

ASIA AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Blessings of Temple Worship

By Elder Wisit Khanakham
Of the Seventy



Elder Wisit
Khanakham

The first temple worship experience for me and my wife was on May 6, 1981, when we were endowed and sealed in the Tokyo Japan Temple. We did not understand much then, but we have since counted temple worship as a blessing every day in

our lives. When we look back on the previous 35 years, it proves to us that the many blessings of temple worship have come true. We still remember as long as we keep the covenants we have made in the temple, the Lord will bless us a hundredfold.

It reminds our family of the promise made in the Book of Mormon: “Therefore, if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you” (Mosiah 2:22).

There are five simple ways that help us feel and count the blessings of temple worship.

1. Remember your temple experiences daily:

We are encouraged to return to the temple as often as possible. However, there are many faithful Saints among us who live far away from the temple. Family financial difficulties do not allow many to return often. Yet, we can still embrace our feelings of temple worship by thinking of the different temple ordinances in our daily life, such as the endowment, baptism and confirmation for our ancestors, sealing, etc. By so doing, we can feel inner peace and joy and have a righteous desire to worship and serve in the temple.

2. Focus our life on the Lord Jesus Christ as the center point in our heart:

Temples are built so “that the Son of Man might have a place to manifest





himself to his people” (D&C 109:5).

“The symbols and rituals of the temple help to focus our attention on the Savior.”¹ It is understood that there is a difference between life in the temple and life outside the temple. The world hands us opposition in all aspects of life—good and bad, gladness and sorrow, success and failure, happiness and sorrow, accomplishment and disappointment. When we allow His name to be in the center of our hearts, we remember that the purpose of our temple worship is to be with Him and not with others. Our feelings of His tender mercy in the temple inspire us to be better and do better in accordance with His will. As long as we follow His will, we will never feel distant from temple blessings.

3. Continue living worthily by reviewing temple recommend interview questions:

“Temples are the very center of the spiritual strength of the Church. We should expect that the adversary will try to interfere with us as a Church and with us individually as we seek to participate in this sacred and inspired work. The interference can vary from the terrible persecutions of the earlier days to apathy toward the work. The latter is perhaps the most dangerous and debilitating form of resistance to temple work.

“Temple work brings so much resistance because it is the source of so much spiritual power to the Latter-day Saints, and to the entire Church.”²

It is vital for us to examine how we live. Reviewing the temple recommend interview questions reminds me of how I answered them to the Lord through my priesthood leaders. I am always aware that I am to live the gospel, stay on the right path, and keep temple covenants even if nobody asks me the questions again. The Lord knows and watches over me, and the power of the Holy Ghost permits me to feel the blessings of temple worship.

4. Ponder the commitments and covenants we have made in the temple:

I add my testimony to the witnesses of the Twelve Apostles that our Heavenly Father is our true and living God and Jesus Christ is His Beloved and Only Begotten Son. Whenever I ponder upon the commitments and covenants that I have made with the Lord in the temple, my hope in the blessings of temple worship is strengthened. I keep striving to do more even when the task might appear to be very difficult for me. An example of this would be doing family history work.

My wife and I tried many times to do our family history but failed due to

our clumsiness with new technology. We tried and failed again and again, but we never failed to try. We finally prayed and decided to seek help from a senior couple missionary in Thailand. After seeking assistance from family history specialists in the Asia Area and Church headquarters, they made our day. Our questions were answered and we were able to continue temple work for our ancestors from old records. “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10). Pondering the commitments and covenants we make in the temple is a source of the blessings of temple worship.

5. Have the right vision and right attitude towards the blessings of temple worship:

If we have a clear picture in our minds that the blessings of temple worship reveal spiritual matters to us individually, we will not challenge the Lord by asking: “Why am I still poor?” “Why did I lose my lifelong job?” “Why do I not have sufficient means to pay a full tithe?” “Why am I so frustrated in my Church calling?” “Why am I not happy in the home?” and so on.

“Temple attendance allows us to serve others and to continue to gain greater spiritual knowledge. . . .

“No work is more of a protection to this Church than temple work and the

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genealogical research which supports it. No work is more spiritually refining. No work we do gives us more power. No work requires a higher standard of righteousness . . .

