

241.1: Temples and Sacred Space (D&C Gospel Doctrine Lesson 18, Updated)

Manual Goal: To help class members understand the significance of temples and encourage them to seek the blessings of the temple in their own lives.

EGD Goal: To help class members develop a greater appreciation for and healthier relationship to the temple.

Outline

- I. Framing
- II. Discussion of new resources
- III. Productive Sunday Schooling
 - i. Ask class members what their relationship is to/experience with the temple
 - ii. Create a safe space for class members to be honest
 - iii. Ask why members might have a hard time with the temple (Discussing the positives can't do good until we feel safe to discuss challenges. temple is strongly emphasized, but we don't talk about it as much as other elements of Mormonism; high degree of ritual feels unfamiliar, etc)
 - iv. What do you love about the temple?
 - v. How can we improve our relationship to the temple?
 - vi. Finding/creating your personal temple
 - vii. Use D&C 88:119 to conclude the discussion. Where in our lives do we best experience each of these? Prayer, Fasting, Faith, Learning, Glory, Order, God?

Outline

- I. Framing (As I discuss at length in the full episode, the temple holds place in LDS culture. For outsiders and insiders alike, temples are both beautiful and mysterious. Temple recommend holding member is the only way to be a member in good standing. Functionally, almost all investments into the Church go toward temple activity. I hold that belief in the necessity of temple ordinances is the minimum for literal belief in Mormonism, because if you don't believe in that, what is the point of working so hard? At the same time, we don't talk about the temple, preparation to

attend the temple can be spotty, and attending can be an overwhelming and even troubling experience).

II. Discussion of new resources

Lesson 18: “Establish . . . a House of God” I found this lesson’s resources to be helpful, instructive, and inspiring. Very much worth reading through. (Side comment. Does temple guy narrating the church videos weird anyone else out?) (had a hard time loading some of the videos from the Church history links)

- **“A School and an Endowment”**: This article discusses the endowment of spiritual power the Saints worked toward in Kirtland and the process of spiritual preparation for the Kirtland Temple. I really appreciate details such as these that illuminate the ways understanding and doctrine have changed over the years: “In later years, this endowment came to be understood as a specific set of ceremonies performed in the Nauvoo Temple and later temples, but in the 1830s it was understood to be a spiritual outpouring similar to what happened on the day of Pentecost, a literal endowment or bestowal of miraculous power on those who went to spread the gospel.” So cool! I value the historical and cultural context these new resources provide. I’m inspired by the early saints’ desire to learn and teach each other on topics “both religious and secular”. “The concept of a school of the prophets was not unique to the Latter-day Saints. In the 17th and 18th centuries, Harvard and Yale were seminaries for training clergy, and both were referred to at times as schools of the prophets. Later, reform movements associated with the Second Great Awakening—a widespread religious revival movement in the United States in the early 19th century—established private ministerial schools under the same name.” Fistfights between Joseph and William . . . lots of interesting details here. I appreciated the emphasis on the need for civility, unity, reconciliation, etc. While studying Greek I appreciated learning that “endow” means “to clothe” in Greek. So the Greek Bible says that God “endowed” