say only the following: Associated with the endowment are washings and anointing—mostly symbolic in nature, but promising definite, immediate blessings as well as future blessings.

“In connection with these ordinances, in the temple you will be officially clothed in the garment and promised marvelous blessings in connection with it” (*Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple* [2002], 32; see also D&C 124:39).

Endowment. Church members usually receive the endowment when they are preparing to serve full-time missions or be sealed in marriage in the temple. Spiritual maturity is important for those receiving their endowment. The endowment is a gift of knowledge and is accompanied by sacred covenants wherein the individual being endowed promises to live according to

the gift of knowledge he or she receives. To endow also means to prosper, as in bequeathing something of value to another. “To endow is to enrich, to give to another something long lasting and of much worth” (*Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple*, 29).

President Brigham Young (1801–77) defined the temple endowment: “Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 302).



Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave an overview of the covenants associated with the endowment: “The ordinances of the endowment embody certain obligations on the part of the individual, such as covenant and promise to observe the law of strict virtue and chastity, to be charitable, benevolent, tolerant and pure; to devote both talent and material means to the spread of truth and the uplifting of the [human] race; to maintain devotion to the cause of truth; and to seek in every way to contribute to the great preparation that the earth may be made ready to receive her King,—the Lord Jesus Christ. With the taking of each covenant and the assuming of each obligation a promised blessing is pronounced, contingent upon the faithful observance of the conditions” (*The House of the Lord*, rev. ed. [1976], 84).

Sealing. The power to seal a family for time and eternity is the culminating experience of the temple. **President Howard W. Hunter** taught about temple sealings: “Another temple ordinance is that of celestial marriage, where wife is sealed to husband and husband sealed to wife for eternity. We know, of course, that civil marriages end at death, but eternal marriages performed in the temple may exist forever. Children born to a husband and wife after an eternal marriage are automatically sealed to their parents for eternity. If children are born before the wife is sealed to her husband, there is a temple sealing ordinance that can seal these children to their parents for eternity, and so it is that children can be sealed vicariously to parents who have passed away” (“A Temple-Motivated People,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 40).

Ordinances for Deceased Ancestors Can Only Be Performed in Temples ^[10.4]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Doctrine and Covenants 124:29–37
- Doctrine and Covenants 127:5–9
- Doctrine and Covenants 128:11–15, 24

Baptism for the dead was restored in the latter days. ^[10.4.1]

The Prophet Joseph Smith, while speaking at the funeral of Seymour Brunson on August 15, 1840, introduced the doctrine of baptism for the dead. Church members were both surprised and excited. After that event, the Brethren spoke frequently of this new doctrine, and the Saints began performing baptisms in behalf of their deceased loved ones in the nearby Mississippi River (see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, Classics in Mormon Literature Series [1979], 252–53; *Church History in the Fulness of Times: Student Manual* [2003], 251).

During the October 1841 general conference of the Church in Nauvoo, Illinois, the Prophet Joseph Smith declared that the Lord wanted the Saints to cease performing baptisms for the dead until they could be performed in His house (the Nauvoo Temple). On November 8, 1841, President Brigham Young, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, dedicated the font in the basement of the unfinished temple, and Church members began performing baptisms for the dead (see *History of the Church*, 4:426, 446, 454).

Doctrine and Covenants 127 and 128 contain further direction from the Prophet Joseph Smith on baptism for the dead. Since then, all of the saving ordinances for the dead have been performed only in temples.

We have a responsibility to perform ordinances for the dead. ^[10.4.2]

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught about our responsibility to provide the ordinances of exaltation for our deceased ancestors:

“One of the works He has commissioned in these latter days is that we who have received the ordinances of exaltation do the ordinance and sealing work for our progenitors who have not had the opportunity to receive the gospel while in mortality. Ours is the privilege of opening the doors of salvation to those souls who may be imprisoned in darkness in the world of spirits, that they may receive the light of the gospel and be judged the same as we. Yes, ‘the works I do’—proffering the saving ordinances of the gospel to others—‘shall [ye] do also.’ How many thousands of our kindred yet await these sealing ordinances?”



A group of youth leaving the temple in Ghana, West Africa

“It is well to ask, ‘Have I done all I can as an individual on this side of the veil? Will I be a savior to them—my own progenitors?’

“Without them, we cannot be made perfect! Exaltation is a family affair” (“Because I Live, Ye Shall Live Also,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1993, 6).

All of Heavenly Father’s children will be offered the saving ordinances. ^[10.4.3]

President Boyd K. Packer explained that the ultimate intent of work for the dead is to bring the gift of salvation to all who will receive it:

“In the temples, members of the Church who make themselves eligible can participate in the most exalted of the redeeming ordinances that have been revealed to mankind. There, in a sacred ceremony, an individual may be washed and anointed and instructed and endowed

and sealed. And when we have received these blessings for ourselves, we may officiate for those who have died without having had the same opportunity. In the temples sacred ordinances are performed for the living and for the dead alike.

“. . . Someday every living soul and every soul who has ever lived shall have the opportunity to hear the gospel and to accept or reject what the temple offers” (“The Holy Temple,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 32).



Baptismal font in the Helsinki Finland Temple

All have agency to accept or reject vicarious ordinances. [10.4.4]

Some individuals have expressed concerns with the Church’s practice of performing vicarious baptisms for those who have died. One concern is that they feel it might be going against the desires of the deceased.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson clarified the Church’s respect for the agency of deceased persons for whom we perform ordinances in the temples: “Some have misunderstood and suppose that deceased souls ‘are being baptised into the Mormon faith without their knowledge’

or that ‘people who once belonged to other faiths can have the Mormon faith retroactively imposed on them.’ They assume that we somehow have power to force a soul in matters of faith. Of course, we do not. God gave man his agency from the beginning [see Moses 7:32; see also Alma 5:33–36; 42:27]. ‘The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God’ [D&C 138:58], but only if they accept those ordinances. The Church does not list them on its rolls or count them in its membership” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 10).

We Are Blessed through Temple Worship [10.5]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Doctrine and Covenants 97:15–16
- Doctrine and Covenants 109:10–12, 20–26, 67, 72–75
- Doctrine and Covenants 110:7

Prepare to attend the temple. [10.5.1]

“The ordinances and ceremonies of the temple are simple. They are beautiful. They are sacred. They are kept confidential lest they be given to those who are unprepared. Curiosity is not a preparation. Deep interest itself is not a preparation. Preparation for the ordinances includes preliminary steps: faith, repentance, baptism, confirmation, worthiness, a maturity and dignity worthy of one who comes invited as a guest into the house of the Lord” (*Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple*, 2).

The temple is a place of revelation. [10.5.2]

Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles indicated that those who worship in the temple faithfully should expect to receive revelations: “To the man or woman who goes through the temple with open eyes, heeding the symbols and the covenants, and making a steady, continuous effort to understand the full meaning, God speaks his word, and revelations come. . . . I believe that the busy person . . . who has his worries and troubles, can solve his problems better and more quickly in the house of the Lord than anywhere else. If he will leave his problems behind and in the temple work for himself and for his dead, he will confer a mighty blessing upon those who have gone before, and quite as large a blessing will come to him, for at the most unexpected moments, in or out of the temple will come to him, as a revelation, the solution of the problems that vex his life. That is the gift that comes to those who enter the temple properly, because it is a place where revelations may be expected” (“Temple Worship,” *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 63–64.)

The Spirit of the Lord will permeate our lives. [10.5.3]

Elder Royden G. Derrick (1915–2009) of the Seventy testified of the various blessings of temple worship: “Temples of the Lord are a resource to be used by faithful members to spiritually enrich and ennoble their lives and the lives of their immediate and extended family members. When members of the Church attend the temple regularly, inner peace calms the soul; the Spirit of the Lord permeates the home; love and respect deepen between family members; problems are more clearly defined; solutions are more apparent; emotions are more serene in family relations; divorces significantly decrease in the Church community; lives of participants and their associates are spiritually enriched; and children are more likely to socialize with good friends, be more communicative with parents, attend seminary and institute, serve missions, be active in the Church, better understand gospel principles, and qualify for a forever family relationship” (*Temples in the Last Days* [1987], 156).

The endowment is a protection to us. [10.5.4]

Promises always accompany covenants we make with the Lord. **President Joseph Fielding Smith** reflected upon the Lord’s promise of protection that accompanies temple covenants:

“If we go into the temple, we raise our hands and covenant that we will serve the Lord and observe his commandments and keep ourselves unspotted from the world. If we realize what we are doing, then the endowment will be a protection to us all our lives—a protection which a man who does not go to the temple does not have.

“I have heard my father [President Joseph F. Smith] say that in the hour of trial, in the hour of temptation, he would think of the promises, the covenants that he had made in the house of the Lord, and they were a protection to him. . . .

“This protection is what these ceremonies are for, in part. They save us now, and they exalt us hereafter, if we will honor them. I know that this protection is given for I, too, have realized it, as have thousands of others who have remembered their obligations” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:252–53).

Temple attendance assists proper living. [10.5.5]

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught that temple worship helps us avoid destructive addictions: “Make a habit of going to the house of the Lord. There is no better way to ensure proper living than temple

attendance. It will crowd out the evils of pornography, substance abuse, and spiritual atrophy. It will strengthen marriage and family relations” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 109; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 102).



Personal blessings come from doing work for the dead. [10.5.6]

Sister Mary Ellen Smoot, former Relief Society general president, pointed out some of the reciprocating rewards that come to those who go to the temple to do work for the dead: “We see sisters who rejoice in the blessings of the temple—sisters who seek to make and keep their covenants, do work for their kindred dead, and in the process find their own loads lifted and their power to resist temptation fortified, daughters of God who understand their divine destiny, catch a vision of their potential, and focus on overcoming weaknesses” (“Rejoice, Daughters of Zion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 94).

Questions to Ponder

- What impressions come to you as you ponder the covenants you have made with your Heavenly Father?
- What goals can you set to increase your ability to honor your covenants?
- What blessings have you received because of the ordinances and covenants of the temple?

Suggested Assignment

- Write three or four goals to help in your own temple worthiness or attendance. Place them in a priority that best fits your circumstances.

Additional Resources

- Ezra Taft Benson, “What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 6–10.
- *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple* [booklet, 2002].
- D. Todd Christofferson, “The Power of Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 19–23.



Stratford Ave.
 City, Utah

DEFENSE SAVINGS
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

SLIT LAKE
 DEC 3
 2 1941
 UTAH

DEFENSE SAVINGS
 BON.

E. Tanner
 Bayhew-Erisman & Co.
 Montgomery Street
 Los Angeles, California

FAMILY RECORD.

Frederick ^{OF} Tanner Son of William ^{Son of}

NAME	Occupation	WHEN BORN. Day. Month. Year	Town.	WHERE BORN. County.	Son of
Frederick Tanner <small>Below give Names, &c., of Children.</small>	Baptist Minister	4 July 1796			
Thomas					

Research in Family History

Introduction

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency spoke of our unique opportunities and the resources available for furthering the work of the Lord in temples: “Your opportunities and the obligations they create are remarkable in the whole history of the world. There are more temples across the earth than there have ever been. More people in all the world have felt the Spirit of Elijah move them to record the identities of their ancestors and facts of their ancestors’ lives. There are more resources to search out your ancestors than there have ever been in the history of the world. The Lord has poured out knowledge about how to make that information available worldwide through technology that a few years ago would have seemed a miracle” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 82; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 79).

In this chapter you are encouraged to persevere in family history work. It may be an easy task to begin, but it will likely become more challenging as you continue in your efforts. Identifying ancestral lines beyond your current knowledge and finding information necessary to provide the temple ordinances for those individuals will require extra effort and patience. Focus on a particular goal and organize your research efforts in order to increase the effectiveness of your work. Information in this chapter will help you become familiar with the variety of records available and the types of information contained in those records.

Commentary

Family History Work Becomes More Challenging as You Research Generations Further Removed from Your Own ^[11.1]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Doctrine and Covenants 18:15–16
- Doctrine and Covenants 103:36
- Doctrine and Covenants 127:4

Persist despite the challenges. ^[11.1.1]

President Henry B. Eyring counseled us to persevere when family history work becomes difficult, promising that we will have help beyond our own strength:

“After you find the first few generations, the road will become more difficult. The price will become greater. As you go back in time, the records become less complete. As others of your family search out ancestors, you will discover that the ancestor you find has already been offered the full blessings of the temple. Then you will have a difficult and important choice to make. You will be tempted to stop and leave the hard work of finding to others who are more expert or to another time in your



life. But you will also feel a tug on your heart to go on in the work, hard as it will be.

“As you decide, remember that the names which will be so difficult to find are of real people to whom you owe your existence in this world and whom you will meet again in the spirit world. When you were baptized, your ancestors looked down on you with hope. Perhaps after centuries, they rejoiced to see one of their descendants make a covenant to find them and to offer them freedom. In your reunion, you will see in their eyes either gratitude or terrible disappointment. Their hearts are bound to you. Their hope is in your hands. You will have more than your own strength as you choose to labor on to find them” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 82; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 79–80).



Careful research leads to a sealing ordinance. [11.1.2]

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency shared an experience that resulted in an orphaned pioneer ancestor being sealed to her natural parents:

“Picture with me a little six-year-old orphan girl traveling across the plains of America. Her name is Elsie Ann. Her mother died when she was two. Her father remarried, and so for a time she had a stepmother. Then her father died at Winter Quarters when she was five. Her stepmother remarried and moved away, leaving this little orphan behind with Peter and Selina Robison, who were related to her stepmother. Elsie Ann left Winter Quarters with the Robisons in July of 1849 to come west. As she watched Selina care for her 10-month-old baby girl, she no doubt ached for the love of her own mother. Sometimes she would even ask, ‘Where is my mother?’

“My heart goes out to this little girl when I think of her facing her uncertain future with no blood relatives to comfort and help her. Elsie Ann was my great-grandmother, and only recently did we find out who her mother really was. For years we thought Elsie Ann was Jane Robison’s daughter. Careful research discovered her true parentage, and after all these years Elsie Ann now has been sealed to her father, John Akerley, and her mother, Mary Moore” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 56; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 53).



An Organized Research Method Will Help Make Your Efforts More Effective [11.2]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- Ecclesiastes 9:11
- 1 Corinthians 9:24
- Mosiah 4:27

Develop a system for family history research. [11.2.1]

It will be helpful for you to develop a system to organize and direct your family history efforts. You may use or adapt the following suggestions to suit your own needs. The following steps can lead you through a basic research pattern for family history work. Steps 1 through 3 review information you have learned in previous chapters in this course; steps 4 through 6 will help extend your research to more difficult tasks.

Step 1: Remember your ancestors.

Step 2: Use sources in your home.

Step 3: Ask relatives for information.

Step 4: Choose a family or ancestor you want to learn more about.

Step 5: See if someone else has already found the information.

Step 6: Search records for information about the family or ancestor.

Step 1: Remember your ancestors. [11.2.2]

Begin by remembering, accumulating, and organizing information to identify members of your family. Each person can be identified by personal information, such as the following:

- Name (first name, middle names, surnames, maiden name, and nicknames)
- Relationship to other members of the family
- Dates and places of important events, such as birth, marriage, and death
- Ancestral home
- Occupation

Use pedigree charts, family group records, and other tools available on computer programs to simplify the task of recording and organizing information. Begin by filling out the information for yourself and your immediate family, and then work back through your parents' and grandparents' generations. You can quickly see what you know and what information is missing or incomplete.

Step 2: Use sources in your home. [11.2.3]

Look for sources in your home that might provide important family information (including information missing from your pedigree chart or family group records). Useful sources include birth, marriage, and death certificates; family Bibles; funeral programs; obituaries; wedding announcements; family registers; and ancestral tablets.

Add the information you find to your family's pedigree charts and family group records. Record the sources of the information in the notes or sources section on the forms or in your family history program. This helps you and others know where the information came from.