“If we will accept the revelation concerning temple ordinance work, if we will enter into our covenants without reservation or apology, the Lord will protect us. We will receive inspiration sufficient for challenges of life”³

I know the temple is the holy house of the Lord and the blessings are for all who are faithful and willing to accept the fruits of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22–23). These fruits of the Spirit produce within us such strong spiritual self-reliance that we as individuals and as families can learn how to bear worldly challenges and difficulties step by step. I testify of this in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. *Endowed from on High: Temple Preparation Seminar Teacher's Manual* (2003), 32; www.lds.org/manual/endowed-from-on-high-temple-preparation-seminar-teachers-manual/lesson-7-continuing-to-enjoy-the-blessings-of-temple-attendance.
2. “Not without Opposition,” *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple* (2002), 35–36; or, www.lds.org/manual/preparing-to-enter-the-holy-temple/preparing-to-enter-the-holy-temple.
3. *Endowed from on High*, 35.

Exciting to Live the Gospel

By Brother Akira

I started attending meetings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when I was young. While growing up I went with my mom to church every other week. I always had faith that the Church was true.

I was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and committed to go to church every week. As I read Book of Mormon, I felt peace because the Spirit testified the book taught truth—that we should strive to be like Jesus Christ. I could feel joy and light in my life because I know the fruits of living the principles of the gospel are joy, light, peace, and goodness. I know these principles to be true.

I am not perfect by any means. I've made plenty of mistakes, and I'm sure I'll make plenty more. But I know that the true happiness comes from continually striving to be like Christ, which is one of the central messages of this Church. At the end of the Book of Mormon, Moroni invites us to “ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power

of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4). So I knelt down and prayed for a confirmation that the Book of Mormon is true—and consequently, a confirmation of the verity of the restored gospel and the legitimacy of Joseph Smith as a prophet as well—and, as promised, the Holy Ghost confirmed the truth of these things to me. Over the years, I've continued to have experiences that confirm my testimony. I know this Church is true because of the fruits of exercising my faith.

How I am faithful

As a member of this Church, there are many commandments and lifestyle choices that I am expected to live: I'm supposed to live the Word of Wisdom (which keeps my body free from drugs, alcohol, tea, coffee, and tobacco), be honest, pay tithing, attend all three meeting hours of church every Sunday, and fulfill responsibilities in the Church without monetary gains. Many people look at this religion and assume that these expectations are oppressive and limits our freedom. But here's the truth about living this lifestyle: It is not limiting; it is liberating. When

I follow God's commandments, I feel the peaceful confirmation of the Holy Ghost telling me that His commandments are for our happiness and protection. For example, by living the Word of Wisdom, I am free from the chains of addiction and other effects of harmful substances. By living honestly, I don't have to worry about getting caught cheating or lying, and people trust me more. Those are

just a few of the blessings that come from living certain principles, but ultimately, obedience itself brings blessings. By obediently keeping the commandments of our own free will, we become more like Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer. The Lord Jesus Christ was and is the perfect example of obedience to God's commandments; I live my faith by striving to emulate Him. I'm currently preparing

to serve a full-time mission in the India New Delhi Mission.

I am so excited to be given the opportunity to serve the Lord by sharing the gospel with the people there. It is a blessing and a privilege to dedicate my time and efforts to Him. I hope to help others feel the same peace and joy that I have felt through living this gospel. ■

Brother Akira lives in India Hyderabad Stake

My Burdens Lifted in the Temple

I am grateful to Heavenly Father for giving this wonderful opportunity to bear my testimony regarding the temple. My temple experience was marvelous. I am thankful to God.

I am Lavanaya Roopa Ebenezer Paul. My husband and I are blessed with two children, Mary Angelina and Melissa. Heavenly Father blessed me with a wonderful family. I am grateful to Him for that blessing.

I have been a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for the last 15 years. I was born and brought up in Hyderabad. All my brothers and sisters are members of the Church. I am grateful to elders who taught us about the true Church and the true gospel.

I had decided to go to the temple before my marriage, but it was not possible due to family problems. But God gave a great opportunity through my husband. We were planning to go to the temple for two years, but so many trials and problems besieged

us that it was difficult for us to go. All those problems were swept away this year. In 2015, I received the marvelous and wonderful blessing from God to reach my long cherished goal to be in the temple.

