



Elder Dale G. Renlund, Sister Ruth Renlund, and Ashley Renlund

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Real Power in Combining Family History with Temple

"The real power comes when we combine family history with the blessings of the temple."

Thank you, Elder Packer, for the introduction. As he mentioned, I'm Elder Renlund, the most newly minted Apostle. I'm grateful to be here with my wife, Ruth; and of course, when she's not with me, I'm ruthless.

We're grateful to be with our daughter, Ashley. Without Ashley, our lives would be greatly, greatly diminished. Every time she came home from school, regardless of which coast she came from, it was like the awakening of Sleeping Beauty castle. All the darkness went away, the house became alive again, and there was joy and happiness. And the same thing continues to happen now.

This is a bit more terrifying than I thought it would be, but we welcome you. We're going to have a discussion, a family discussion; that is not atypical for us, except it will be a little more formal.

Ashley
I'm not supposed to interrupt.

Elder Renlund
Do both of you promise to let me finish my sentences?

Ruth Renlund

We'll give it a try.

Ashley

Don't hold your breath.

Elder Renlund

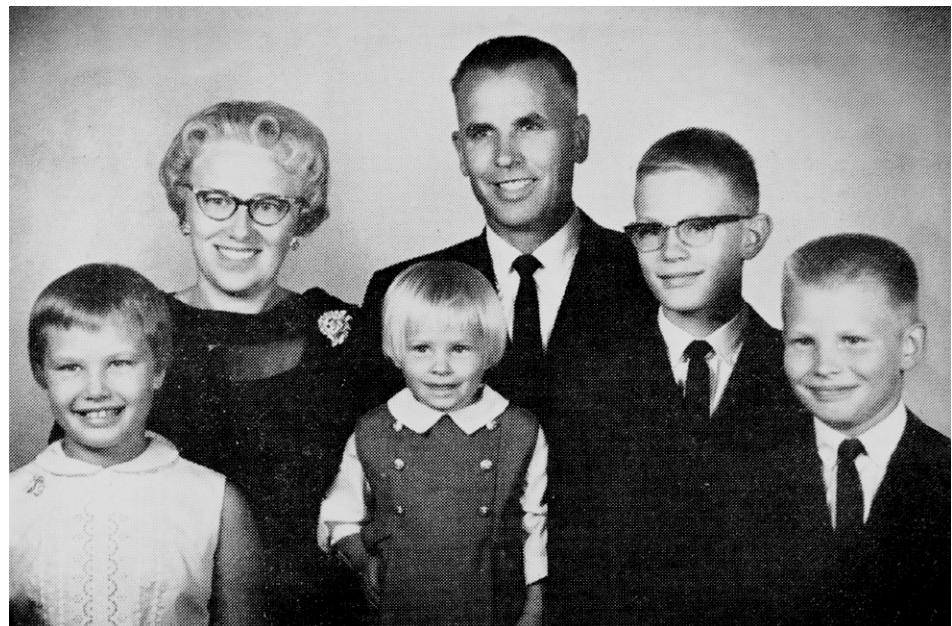
It'll be just a bit more formal because we've invited 14,000 friends to be here with us. So thank you for joining us.

Ashley Renlund

Dad, you look darling in this picture. You had hair! How old were you when this was taken?

Elder Renlund

That's a photo of our family in 1963. I was almost 11 years old then. This is my father—your grandfather—Åke, and This is your grandmother, Mariana. This is your uncle Gary,



Elder Renlund (far right) with his parents and siblings in 1963.

who was 12 at the time; aunt Anita, who was 9; and aunt Linda, who was only 2 and a half.

Ashley

Let's see, 1963—that's right before your family moved to Finland, right?

Elder Renlund

Yes, my father and mother were called to be Church building missionaries. We first lived in Haaga, a suburb of Helsinki, for the seven coldest months of my life. We then moved to Göteborg, Sweden, where we lived for two more years.

Ashley

How many buildings did Grandpa Åke help build?

Ruth Renlund

At least three buildings, one in Sweden, one in Norway, and one in Finland.

Ashley

And are they still there?

Ruth

I think so. We've been to a couple of them, but your dad knows a lot more about those.

Elder Renlund

There's one outside of Haaga, a chapel. That's the one in Helsinki. There's one in Sweden in a suburb of Göteborg, known as Västra Frölunda. There's also one in Bergen, Norway.