Step 3: Ask relatives for information. [11.2.4]

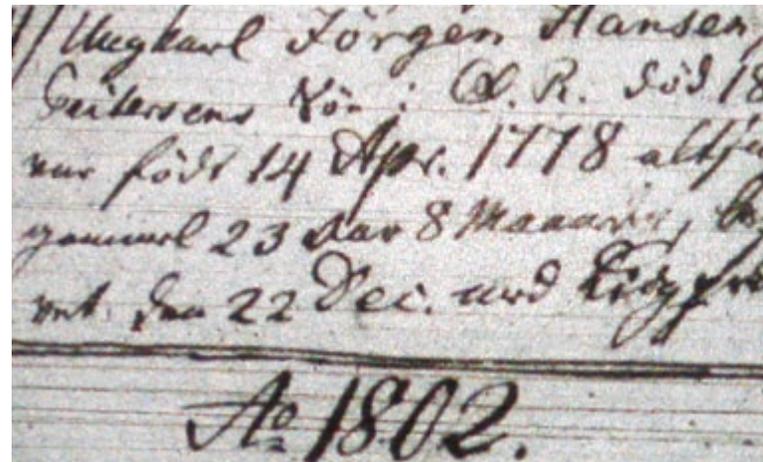
Make a list of relatives and the family information they may have. Then contact the relatives—visit, call, write a letter, or e-mail them. Be sure to ask specifically for the information you need. (For example, "Do you know when Aunt Jane was born?") Ask if there is a document you can copy that lists the information.

Oral histories of family members are important and may be the only source of information for certain individuals. If possible, make a recording of the person telling the story. Write the story down; then list a source, such as "oral history, told by my grandmother Anne (Hamblin) Zabriski on November 30, 2011."

Add the information to your family's pedigree charts and family group records. Consider storing this information

on FamilySearch.org so others who share your ancestral lines will have access to it. Record the names of the relatives who gave you the information in the notes or sources section on the forms or in your family history program.

Strive to be accurate and thorough. You may not need to fill in every blank on a family group sheet, but each piece of information helps confirm that you have identified the right person and helps you learn more about that person and others in that family line.



Sample death certificate

Step 4: Choose a family or ancestor you want to learn more about. [11.2.5]

Look for missing or incomplete information on your family's pedigree charts and in other family records. Then prayerfully select a family or ancestor with missing or incomplete information. Start with the generations closest to you, and work your way back. It is usually easier to find information on a family or ancestor who lived more recently.

Step 5: See if someone else has already found the information. [11.2.6]

Search for information on the family or ancestor on FamilySearch.org. The FamilySearch databases include information submitted by others and can tell you if there is a published family history. A surname search in the Family History Library catalog will list any family histories in the Church's Family History Library's collection that contain the surname. You can arrange to see many of the histories at your local family history center.

Look for published family histories on other websites or at public archives and libraries. Using Internet search engines may be helpful.



If the family histories do not contain the information about the family or ancestor you are looking for, search for records in the general geographic locality where the family or ancestor lived.

Step 6: Search records for information about the family or ancestor. [11.2.7]

The FamilySearch Research Wiki can teach you research techniques and help you locate records based on where the person lived and the time frame of his or her birth, marriage, or death. You search the Research Wiki by geographic location and time frame. Any available tools and learning aids will be listed, along with recommended things to do and records to search.

Download and print forms and guides to help you. Many forms and guides are available on the Research Wiki to download for free. These forms will help you plan, record, and analyze your research.

Go through each record you find, evaluate the information, and determine if it contains the information you

need: What does the new information tell you? What are you still lacking? Is the source reliable? (Records made close to the event are often more accurate than those created later.) Does the information agree with other records? (For example, a marriage date that is only 10 years after a person's birth date probably indicates an error.)

Use what you learned to decide what to do next: Does the new information give you enough to submit a name for temple work? Does it suggest another record to check? How does it contribute to your research on other names?

As you expand your research, it is helpful to know the difference between original records and compiled records:

- *Original records* are records of life events kept by affected parties at or near the time the events took place. Original records can provide information about birth, death, place of residence, property, occupation, immigration, civil action, religious ceremonies, and personal achievements. Some original records, such as censuses, parish records, birth certificates, wills, deeds, and ship passenger lists, are kept by governments, churches, societies, or other institutions. Other original records, such as diaries and family Bibles, are kept by individuals or families.

Original records are most likely to contain the most accurate information for your family history research because they were made by people living closest to your ancestor at the time of the event. Many original records have been microfilmed by the Church and are now becoming digitally available and searchable on FamilySearch.org. Volunteers can help make more records available through the FamilySearch indexing program.

- *Compiled records* are collections of information gathered from other sources, often many years after the event. Examples include family histories, biographies, place histories, society publications, periodicals, genealogies, and computerized indexes. Compiled records may be drawn from original records, other compiled records, or both. For example, a published family history may be compiled from civil registration records, census records, family papers, and local histories. Compiled records may not be as accurate as original records, but they are still important in family history research because they contain information that may not be available otherwise.

There Are Many Types of Useful Records to Search in Family History Work [11.3]

Modern technology gives quick access. [11.3.1]

Modern technology has enhanced the research process by giving quick access to a myriad of records collections. You can also communicate with individuals who might help you with your family history by sharing their experiences and answering questions.

The following experience is an example of how quickly you may obtain assistance as you take advantage of technology in your family history research: One of the managers in the Church's Family History Department sent out a "tweet" (a short electronic message) one day looking for information on a great uncle who was born in Kansas in the late 1800s. His tweet read: "Thinking about some genealogy and wishing I knew how to get a death certificate for Warren Dodge, died 16 Oct. 1888 in Barton County Kansas." He was surprised that he received his first response back within six minutes. Within six hours he had learned all the information necessary to obtain the needed records. He learned that Barton County did not have death certificates until 1911. He changed his search to probate records. He telephoned the Barton County records office, and within just a few days he had the documents in his hand.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, the FamilySearch website (FamilySearch.org) has extensive resources for research and tutorials explaining how to use them.

Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, also has several family history tutorials available on their website (familyhistorylab.byu.edu) that teach about the types of family history records available to search, what they contain, and how to use them to search for an ancestor. The website contains a link to the BYU Family History Department's step-by-step lessons on how to do various tasks in the research process and locate different records. These lessons are available free of charge to anyone with Internet access.

There are also some helpful commercial family history websites available. Some of them offer a free basic version of their software program. Check with your instructor or a branch, ward, or stake family history specialist for recommendations.

There are many sources to search for family history information. [11.3.2]

Any record created that identifies a person and is available to the public can be a useful resource for family history information. The most helpful records contain not

The image shows a historical population schedule table, likely from a census. The table is organized into several columns, including names, ages, and other demographic information. The text is dense and somewhat faded, but the structure is clear, with rows representing individual entries and columns representing different data points. The title at the top of the table is "POPULATION SCHEDULE".

only names, but dates associated with a person (such as birth, marriage, and death dates) and places where that person lived, moved, or traveled.

The following are some of the more common records available for family history research:

Computer records. Transcripts, indexes, and other records are often available in searchable form on the Internet. The Internet also hosts e-mail lists, message boards, web pages, and other sources for researchers. One of the most extensive sets of computer tools is FamilySearch, produced by the Church.

Civil records. Civil records are records kept by federal, regional, and local governments. These are located in government offices, archives, and libraries. Catalogs and indexes are often available on the Internet or at the locations where the records are held. The following are common examples of civil records:

- *Birth certificates* usually give the person's name, date and place of birth, parents' names (sometimes including the mother's maiden name), and residence.
- *Marriage certificates* usually show the date and place of the marriage, names and ages of the bride and groom, places of residence, witnesses' names, and sometimes parents' names.
- *Death certificates* give the person's name and may show a date and place of death, age, residence, cause of death, parents' names, occupation, date and place of burial, and sometimes the date and place of birth.

The Church has an extensive collection of microfilmed civil records. You can order and view these at Church family history centers or search through digitized and indexed versions on FamilySearch.org.

There is an ongoing effort to digitize and index civil records to make these records available over the Internet to everyone. If you find an ancestor in an index and the Family History Library does not have a film of the actual record, you may need to write to the government office where the record was filed.

Note: In the Family History Library Catalog many civil records are found under “Vital Records.”

Census records. Many governments have compiled census records for the past two hundred years or more. Early census records frequently name only the head of the household and give names, gender, birthplaces, and approximate ages of those in the household. Later census records include more complete information.