When I entered the temple, it was very bright, filled with glory, very quiet and peaceful, and those inside the temple looked like angels.

While in the temple the heavy burdens that I had felt for a long left me. I felt like Jesus Christ kept His hands on my head and gave me the blessing for my burdens to be lifted. I felt free and happy.

As we were sealed as an eternal family, my two daughters looked like angels. It was a very spiritual experience in the temple. ■

Sister Lavanaya Roopa Paul lives in India Bangalore Stake



Our Journey to the Temple

Ebenezer Paul Mahendran, was born and brought up in Bangalore. My family is big. I have four sisters two brothers and me. But I am the only member of the Church. After so many doubts, I came to the Church and I felt the Spirit. I gained a testimony that the Book of Mormon is the true word of God. Then I was baptized on March 8, 2007.

Hearing testimonies of my fellow Saints, I also planned to go to the temple. But there were many challenges to overcome before going into the temple. The first of the challenges was getting passports for my children. My children were born in Hyderabad. We had to apply for passports from Hyderabad. So my wife and kids had to go to Hyderabad apply for passports and stay for a period of three months for all formalities to be completed.

Our passports came and we were ready with other families, but things did not work out. We missed a few schedules. Members and leaders kept encouraging us to keep the goal in sight. Then finally we left to the temple. When we landed at the Hong Kong airport, there awaited a bigger test for us. An immigration official would not allow us in. We showed



*Lavanaya and Ebenezer Paul
with their two daughters,
Mary Anglina and Melissa*

him the invitation letter and told him our purpose. He said, “Why did you come to Hong Kong? Is there no temple in India? We will not give visas for religious purposes.” We were kept in detention. We feared they would deport us, as we had return tickets. We were made to sit. The minutes seemed hours and many emotions ran through my mind. We were near and yet could still not go to the temple.

We had only one thing to do: plead to Heavenly Father to intervene on our behalf and help us in our righteous desires. We prayed in our hearts just like the people of Alma (see Mosiah 24:9–12). Our prayers were fervent and pleading as we wanted to visit the house of the Lord.

Finally the immigration officer called us in. He again asked us to show our travel documents. He went

through them, and finding we also had return tickets, he stamped our passports. Tears of joy, gratitude, and reverence to our Heavenly Father filled our hearts and souls as we came out. Thanksgiving never ceased from our lips for the miracle that had just happened. It was a miracle! There are no words to describe the happiness that we felt. We knew that Heavenly Father was watching over us and that He had accepted our sincere, heartfelt prayer to let us come into His house. We were thankful to God for increasing our testimony. Our faith was strengthened and we knew God hears and answers our prayers. With Him nothing is impossible. We also knew that the Church is true. We knew God loves us.

I am grateful to Heavenly Father that He has given us the true gospel.

My temple experience was too spiritual for me to share. The experience surprised me and I felt very happy.

The holy temple this is a place where God dwells. As a family, we were sealed in the temple. We fulfilled the commandment of our Father in Heaven.

We are so grateful for the Church, its leaders, and prophets. I leave this testimony in name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Ebenezer Paul Mahendran lives in India Bangalore Stake

I Am a Pioneer

By Gagan John

I grew up in a small town of Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh. My mother was a history teacher and my father worked in Delhi with the then Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi. He was an honest man but due to his busy schedule, he was not able to spare any time for our family. This issue between my parents developed, and the family atmosphere and happiness was affected. I have two elder brothers and one younger sister. One of my brothers decided to live with our father in Delhi, but my elder brother, my sister, and I decided to stay with our mother, hoping that someday we all would be together. My mother was a religious woman. We were strong members of a Catholic

church but could not attend due to long distance. In our town we had only one church, the Swedish Baptist Church, and we had no option but to attend this church instead.

It was very unfortunate that my mother started to suffer with an unknown disease, and I was also in pain seeing her pain and sufferings. After a few months, she died at midnight of June 16, 1982, in the presence of me and my sister. I was then 14 years old. After her death, my father brought my sister and I to Delhi, and I continued with my studies. Every Sunday he took us to church. I was not comfortable because there was only one brother, Juriel, and two couple missionaries. But soon I was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A senior elder, Elder Erikson, baptized me in the swimming pool of the Claridge Hotel.