Look, here I am helping my dad on the construction site.

Ashley

Oh, that's great. Again, with the hair. And here are my great-grandparents, your grandparents.

Dad, did you ever meet them?

Elder Renlund

Yes, in December of 1963, I met my grandmother. We made the 6-hour drive from Helsinki to the island of Larsmo, on the western coast of

Finland. That's where my dad grew up and where my grandmother, Lena Sofia, lived.

It was years earlier, in 1912, that Lena Sofia, my grandmother, and my grandfather, Leander, listened to missionaries from Sweden preach the restored gospel. At that time, there were only 756 missionaries in the whole world.

Ruth

And from that small number of missionaries, some were sent to a small island off the coast of Finland to teach your grandparents!

Elder Renlund

That's right! Those missionaries taught the message of the restored gospel, and Lena Sofia and Leander were baptized the following day. They became members of a small branch, the first in Finland.

Just a few years later, Leander's mother, who lived with them, died of tuberculosis. In 1917, Leander also died of tuberculosis, leaving Lena Sofia a widow and pregnant with their tenth child. That child—my father, your grandfather, Ashley—was born 2 months after Leander's

death. Lena Sofia eventually buried 7 of her 10 children. It was a very difficult struggle for her, an impoverished peasant woman, to keep what remained of her family intact.

For nearly two decades, she did not get a good night's rest. She hustled at odd jobs during the day to scrape together enough food to eat. At night, she nursed dying family members. Death literally hung over their heads: in those days, timber was split and often put in the roof rafters to dry. Those timbers were then used to make coffins for those who died. It is hard to imagine how she felt.

On the day we met, in 1963, I had just turned 11 and she was 87. She was stooped from a lifetime of hard labor. She was so bowed over that when she stood from her chair, her height did not change. The skin of her face and hands was weather-beaten, as tough and textured as worn leather.

She stood as best as she could and pointed to a photo of Leander on the wall and said to me, in Swedish, "*Det här är min gubbe*"—this is my hubby.

I was enrolled in a Swedish-speaking school earlier that fall and was just



Elder Renlund's grandmother and grandfather in Finland



The scientist Alfred Nobel developed dynamite by combining kieselguhr and nitroglycerin.

relearning Swedish. I thought she had incorrectly used the present tense of the verb when she said, "This is my hubby," because Leander had been dead for 46 years. I pointed out to my mother that Lena Sofia should have said, "This was my hubby." My mother simply told me, "You don't understand."

She was right, I didn't really understand. Not like I do now. Since then I have reflected many times about the meaning of that experience and what my grandmother taught.

I believe there are so many messages the Lord has given to us about working with our family history, and throughout my life I have been able to learn and connect to the example of my family.

Ashley

In an odd way, it reminds me of some of the history of explosives that Aunt Anita taught.

Elder Renlund

How so?

Ashley

My Aunt Anita is an explosives expert, a fabulous teacher, and our family's real rocket scientist.

Until the mid-1800s, the most powerful explosive known in the world was black powder—a mixture of charcoal, sulfur, and potassium nitrate. It had been around for centuries and was used to propel musket or cannon balls. It was relatively stable and safe for an explosive.

In 1847, the Italian chemist Ascanio Sobrero concocted a completely new explosive material—nitroglycerin. Unlike the mixture of things that comprised black powder, nitroglycerin was a single pure chemical compound and about 1,000 times more powerful than black powder. It was the first high explosive.

It had many potential uses, especially in mining and tunnel building, as it could shatter rock quite effectively. But it is incredibly unstable. If you drop a bottle of nitroglycerin from a small height, it will blow up. If it gets too hot, it will blow up. If it gets too cold and forms crystals, it will blow up. If you put it on a shelf in a cool dark room and leave it alone, under perfect circumstances, it will eventually blow up.

Elder Renlund

You see the pattern?

Ruth

I see the pattern.

Ashley

Because of this instability, it was almost impossible to get nitroglycerin to where it was most needed, where it could be most useful.

A few decades later, a Swedish chemist began to experiment with ways of safely harnessing or directing the force inherent in nitroglycerin. He eventually found that he could absorb liquid nitroglycerin into a stabilizing material called *kieselguhr*, more commonly called diatomaceous earth.

Ruth

What's that?

Elder Renlund

It's probably best known as kitty litter.

Ruth

Oh.