Be careful when using census records because they provide only a glimpse of the family. Following are some cautions to keep in mind when consulting census records:

- Family members may not be included in a census if they were not home when the census was taken.
- Censuses do not include deceased family members.
- The wife listed in the census may not be the mother of the children.
- Relatives and boarders are sometimes listed as children.
- Information may have been supplied by neighbors or approximated by census takers.
- Names might appear under a variety of spellings.
- Ages are frequently rounded, and birthplaces often approximated.

Immigration records. Shipping companies have long kept records of passengers traveling from one country to another. Beginning in the 1800s, countries began to keep arrival lists (lists of immigrants arriving on their shores). Many of these records have been compiled in book and electronic form. Immigration records may include an individual’s name, age, occupation, place of origin, port of embarkation (departure), and other information.



Naturalization records. Naturalization records include declarations of intention (in which an immigrant renounces allegiance to another country), petitions for citizenship, and depositions (testimonies given in courts of law as part of the application for citizenship). The information includes the petitioner’s age, name changes, birthplace, port of debarkation (arrival), marital status, and mailing address. At different periods, naturalization may have been handled locally or nationally. For example, in the United States, naturalization records were originally processed by a variety of federal, state, and county courts. In 1906 the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service began maintaining an index of naturalizations, with copies of important documents for each case.

Probate records. Probate records are court records showing how deceased individuals’ estates (property) were divided among their heirs. Wills frequently list gifts of property to spouses, children, and other relatives. Administration papers name the individuals (often the surviving spouse or eldest son) who are to execute the will. Probate records often do not list all of the children, and children who had already died or received their inheritances are usually not named. Also, the surviving spouse may not be the parent of all or any of the children named.

Land records. Land records, such as deeds and mortgages, can be used to verify an individual’s or family’s movements. Sometimes land records state relationships, such as when a husband and wife jointly own a piece of land or when an individual sells land to a family member. In other instances, these relationships are not stated but can be inferred. Land records can also provide clues as to financial circumstances, neighbors, business associates, and full names.

Military records. The most valuable military records for family history research are pension applications written by servicemen or their surviving spouses. Information on military records includes the person’s birth date, marriage date, age at enlistment, regiment, physical description (such as hair color, eye color, height, and distinguishing marks), military campaigns and battles, disabilities incurred through military service, testimonies of contemporaries, places of residence, and sometimes names and birth dates of heirs.



Church records. Church records predate civil records in many parts of the world by hundreds of years. Parish registers of most denominations record christenings, marriages, and deaths. Along with the dates and the names of those involved, church records may also contain information such as the names and residence of parents, occupations, and names of witnesses and godparents, who were often relatives. Some church records are still in local churches, but many have been gathered into central archives. The Family History Library has microfilmed records from many thousands of parishes around the world.

Have a System for Tracking Your Progress and Storing Family History Documents [11.4]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- 1 Nephi 5:14
- Doctrine and Covenants 127:9

Use computer programs to track and store information. [11.4.1]

Computer programs provide the best methods for easy storage and retrieval of family history information. There are a variety of programs available from the Church and commercially, each with its own design and special features.

A computer file that keeps track of what you have searched for, where you have looked, and what you have found can also be a valuable resource, particularly when you have invested a lot of time and effort into family history research.

For protection against possible loss of your electronic records, always make at least one backup on a regular basis.

Supplement your computer records. [11.4.2]

An effective filing system can be made from hanging files, file folders in containers, and so forth. It is exciting to be able to hold up a certified copy of a birth certificate, browse through a copy of a will in original handwriting, or read an original journal kept by an ancestor.

Making digital scans of documents is a way to preserve and share records and be able to cite them as sources of information.

A combination of computer and paper files is an effective option for storage and retrieval of family history records. A good general guideline is to have a system that someone else in the family could access and understand easily.

Check with people who are experienced in family history work, and find out what they do or would recommend. Then determine what would be most helpful to you.

Questions to Ponder

- How does record keeping relate to success with family history research?
- What information would you include on a family history research log?
- Who benefits from your family history research?

Suggested Assignments

- Go to the BYU Family History Department's website (familyhistorylab.byu.edu) and work through the available tutorials.
- Outline a plan for research on a specific ancestral line, including what information you would like to find and where you are going to start looking for it.
- Develop a design for a research log to keep track of your family history efforts.
- Evaluate computer-based record managers and decide on one to use for your personal research efforts.

Additional Resources

- David A. Bednar, "The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 24–27.
- LDS.org: click **Resources**; under "Family," click **Family History**.
- BYU Family History Department's website: familyhistorylab.byu.edu.



Finding and Creating Personal and Family Histories

12

Introduction

It can be exciting to discover a historical record of one of your ancestors—especially if he or she personally created it. These records can help you develop deep feelings for your ancestors and gain an appreciation for what they went through. Your personal records will do the same for your descendants. They will enable you to make a connection with your family members in the future, even though you may never meet in mortality.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) regarded personal journals as valuable legacies:

“You are unique, and there may be incidents in your experience that are more noble and praiseworthy in their way than those recorded in any other life. There may be a flash of illumination here and a story of faithfulness there; you should truthfully record your real self and not what other people may see in you.

“Your story should be written now while it is fresh and while the true details are available. . . .

“What could you do better for your children and your children’s children than to record the story of your life, your triumphs over adversity, your recovery after a fall, your progress when all seemed black, your rejoicing when you had finally achieved? . . .

“Get a notebook, . . . a journal that will last through all time, and maybe the angels may quote from it for eternity. Begin today and write in it your goings and comings, your deepest thoughts, your achievements and your failures, your associations and your triumphs, your impressions and your testimonies” (“The Angels May Quote from It,” *New Era*, Oct. 1975, 5).

Personal histories can include any document or record that contributes information about an individual’s life and helps to tell that person’s life story. These include journals and diaries; birth, marriage, and death certificates; certificates of achievement (such as diplomas and documents from various organizations); letters; photos; and audio and video recordings.

In addition to personal records, family records are of great value. Family records could include pedigree charts, family group sheets, journals, documents, photos, videos, or any other record that helps tell the story of a family.

This chapter examines the value of personal and family records and gives some suggestions for what to include in your own personal history.

Commentary

We Can Be Inspired by Reading the Personal Histories of Our Ancestors [12.1]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- 1 Nephi 5:10, 14–17
- Mosiah 1:2–7

Family records can be sacred records. [12.1.1]



Reading and hearing stories from the lives of others can be inspirational. **Elder Theodore M. Burton** (1907–89) of the Seventy shared his thoughts about his grandfather’s journal and why we should each keep a journal:

“What Grandfather Burton did for me was to write a sacred family record, the small plates of Burton, or, if you will, an inspirational family record. Much of what we now regard as scripture was not anything more or less than men writing of their own spiritual experiences for the benefit of their posterity. These scriptures are family records. Therefore, as a

people we ought to write of our own lives and our own experiences to form a sacred record for our descendants. We must provide for them the same uplifting, faith-promoting strength that the ancient scriptures now give us.

“The advantage of having records from our own immediate progenitors is that we thus get to know them personally and feel close to them. We can relate our own lives to theirs. They are speaking to us from times close to those in which we live, and naturally we can better understand them and their problems than we can those of ancient Israel. Thus their teachings and experiences become more poignant and meaningful to us, sometimes even more so than when we read the ancient scriptures. Through them we feel their love for God and his love for them and for us. We in turn can pass on to our descendants this same faith and resolve. In this way, a chain of faith builds in us and from us to those who will follow in our footsteps.

“Let us respond to the plea which has been made of us by our leaders to write our personal histories and thus pass on to future generations our own resolve to stand

steadfast before God because we know and love him. Our descendants, feeling our love for them, will stand firmly and steadfastly in their places as sons and daughters of God. In this way we pass on the torch of faith and love for God and feel in turn his love for us and for those who will follow us” (“The Inspiration of a Family Record,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 17).