Gagan John and his companion Elder Abel when serving a mission in India.

After my baptism, I became serious and started to learn very quickly the language of God's unseen Spirit. That was great! I started to learn about the prophet Joseph Smith and his sacrifice, how he struggled at a very early age and how the pioneers struggled in the early days of the Church. After a few months, my brother Ravi Julian John and my Aunt Leena John also joined the Church. One day, I told my father that I wanted to go on a mission and serve the Lord. He was very happy to give me permission and said, "You will be a pioneer missionary for this part of the world."

I have a Catholic background, but the Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, Doctrine and Covenants, and the inspiring talks of the living prophets and apostles has had a great impact on me. Keeping the commandments, looking for eternal hope, understanding the doctrine of baptism for dead and temple marriage for eternity, and even understanding that death is not an end increased my testimony. And also knowing that Father Lehi's vision of the iron rod is true. Studying and pondering increased my faith and made me humble before God. Attending church regularly has helped me a lot because that nourishes me regularly in my spiritual pursuits. The great sacrifice of our loving prophet Joseph Smith made my testimony

strong. I love and admire his great sacrifice.

In my life there are many spiritual experiences that helped me to be a strong member of the true Church. God gave me a very caring, loving, and helpful life partner who helps and supports me. We have two God-fearing and talented children—daughter Bhoomika and son Saransh—who make our family happy and complete. My children are active members. They are growing in the Church's atmosphere, which will help them to be strong enough to face the world's challenges. They will have wisdom to choose between right and wrong. I am happy for them and I know that they are on the right path. These things make me a better person and a strong member of the Church.

My suggestions to youth and new converts is this that if you want happiness and joy, please hold on to the iron rod and never be afraid. The Lord has chosen you in His family, and if you follow His path, you will always be guided by the Holy Ghost. I know that Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life. The day you understand the fullness of the gospel and bear witness of the living Christ, you too will enjoy eternal life. We all make mistakes because of the human nature in every person, but we can mend human nature by repentance and move forward

with a firm decision that we will not repeat the wrongdoings again.

I was totally influenced by the young boy of 14 years, Joseph Smith, who was directed by God the Father and through him, the true gospel was restored to the earth. Also, the scriptures and the Prophet's teachings have influenced me a lot. Their teachings touched my heart and I was converted to the true Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I know that the truths which the scriptures contain are perfect for our progression and give us strength at times of need.

The most powerful influence of the Spirit of the Lord and what became a milestone of my life came when I was serving my full-time mission in Bangalore. At that time, I strongly felt that the calling and responsibility assigned to me was heavenly and that the priesthood is not mediocre, but it is superbly connected with heavenly power. I felt that the work which I was doing was an assignment from God. Thereafter I found myself privileged to serve the Lord to bring my brothers and sisters into the light of truth. The prophet Joseph Smith's sacrifice and a lot of other pioneers' sufferings to establish the God's kingdom on earth gave me the knowledge to understand that the truth will prevail when the time comes and the conflict shall be over.



Gagan John with his family

I have received my patriarchal blessing. It gives me much strength that I will have knowledge and the power of discernment which strengthens my testimony. I know for sure that I stand on a sure foundation and that the key to my faith

is the Book of Mormon. I know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true Church upon the face of earth. I know that my Redeemer lives and that after this mortal journey of my life is over, I will live again.

From that time onwards, my testimony has grown a lot to see that the growth which started in 1984 with four families now becoming many thousands of people. They attend church regularly and participate in various activities of the Church. I feel that they are fortunate to have the Church.

My wife and I were sealed with our children in the Hong Kong China Temple for time and all eternity in 2004 when my daughter was six years old and my son was a tiny baby of seven months old. I love my family very much and always want to live with them. Our temple sealing gives me hope of being together forever, if we faithfully endure to the end. I feel so happy and blessed that the seed planted in the past in India is growing so fast with the help of members and many missionaries serving around us. I share these things in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

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LOCAL NEWS SUBMISSIONS

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