Ashley

Anyway, that scientist was Alfred Nobel, and he named the new material—that combination of nitroglycerin and *kieselguhr*—dynamite.

Dynamite wasn't the discovery of a new material, but it involved putting two known materials together to make them safer, more effective, and more useful. I don't think it's really an exaggeration to say that the explosive power of dynamite changed the world.

Ruth

Wow.

Elder Renlund

Well, Ashley, you're just as scary smart as my sister. But I think that I know where you are going with this. Think about the strength and comfort Lena Sofia must have gained from knowing about the sealing power! But that power is given direction as we research and learn about our ancestors. Both can be meaningful in our lives, but just like nitroglycerin and kieselguhr, the real power comes when we combine family history with the blessings of the temple. It is not just randomly mixing two things together, but the one helps direct the other.

Ashley

Exactly. Without family history, the sealing authority can't get where it needs to be to be used. And the true value of family history is only realized because of the sealing authority. The real power is in the combination, just like nitroglycerin and kieselguhr combine to make dynamite.

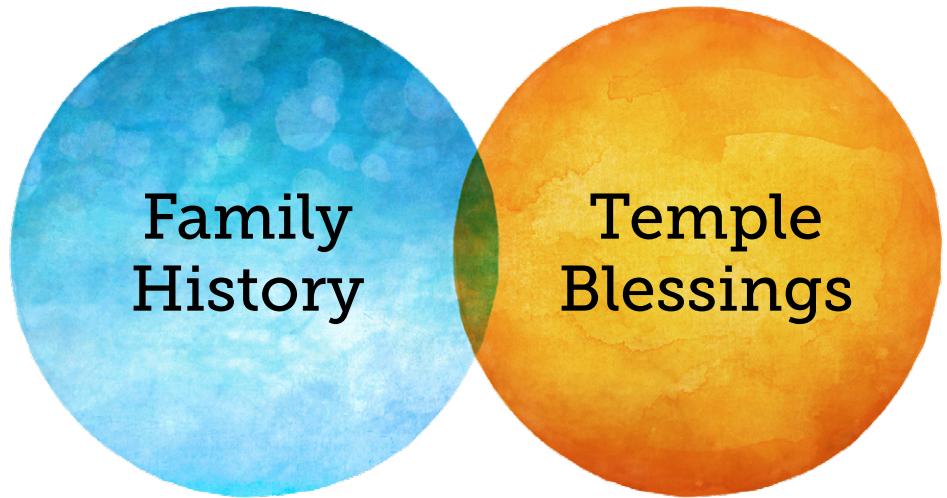
Ruth

I love this concept. We learn about both of these blessings in the scriptures everywhere, but combining them clearly brings more blessings and power in our lives. Let's look at a couple of examples in the scriptures.

If you'll turn to Doctrine and Covenants 2:3.

Elder Renlund

Give a moment for the slow one.



Real power comes when we combine family history with the blessings of the temple.

Ruth

OK. The Lord tells us that he sent Elijah to plant promises made to the fathers in the hearts of the children. And this would turn the hearts of the children to the fathers. I think this is part, Dale, of what your grandmother planted in you. Then the Lord tells us that "the whole earth would be utterly wasted at [the Savior's Second] coming" if this "turning" had not happened. This is a powerful message.

So even if we had all the genealogical records the world could offer, and all that we could possibly collect, without the sealing authority restored by the prophet Elijah, the purpose of the creation would have been thwarted and "wasted" (D&C 2:3).

This was one of the very first messages that Joseph Smith included in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Elder Renlund

You're right, Ruth. Without even knowing it, I have felt the strength and power of stories and examples from my grandmother and other progenitors my whole life.

There's a prophecy in Doctrine and Covenants section 128, where

Joseph quotes Malachi 4. He explains the "turning of the hearts of the children to their fathers" and then explains these verses in the context of the sealing power and baptism for the dead. Finally, he says in verse 18:

"And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times."

Think of that! Joseph Smith predicted that even children would understand and know things that the learned men and women of the world could not explain. Children and youth all over the world participate in these blessings every day, just like I did when I was 11, learning about these concepts from my grandmother and mother. People who had never heard of the Savior while living on earth can have the opportunity to receive the same blessings as those who have had the opportunity in this life. No one is left out. This opportunity for blessings excludes no one.