Personal and family records can teach and inspire. [12.1.2]

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the inspiration we can receive from reading stories of our ancestors and shared an example from his own pioneer heritage:

“My great-grandmother Margaret McNeil Ballard recorded in her journal a pioneer experience of sacrifice that occurred when she was between nine and eleven years of age. She wrote:

“‘After landing we planned to go west to Utah with the Martin and Willey handcart companies; but Elder Franklin D. Richards counseled my father not to go with them. Afterwards we were very thankful. . . .



We can come to know our progenitors by studying their personal records.

“The company we were assigned to had gone on ahead and as my mother was anxious for me to go with them she strapped my little brother James on my back with a shawl. He was only four years old and . . . quite sick with the measles; but I took him since my mother had all she could do to care for the other children. I hurried and caught up with the company, traveling with them all day. That night a kind lady helped me take my brother off my back. I sat up and held him on my lap with the shawl wrapped around him, alone, all night. He was a little better in the morning. The people in the camp were very good to us and gave us a little fried bacon and some bread for breakfast.

“‘We traveled this way for about a week, before my brother and I were united with our family again.’

“This brief episode in Great-grandmother’s life teaches me that our pioneer ancestors gave everything, even their lives, for their faith, for the building of the kingdom of God when the Church was in its infancy. It teaches also that they helped, nourished, and strengthened each other in their extremity and shared unstintingly. Their material means, such as food, clothing, and shelter, were meager, but their love for one another and their devotion to their Lord and to the gospel were boundless” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 105–6; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 75).

“There was my wife’s father’s name.” [12.1.3]

President Thomas S. Monson told of reading an account written by his grandfather about his wife’s father:

“My father’s father came from Sweden, and his wife from England. They met on the ship coming over. He waited for her to grow up, and then he proposed marriage. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple, and he wrote in his journal, ‘Today is the happiest day of my life. My sweetheart and I were married for time and eternity in the holy temple.’

“Three days later, on April 23, 1898, he wrote, ‘Took the train at the Rio Grande Western Depot enroute eventually to Scandinavia, where I have been called as a missionary.’ Off he went to Sweden, leaving his bride of three days.

“His journal, written in pencil, came to me from an uncle who somehow chose me to receive his father’s journal. The most frequent entry in the journal was, ‘My feet are wet.’ But the most beautiful entry said: ‘Today we went to the Jansson home. We met Sister Jansson. She had a lovely dinner for us. She is a good cook.’ And then he said, ‘The children all sang or played a harmonica or did a little dance, and then she paid her tithing. Five krona



President Thomas S. Monson and his wife, Frances

for the Lord and one for my companion, Elder Ipson, and one for me.’ And then there were listed the names of the children.

“When I read that in the journal, there was my wife’s father’s name as one who was in that household, one who probably sang a song, one who became the father of only one daughter, the girl whom I married” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 112; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 111).

The Lord knew Joseph Millett. [12.1.4]

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, shared excerpts from a pioneer’s diary that illustrate the strength and inspiration of “true testimony” that can be shared from the lives of “ordinary men and women and children”:

“Let me quote from the diary of Joseph Millett, a little-known missionary of an earlier time. Called on a mission to Canada, he went alone and on foot. In Canada, during the wintertime, he said:

“‘I felt my weakness. A poor, ill-clothed, ignorant boy in my teens, thousands of miles from home among strangers.

“The promise in my blessing and the encouraging words of President Young to me, with the faith I had in the gospel, kept me up.

“Many times I would turn into the woods . . . in some desolate place with a heart full, wet eyes, to call on my master for strength or aid.

“I believed the Gospel of Christ. I had never preached it. I knew not where to find it in the scriptures.’

“That didn’t matter so much, for, ‘I had to give my Bible to the boatman at Digby for passage across the sound.’

“Years later, Joseph Millett, with his large family, was suffering through very, very difficult times. He wrote in his journal:

“‘One of my children came in and said that Brother Newton Hall’s folks was out of bread, had none that day.

“I divided our flour in a sack to send up to Brother Hall. Just then Brother Hall came.

“‘Says I, “Brother Hall, are you out of flour?”

““Brother Millett, we have none.”

““Well, Brother Hall, there is some in that sack. I have divided and was going to send it to you. Your children told mine that you was out.”

“Brother Hall began to cry. He said he had tried others, but could not get any. He went to the cedars and prayed to the Lord, and the Lord told him to go to Joseph Millett.

““Well Brother Hall, you needn’t bring this back. If the Lord sent you for it you don’t owe me for it.”

“That night Joseph Millett recorded a remarkable sentence in his journal:

“You can’t tell me how good it made me feel to know that the Lord knew there was such a person as Joseph Millett’ (Diary of Joseph Millett, holograph, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City).

“The Lord knew Joseph Millett. And He knows all those men and women like him, and they are many” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1980, 84; or *Ensign*, May 1980, 63).

Search records in the Family History Library. [12.1.5]

The Church’s Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, has collected large numbers of family histories, pedigrees, and other family records from around the world. These resources are available to the public and can be explored early as you search for personal and family

history records. Like most libraries, the Family History Library has a catalog of its holdings, known as the Family History Library Catalog (FHLC).

The FHLC, part of the Church’s FamilySearch software, is available at family history centers and on the Internet for use at home. The FHLC lists and describes the records, books, microfilms, and microfiche in the Family History Library. Once you have identified a microfilm or microfiche, you can order it for use in family history centers throughout the world.

The Family History Library has three types of records:

1. *Original records* include wills; deeds; censuses; journals and diaries; certificates of birth, marriage, and death; church records; and other such records.
2. *Compiled records* include published family histories, community histories, collections of family group sheets, and other collections of information about a person, family, or place.
3. *Reference materials* include maps, directories, encyclopedias, dictionaries, indexes of histories, genealogies, microfilm collections, and so on. Reference materials often contain important information on how to use original and compiled records.

Search records in the Church History Library. [12.1.6]

The Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, has thousands of documents from the early days of the Church, including personal histories of many Latter-day Saints. Collections also include manuscripts, books, Church records, photographs, oral histories, architectural drawings, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, maps, microforms, and audiovisual materials. The materials are noncirculating and may be used only in the Church History Library.

The Church History Library is open to the general public. The library and archives catalogs have been automated and were originally available in-house only, but they are being prepared for access on the Internet. For current information about the library and its services, go to lds.org/churchhistory/library.

Copies of patriarchal blessings are also housed in the Church History Library, and you may order copies of your own or of your deceased direct-line ancestors’ blessings. This may be done online by going to LDS.org, clicking on **Sign In/Tools**, and then clicking on **Patriarchal Blessing** and following the instructions.



The Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah

Personal and Family Histories Have Value for Us and Our Descendants [12.2]

Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- 1 Nephi 1:1–3
- 1 Nephi 19:1
- Moses 6:4–8
- Abraham 1:31

“A book of remembrance was kept.” [12.2.1]

Adam and his descendants kept “a book of remembrance” because they knew it would be important to future generations (see Moses 6:4–6). Moses also kept a record that became part of the Bible (see Moses 1:40–41).

You may not be asked to record the history of God’s dealings with His people of our time, but you are encouraged to keep a record of your own history and God’s dealings with you personally. **Elder Theodore M. Burton** taught: “Not everything we do is important. Not everything we write is important. Not everything we think is important. But *occasionally* we *are* in tune with God. Inspiration sometimes comes to us without our even recognizing it. At such times the Lord whispers things into our minds, and what one then writes can

become inspirational to one’s descendants. When we write by the Spirit and they read by the Spirit, there is a godly communication between us and them which makes that which we write become meaningful and a source of inspiration to our descendants” (“The Inspiration of a Family Record,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 17).

Prophets counsel us to keep accurate records. [12.2.2]

Ancient and modern prophets have repeatedly encouraged us to keep a record of our life. **President Wilford Woodruff** (1807–98) kept a personal journal for more than 60 years, and much of what we know about the early history of the Church comes from his journals. On one occasion he encouraged Church members to follow the counsel of both the Prophet Joseph Smith and President Brigham Young to keep a sacred record:

“Now should we not keep a Journal, record, & History of the dealings of God with [us] as they transpire day by day before our Eyes? We should. . . .

“The Prophet Joseph always recommended the priesthood to keep a record of all their Official acts. . . .

“President Brigham Young has also Carried out the same Principle since He has been president of the Church, in



Keeping a personal journal will bless you and your posterity.

all of our ordinances, Endowments, sealings and official acts. He wishes us to be particular in recording the same.