“Without family history, the sealing authority can’t get where it needs to be to be used. . . . The real power is in the combination, just like nitroglycerin and kieselguhr combine to make dynamite.”

Ruth

And the temple ordinances are central to individual power. In fact, the Lord has given us examples of this individual power. The early saints were taught about the need for their endowments before they were able to further the work of salvation. Doctrine and Covenants 105:9–11 says, “It is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion—

“That they themselves may be prepared, and that my people may be taught more perfectly, and have experience, and know more perfectly concerning their duty, and the things which I require at their hands.

“And this cannot be brought to pass until mine elders are endowed with power from on high.”

So the Lord was teaching about the importance of preparing to receive temple endowments that they may be blessed with power from on high. This blessing enabled them to continue to be more perfectly taught to use that power well.

Elder Renlund

You can extend this understanding if you continue to section 109, the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland

temple. Joseph Smith prays, “And that all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord’s house may feel thy power, and feel constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, and that it is thy house, a place of thy holiness” (109:13). Section 109 goes on that they will “receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost (109:15), . . . and when thy people transgress, any of them, they may speedily repent and return unto thee (109:21), . . . that no weapon formed against them shall prosper; . . .

“That no combination of wickedness shall have power to rise up and prevail over thy people upon whom thy name shall be put in this house” (109:25–26).

Ashley

Yes, the temple ordinances are like nitroglycerin—pure and powerful. But I can see how, when you add the temple ordinances to the work of studying and learning about your ancestors, the power is greater and takes our blessings to the next level.

Ruth

Dale, do you think Lena Sofia understood that when she made her comment to you about Leander? Was her understanding more powerful because she acknowledged the power of the temple along with her love for him and her family?

Elder Renlund

Now look, Ruth, we talked about this. You’d only ask one question at a time.

Ruth

OK.

Elder Renlund

But let me give it a shot. Yes, this is exactly what she was teaching. Lena Sofia knew that her long dead husband was and would remain hers through the eternities. Through

the doctrine of eternal families, Leander remained a presence in her life and part of her great hope for the future. Lena was like others who died in faith.

Ashley

OK, where are you going?

Elder Renlund

Hebrews 11 verse 13 says, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” In a blazing affirmation of her faith in the sealing authority, in 1938, Lena Sofia submitted the family records for her deceased children who were over age eight at the time they died. That way their temple work could be performed, although she herself would not get to the temple during her lifetime. These were among the earliest ordinances submitted to a temple from Finland.

Do either of you remember the challenge that Elder Neil L. Andersen gave at Rootstech two years ago?

Ashley

“Prepare as many names for the temple as baptisms you perform in the temple.”

Ruth

And last year he added eight words: “And help someone else to do the same.”

Elder Renlund

Exactly. It’s been called the temple challenge. But I’ve been thinking more about this challenge, and this Apostolic temple challenge can continue to grow this year. In light of our conversation, I believe we can add an element of spiritual power to this promise.

Let's read in Ezekiel in chapter 47. Ruth, will you read verses 1 through 5, and Ashley, will you read verses 8 and 9?

Ashley

Oh, sure.

Ruth

Ezekiel 47?

Elder Renlund

Ezekiel 47.

Ruth

Of course.

"Afterward he [an angel] brought me [Ezekiel] again unto the door of the house [of the Lord]; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and

the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

"Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

"And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters."

Hey, remind me, what is a cubit?

Elder Renlund

It's a sixth of a Goliath.

Ruth

Oh, that was helpful.

Ashley

Cubit. Isn't that from the elbow to the tips of the fingers?

Elder Renlund

Yeah.