“. . . All should keep a Journal of the dealings of God with them and [their] official acts, and keep a true History of Events in this great dispensation. . . .

“Brethren and sisters we are making History Every day. Let that History be good. Let us do the works of righteousness that when our acts are recorded we shall be satisfied with them Either in time or Eternity” (*Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833–1898 Typscript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. [1983–85], 6:22–23, 25; capitalization from original retained).

Journals and family histories have value. [12.2.3]

There is great personal value in expressing yourself through writing. **Elder L. Edward Brown**, then a member of the Seventy, wrote how keeping a journal can help you see the Lord’s hand in your life: “There

is something about journal writing that causes us to meditate, to recommit, and to receive spiritual impressions in the process of such pondering. Frequently, you will have cause to rejoice at how the Lord has been sensitively involved in guiding and watching over you and those you love and care about” (“Bring Your Mission Home with You!” *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 16).

During the April 1978 general conference sessions, **President Spencer W. Kimball** urged all Church members to leave a written record of their lives: “I urge all of the people of this church to give serious attention to their family histories, to encourage their parents and grandparents to write their journals, and let no family go into eternity without having left their memoirs for their children, their grandchildren, and their posterity. This is a duty and a responsibility” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 4; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 4).

In a later address during that same conference, President Kimball spoke of the spiritual value of writing in a journal: “Please follow the counsel you have been given in the past and maintain your personal journals. Those who keep a book of remembrance are more likely to keep the Lord in remembrance in their daily lives. Journals are a way of counting our blessings and of leaving an inventory of these blessings for our posterity” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 117; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 77).



Every life has interesting events. [12.2.4]

To those who may feel that their life is uneventful or lacks excitement, **President Spencer W. Kimball** taught:

“People often use the excuse that their lives are uneventful and

nobody would be interested in what they have done. But I promise you that if you will keep your journals and records, they will indeed be a source of great inspiration to your families, to your children, your grandchildren, and others, on through the generations.

“Each of us is important to those who are near and dear to us—and as our posterity read of our life’s experiences, they, too, will come to know and love us. And in that glorious day when our families are together in the eternities, we will already be acquainted” (“President Kimball Speaks Out on Personal Journals,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1980, 60–61).

Protection by divine intervention [12.2.5]

Elder Theodore M. Burton shared an experience when he encouraged a friend to write a personal history for his family:

“During the past year great efforts have been made by our Church leaders to get members of the Church to write their personal histories. Many have done so and have brought great joy not only to themselves, but to their families as well. Many more have simply refused to take part in this movement. I have heard men say: ‘I am nobody. I haven’t done anything interesting. Who would ever want to read anything about me?’ What such people fail to understand is that their lives are filled with interesting stories.

“I urged one good friend to write his history and he replied in much the same language, that no one would be interested in him. At my urging he wrote a very short history of his life, probably just to show me that he hadn’t done anything very interesting. If you were his child, his grandchild, or his great-grandchild, would you be interested in the following, which I have taken word for word from his account? . . .

“I’ll never forget when Brother Ottosen and I were to go to the Sandman’s home to conduct a bible class. They lived quite a distance from the railroad station, so they gave us instructions on how to take a short cut. We walked a distance and in the moonlight we could see the path very well. All at once a dark cloud passed over the moon and we could see nothing. We tried to walk on, but just couldn’t move, so we turned around. We went back to town and took the regular road. This made us one half hour late. We told them our excuse and conducted the meeting. Afterwards we stayed with them that night. The next morning we retraced our steps. When we got to the place where we had stopped the night before, we saw our footprints leading to the edge of a stone quarry 100 feet below. If something had not stopped us, it would have been the end of us. An angel must have been there to protect us and thus make it possible for us to finish our work here on the earth.’

“. . . Think what it would mean to a grandchild of this good man. Without the intervention of the whisperings of the Holy Spirit to those humble elders, that grandchild would never have come to the family it came to” (“The Inspiration of a Family Record,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 15–16).

Leave a Record of Your Life That Reflects Your Faith in God and Testimony of His Influence in Your Life to Inspire Faith in Others

 [12.3]
Scriptures to Study and Ponder

- 1 Nephi 19:5
- 2 Nephi 4:15–16
- 2 Nephi 25:23, 26
- Jacob 1:2–4
- Jacob 4:1–4
- Moroni 1:4

Record the blessings you receive from the Lord. [12.3.1]

When you bear your testimony in family and church settings, the Holy Ghost can accompany your words (see 2 Nephi 33:1). The Spirit can also accompany your written expression of faith and testimony, and it can be felt by readers who are in tune with the Spirit. Your records should tell not only the story of your life, but also of the development of your faith in God.

**President Henry B. Eyring**

proposed one way we can remember and record spiritual experiences: “As you start to write, you could ask yourself, How did God bless me today? If you do that long enough and with faith, you will find yourself remembering blessings.

And sometimes, you will have gifts brought to your mind which you failed to notice during the day, but which you will then know were a touch of God’s hand in your life” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 15; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 13).

On another occasion, President Eyring explained how the habit of recording blessings received from the Lord has blessed him and his family:

“When our children were very small, I started to write down a few things about what happened every day. . . .

“I wrote down a few lines every day for years. I never missed a day no matter how tired I was or how early I would have to start the next day. Before I would write, I would ponder this question: ‘Have I seen the hand of God reaching out to touch us or our children or our family today?’ As I kept at it, something began to happen. As I would cast my mind over the day, I would see evidence of what God had done for one of us that I had not recognized in the busy moments of the day. As that happened, and it happened often, I realized that trying to remember had allowed God to show me what He had done.

“More than gratitude began to grow in my heart. Testimony grew. I became ever more certain that our Heavenly Father hears and answers prayers. I felt more gratitude for the softening and refining that come because of the Atonement of the Savior Jesus Christ. And I grew more confident that the Holy Ghost can bring all things to our remembrance—even things we did not notice or pay attention to when they happened.

“The years have gone by. My boys are grown men. And now and then one of them will surprise me by saying, ‘Dad, I was reading in my copy of the journal about when . . .’ and then he will tell me about how reading of what happened long ago helped him notice something God had done in his day” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2007, 70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 66–67).



Our lives contain stories of great importance. [12.3.2]

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy, who also served as the Church Historian, reviewed how the history of the Church began with the record of a young man and God’s dealing in his life:

“Someone once said that a people can be no greater than its stories. The history of the Church begins with the compelling account of Joseph Smith and his search for the true Church. When we believe Joseph’s account, we become part of a great body of believers whose lives change by embracing the restored gospel. This experience becomes a very important part of our common



The history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began with the record of Joseph Smith wondering which church to join.

Latter-day Saint heritage. It also helps explain why the history of the Church's beginnings is so critical to the Church's existence and continued growth and vitality.

"There are other great stories in our history that deserve to be known and taught at church and at home. The lessons of Kirtland, the trials of Missouri, the triumphs and eventual expulsion of the Saints from Nauvoo, and the westward trek of the pioneers are stories that inspire Latter-day Saints in every land and language. But there are equally moving stories about the rise and progress of the Church and the impact of the gospel in the lives of ordinary members in every nation touched by the restored gospel. These need recording and preserving as well" ("There Shall Be a Record Kept among You," *Ensign*, Dec. 2007, 30–31).

Use Modern Technology to Compile, Display, and Share Personal and Family Records

[12.4]

Family records can unite families. [12.4.1]

Before the use of personal computers, methods to create, collect, and preserve family history records were much more laborious compared to those we have today. Current technology may become obsolete in a few years, but you can still take advantage of the many means available for recording, copying, and preserving family history records. Your descendants may consider our modern inventions "old fashioned," but the records you leave can be of great value to them. They can then use *their* modern technology to preserve *our* records.

Your personal records can take many forms and may include the following:

- *Collections:* Photos, video and audio recordings, scrapbooks, drawings, arts, crafts, evidences of hobbies and pastimes, documents, awards, certificates, computer files, and documents.
- *Oral histories:* Stories, interviews, and histories recorded on audio or video devices or transcribed.
- *Brief records:* Day planners, time lines, notes, outlines, letters, brief accounts of thoughts and activities, and biographical sketches (1–5 pages) in paper or electronic form.
- *Longer written records:* Journals; diaries; travelogues; personal essays on thoughts, feelings, and events;

correspondence (including missionary letters), e-mail, and blogs (which can be printed, compiled, and saved); brief personal histories; complete personal histories; and book-length biographies and autobiographies in either hard copy or electronic form.

Today a large amount of family history information can be preserved and carried conveniently in a small amount of space, such as on CDs, DVDs, flash drives, mobile phones, and portable computer hard drives. Family history work is becoming easier to do, simpler to understand, and more convenient to share with others because of advancements in modern technology.

Record Your Personal History

[12.5]

The first step in writing your personal history is to just begin.

[12.5.1]

Following are some ideas of what to write about in your personal history.

Adapt them to your personal circumstances.

Birth and early years: Parents, physical descriptions of parents and of you, personalities, important dates and places, conditions surrounding your birth, interesting stories, brothers and sisters, friends, and relatives.

Childhood: Schools, the first day of school, special teachers, classes, activities, accomplishments, humorous events, pets, things you liked to do, games, places you liked to go, hobbies, recreation, toys, friends, talents, private lessons, sports, church, spiritual development, favorite songs, talks, personal prayers, scriptures, clothes, responsibilities at home, opportunities, likes and dislikes, family life, homes, travel, vacations, finances, neighborhoods, spiritual associations and experiences, projects, entertainment, difficulties, trials, accidents, visits to the doctor, operations, grandparents, cousins, other relatives, influential people, lessons you learned, birthdays, holidays, goals, and aspirations.

Youth: Schools attended, school activities, classes, teachers, subjects, extracurricular activities, friends, honors, achievements, transportation to school, family or personal automobiles, talents, music, sports, movies, church, Young Men or Young Women, ordinations, advancements, activities, talks, youth groups and classes,



seminary, goals, Church callings, influential teachers, spiritual experiences, lessons learned, scripture reading, homes, hobbies, interests, what you liked to do after school or on weekends, jobs, work experiences, what you did with money earned, vacations and travel, characteristics of society, fashions, dances, singing groups, celebrities, teachings of the General Authorities, and events in local, national, and world news.

Mission: Preparation and desire to serve, interviews, the call, description of mission, companions, leaders, areas of service, people taught, spiritual experiences, difficulties, successes, joys, transportation, living arrangements and conditions, food, coming home, and testimony.

Courtship and marriage: How you first met, circumstances, first impressions, first date, growing in love, special experiences during courtship, how and when you knew this was the person you wanted to marry, proposal, meeting the parents, engagement period, plans, activities, goals and aspirations, challenges, spiritual experiences, wedding, wedding guests, special feelings, and details about the wedding celebration and festivities.

Military: When entered, why, areas of training and service, church activity, events and attainments, lessons learned, influential people, attitude about the service, and feelings about patriotism.

College or job training: Further education, colleges or trade schools, special areas of study or training, degrees, first job, how obtained, where, starting salary and benefits, feelings, personal growth, responsibilities, promotions, other jobs, transfers, new fields, and church activity during these years.

Married life and children: Settling in, the first home, financial conditions, planning for children, special activities together, goals and dreams, births of children, challenges, successes, Church callings and activities, spiritual experiences, anniversaries and other special days, trips together, relatives, work, experiences raising children, family nights, and vacations.

Middle age: Interesting events, places visited, achievements, trials, spiritual experiences, church service and experiences, civic service, family growth, development of skills, talents, hobbies, new interests, testimony and gospel knowledge, humorous incidents, special occasions, birthdays, vocational and professional growth, accomplishments, changes, adjustments, philosophy, special experiences with spouse and children, unexpected problems and how you dealt with them, and insights.

Retirement: Completion of work life, description of retirement, summary of years and areas of work, how you use extra time, church service and experiences, goals and desires, grandchildren, vacations and travel, advice for others, observations on life and progress, continuing spiritual growth and insight, health, and physical fitness.

Your sacred record: Testimony, thoughts, feelings, experiences, life summary, philosophy, blessings of the Lord, desires, goals, hopes, heritage, faith, belief, knowledge, traditions, and priesthood ordinances received or given.

Questions to Ponder

- How has your life been influenced by studying the history of one or more of your ancestors?
- What events in your life would you most like your posterity to know about?
- What family records do you have, and how will you preserve them?

Suggested Assignments

- Write about an experience from your life that you think would be interesting or inspiring for your descendants to read.
- Create a time line of important events in your life by making a list of dates or time periods with one or two sentences describing each item.
- Begin now to prepare your personal history. Plan a family home evening especially for working on your family history. If you are not already doing so, begin keeping a personal journal in which you record the important events of the remainder of your life.

Additional Resources

- Theodore M. Burton, "The Inspiration of a Family Record," *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 13–17.
- Spencer W. Kimball, "President Kimball Speaks Out on Personal Journals," *Ensign*, Dec. 1980, 60–61.
- Sydney S. Reynolds, "A God of Miracles," *Ensign*, May 2001, 12–13.

Index

A

- Abraham 67
 - seed of..... 72
- Abrahamic covenant 67–73
 - blessings of..... 68–69, 71
 - defined..... 69
 - extends to individuals in spirit world.... 72
 - helps us understand who we are 72
 - responsibilities of..... 69
 - restored in our day..... 70
- Atonement of Jesus Christ..... 3, 29, 63, 69, 71, 75, 77, 80, 87, 108
 - allows for family to be sealed 7
 - central to plan of salvation..... 75
 - helps us understand our worth..... 3
 - possible to receive blessings of eternal life..... 69

B

- Ballard, M. Russell
 - how precious is the one..... 3–4
 - inspiration from reading stories of our ancestors 102–3
 - thoughtfully allocate our resources 26
- Ballard, Melvin J.
 - experience doing baptisms in Logan Utah temple 83
 - guiding influence from our ancestors ... 46
- Baptism for the dead... 29, 31, 61, 76–77, 81, 88
 - Joseph Smith introduced in 1841 89
- Beck, Julie B.
 - family intentional part of God’s plan..... 7
- Bednar, David A.
 - Abrahamic covenant helps us understand who we are 72
 - first vision an example of asking in faith..... 40
 - influence of the Holy Ghost..... 17
 - invitation to the youth..... 27
 - no age limit for family history work 51
 - qualifying for divine assistance..... 41
- Benson, Ezra Taft
 - on ordinances for the dead 89
 - spirit world is not far away..... 78
- Brough, Monte J.
 - past process was slow and complex 57

- Brown, L. Edward
 - journals and family histories have value..... 106
- Burton, Theodore M.
 - experience when he encouraged a friend to write a personal history ... 107
 - inspiration of a family record..... 105
 - why we should each keep a journal ... 101–2

C

- Christofferson, D. Todd
 - baptism first covenant made with God... 87
 - Jesus set the conditions for salvation 76–77
 - those in spirit world will use agency to accept or reject ordinances 90
- Covenant
 - necessary for exaltation 9, 86
 - sacred agreement..... 85

D

- Derrick, Royden G.
 - blessings of temple worship 91

E

- Elijah
 - held sealing keys 14
 - restored the keys 16, 17
 - return of 15
 - spirit of..... 17, 18
 - translated..... 14–15
- Eternal families 6–10
- Eyring, Henry B.
 - eternal families require help beyond our powers 9–10
 - keeping covenants is crucial test of our lives 86
 - keys passed in an unbroken line..... 17
 - Lord prepared a way from the beginning for us to help ancestors ... 58
 - persevere when work becomes difficult 93–94
 - remember and record spiritual experiences..... 107–8
 - resource to search out your ancestors... 93
 - sealing power greatest power God gives to His children 14
 - simple ways to begin family history 23

F

- Faith
 - required in doing family history work... 39
- Faust, James E.
 - careful research led to ordinance 94
 - claim the blessings of Abraham 72
 - covenants essential for families to continue..... 9
 - family history most interesting puzzle..... 21
 - our responsibility to do the works of Abraham 72
 - restoration of sealing keys pinnacle of restoration..... 17
 - sealing power enhances family relationships..... 18
 - spiritual guidance 39
- First Vision..... 40