Ashley

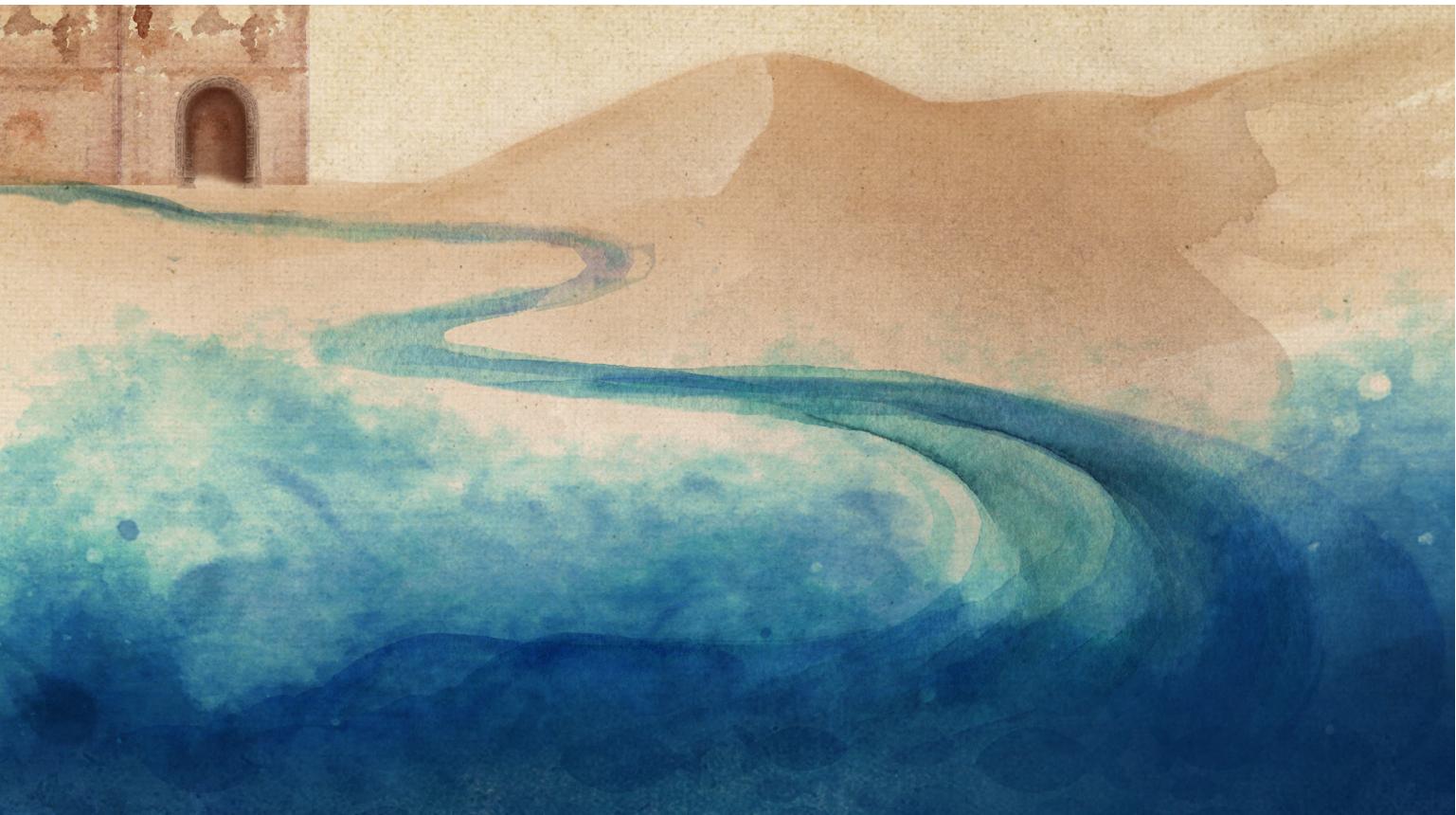
So about 18 inches.

Ruth

About 18 inches, thank you. So back to Ezekiel: "The waters were to the ankles.

"Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins.

"Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could



Ezekiel taught of ever-increasing waters that would issue from the house [of the Lord] and bless families.



Elder Renlunds parents (left) helped ensure that his grandparents, Lena Sofia and Leander (center) were sealed in the Salt Lake temple.

not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over."

Elder Renlund

So what's he saying?

Ruth

Ezekiel saw an angel that brought him to a house, the house of the Lord. There was water coming out from the house, and the further it moved, it grew. It grew to a great big river, so big he couldn't cross over.

Ashley

And in verse 8: "Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.

"And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh." (Ezekiel 47:1–5, 8–9)

Elder Renlund

Ezekiel sees a river that increases as it flows from the house. The water that is moving forth from the temple represents blessings, which

flow from the temples to heal families and give them life.

Ashley

But it gets deeper as it gets further away, and there aren't any other sources of water that would feed it. That doesn't make a lot of sense.

Elder Renlund

That is a bit unexpected. But think of me with two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, all the way back and forward, too. The growth of the river is similar to the exponential growth of our family through the generations.

The blessings of the temple are available to everything and everyone. And what blessings! "Every thing shall live whither the river cometh."