G

- Gates, Susa Young..... 49

H

- Haight, David B.
 - miracle called FamilySearch 51
 - salvation administered on same terms in all ages..... 77
- Hales, Robert D.
 - family begins with heavenly parents 6
 - primary purpose of the temple is ordinances 87–88
- Halverson, Ronald T.
 - family history is a leading hobby 18–19
- Hinckley, Gordon B.
 - after Elijah, family history began to accelerate..... 18
 - greatest joy comes through families 8
 - ministering influence of a member of the Godhead 42
 - prophecy of Joel is unfolding with scientific discovery 50
 - spirits retain their identity..... 29
 - temple work like the spirit of the Savior’s sacrifice 21–22
 - temple worship helps us avoid destructive addictions..... 91
 - unbroken chain of keys and powers..... 17

Holland, Jeffrey R.
 Atonement is center of plan
 of salvation 75
 counsel to less-than-ideal families..... 8

Hunter, Howard W.
 dead are anxiously waiting..... 29
 on temple sealings..... 88
 temple ordinances are
 absolutely crucial 86
 urgency of family history 58

J

Jensen, Marlin K.
 history of Church began with
 the record of a young man 108–9

Jesus Christ
 Atonement of..... 3, 29, 63, 69,
 71, 75, 77, 80, 87, 108
 faith in..... 39
 lineage of..... 69
 only name by which we are saved..... 21
 opened doors of preaching
 gospel in spirit world..... 75, 79, 80, 81
 plan of salvation 4

Joel
 prophecy fulfilled..... 50

K

Kimball, Heber C.
 order and government in
 the spirit world 81

Kimball, Spencer W.
 anticipation of many in the spirit
 world to receive ordinances..... 82
 every life has events of
 value to descendants 106
 family are at work on both sides
 of the veil..... 46
 Lord will inspire new inventions..... 49
 spiritual value of writing in a journal..... 106
 urgency to construct more temples..... 57–58
 value of personal journals 101
 we accepted what awaited in mortality..... 6

L

Lee, Harold B.
 the Lord will open doors 41

M

Maxwell, Neal A.
 testing continues after death 79

McConkie, Bruce R.
 Abrahamic covenant inspires
 family history work 73
 faith is a gift of God 39
 our attitudes and inclinations
 do not change when we die 79
 plan made operative through
 the Atonement 76
 sealing power validates ordinances 14
 we are Heavenly Father’s
 spirit children 6

Monson, Thomas S.
 account written by his grandfather
 about his wife’s father 103
 mandate to do family history work 43
 worth of a soul 4

N

Nelson, Russell M.
 Abrahamic covenant in our day 70
 ask a family history
 consultant for help 55
 computers are one result
 of Joel’s prophecy..... 50
 definition: spirit of Elijah 17
 family is focus of greatest work and joy..... 9
 importance of temple and Atonement
 in Abrahamic covenant..... 71
 importance of temple ordinances..... 85
 invitation to come unto Christ
 extended to those in spirit world..... 73
 newly updated FamilySearch
 computer program 58–59
 ponder doctrinal principles 2
 procedures have been simplified..... 24
 purpose of family history work
 is temple ordinances 57
 restoration of the promises
 made to the fathers 70–71

Neuenschwander, Dennis B.
 covenants originate with God 85–86
 eternal covenants have
 accompanying ordinance 86
 family history work leads us
 to the temple..... 57

O

Oaks, Dallin H.
 family history work general principles..... 25
 Jesus Christ the only name by
 which we can be saved 21
 need of physical body..... 6
 we began as children of
 heavenly parents..... 5

P

Packer, Boyd K.
 all will be offered the
 saving ordinances 89–90
 covenants and ordinances..... 85
 excerpt from diary of Joseph Millet... 103–4
 inspiration can guide family
 history work 26–27
 keys to seal are consummate gift 14
 knowledge of premortal life 4–5
 learned important truths from family 7
 men will be inspired to
 create new technology..... 49–50
 ordinances are vital for salvation 77
 start with yourself 23

Pearson, Kevin W.
 obedience develops faith 39

Perry, L. Tom
 summarized conditions
 of premortal life 4

Petersen, Mark E.
 our spirit resembles our body 78

Physical body necessary 6

Physical death 8

Plan of salvation..... 4, 7, 9
 the Atonement of Jesus Christ is
 central to the plan of salvation..... 75

Premortal world 4–5

Priesthood keys
 defined 13
 Elijah..... 14, 16–17, 18

R

Restoration of the gospel..... 16, 17, 67, 70, 86

S

Saviors on Mount Zion..... 21, 22

Scott, Richard G.
 computers simplifying the work 49
 mortal life is full of challenges 6–7
 recording impressions 2
 we anticipated being born 6

Sealing keys of the priesthood 13, 14, 17

Smith, Joseph
 fulfilled prophecy by Obadiah 21
 greatest responsibility to seek
 after our dead..... 58
 incremental nature of our growth
 after we die 79
 ordinances not to be altered..... 86
 saviors on Mount Zion 22

- Smith, Joseph F.
 priesthood keys 13
 received a vision of the
 redemption of the dead 79
- Smith, Joseph Fielding
 Elijah returned at Passover 17
 faith grows with obedience 39
 fathers are our dead ancestors 70
 in God's perfect plan, not one
 soul shall be left out 81
 it is accounted unto them the same as
 if they had acted for themselves 81
 on Malachi 4:5-6 15
 promise of protection with
 temple covenants 91
 promises made to the fathers 15
 Savior initiated preaching of gospel
 in the postmortal world 80-81
 sealing keys of the priesthood 13-14
- Smoot, Mary Ellen
 reciprocating reward for those
 who attend temple 91
- Snow, Lorenzo
 great bulk of spirit world will
 receive the truth 83
- Spirit body 78
- Spirit children of heavenly parents ... 5-6, 29
- Spirit of Elijah
 defined 17
- Stories
 A. J. Graham: three volumes
 of names 46-47
 Boyd K Packer: inspiration can
 guide family history work 26
 Dieter F. Uchtdorf: woman and \$20 bill 4
 excerpts from diary of
 Joseph Millet 103-4
 George Durrant felt guilty
 about not doing more 44-45
- James E. Faust: careful research
 led to sealing ordinance 94
- Jean-Marc Barr obtained information
 from his grandmother 34
- John A. Widtsoe led by the Spirit
 to locate records 43-44
- M. Russell Ballard: inspiration from
 reading stories of our ancestors 102-3
- Melvin J. Ballard doing baptisms
 in the Logan Utah temple 83
- the name almost leapt off the page 45
- Ronald T. Halverson: family history
 is a leading hobby 18-19
- Spencer W. Kimball: family members
 work on both sides of the veil 46
- Theodore M. Burton encouraged
 friend to write personal history 107
- Thomas S. Monson: worth of a soul 4
- Thomas S. Monson: written by his
 grandfather about his wife's father 103
- Toronto members and
 family history successes 43
 a tweet 97
- T**
- Talmage, James E.
 overview of endowment 88
- U**
- Uchtdorf, Dieter F.
 we do not lose value 4
- W**
- Winkel, Richard H.
 spirit of Elijah strengthens
 family relationships 18
- Widtsoe, John A.
 keeping accurate records 30
 story of being led by the Spirit
 to locate records 43-44
 temple is a place of revelation 90
 we made promise to help
 salvation of others 22
- Wirthlin, Joseph B.
 the Holy Ghost is the
 unspeakable gift 42
- Woodruff, Wilford
 if we could see beyond the veil,
 we would lose interest in riches 1
 kept a personal journal for
 more than 60 years 105-6
 our ancestors are dependent upon
 our vicarious work 22
 very few will not accept the gospel
 in spirit world 83
 visited by the spirits of the
 founding fathers 82-83
- Worth of a soul 3, 4
- Y**
- Young, Brigham
 definition of endowment 88
 inventions of labor-saving devices 49
 Jesus was first to preach to the
 spirits in prison 81
 some have waited thousands of years
 for their temple work to be done 57
 spirit world is not far away 78



SEMINARIES AND
INSTITUTES OF RELIGION

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

ENGLISH