Ruth

Oh, I love that.

Elder Renlund

The Lord has a plan to overcome Lena Sofia's personal misfortune, our loss, your tragedy, in fact everyone's calamity. He restored to the earth His priesthood and His sealing authority. Lena Sofia knew that, and so did my mom.

Ruth

You mean how she submitted Lena Sofia's name for temple work?

Ashley

Oh, I love that story. Shortly after Lena Sofia died—1966, I think—Grandma Mariana took the names to the Genealogy Department in person. The man behind the counter told her that Church policy stated that someone had to have been dead for at least a year before temple work could be done for that person. Grandma Mariana replied, "I don't like that answer. Let me talk to someone who can give a different one. She's waited long enough."

Elder Renlund

You're related to your grandmother, aren't you?

Ashley

Grandpa said that he tried to reason with her, but she gave him a look he knew very well, that any husband would know very well, that another word on the subject would be pointless. Grandpa wrote in his journal, "I probably should feel sorry for the man downtown who said that nothing could be done for at least a year. That man just didn't know what he was up against. I could have told him, but he didn't ask."

Elder Renlund

Less than two months later, with the authorization of the President of the Church, Lena Sofia's temple work

was completed. Grandma Mariana and Grandpa Åke acted as proxies as Leander and Lena Sofia were sealed for time and all eternity in the Salt Lake Temple. And did you know that now it is Church policy that a person who has not been able to enjoy the blessings of the temple because of distance doesn't have to wait a whole year? That way, others like Lena Sofia can receive those blessings as quickly as possible. As Grandma Mariana told the man in the Genealogy Department, "They have waited long enough."

Ruth

What a great day that was for your family! Think of the joy Leander and Lena Sofia felt, not to mention the joy their children felt? The knowledge that these ordinances would someday happen brought comfort and peace to Lena Sofia during the long years of her widowhood.

It's the culmination of family history and temple work coming together, igniting this power we have talked about today.

I was recently reminded of Elder Bednar talking about this power we have been speaking of today. Years ago he started trying to encourage people to recognize the blessing of combining the two divine aspects of temple and family history. Here's what he said.

Elder Bednar (Video)

Family history is not a program, and then we also worship in the temple. It's all gathered together in one in Christ. And there is a power in finding one's own ancestors, in taking your own family names to the house of the Lord. I've done that. I have worked with and spoken with hundreds and thousands of people who have done that work. And as good as it is as we're in the temple, it's

even better when we have done the work to be able to perform those ordinances for our own kindred dead ("To Turn the Hearts").

Ruth

Isn't that beautiful? Elder Bednar provided a personal witness about the power we've been discussing today.

Ashley

President Russell M. Nelson also promised that we can see this power in our lives. He said, "While temple and family history work has the power to bless those beyond the veil, it has an equal power to bless the living. It has a refining influence on those who are engaged in it. They are literally helping to exalt their families" (Russell M. Nelson, "[Generations Linked in Love](#)," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2010, 93).

Ruth

Well, thank you, Dale and Ashley. That's been a very interesting discussion. And thank you for joining us.

Elder Renlund

Now today, I feel grateful to add my testimony to those other testimonies, to be one more apostolic voice in support of this temple challenge. I extend the promise of protection that's been offered in the past. Brothers and sisters, I promise you protection for you and your family as you take this challenge to find as many names to take to the temple as ordinances you perform in the temple and teach others to do the same.

Ruth

So it's not just baptisms?

Elder Renlund

That's right. Not just baptisms, but all temple ordinances.

Ashley

Sounds like no one is off the hook.

"Brothers and sisters, I promise you protection for you and your family as you take this challenge, to "find as many names to take to the temple as ordinances you perform in the temple, and teach others to do the same."

Elder Renlund

That's right. Nobody's off the hook. And if you accept this challenge, blessings will begin to flow to you and your family like the power of the river spoken of by Ezekiel. And the river will grow as you continue to perform this work and teach others to do the same. You'll find not only protection from the temptations and ills of this world, but you'll also find personal power: power to change, power to repent, power to learn, power to be sanctified, and power to turn the hearts of your family together and heal that which needs healing.

I witness that Jesus Christ lives. I witness that the sealing authority has been given to earth, that these keys and priesthood authority exist on earth to bless the lives of all of Heavenly Father's children. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.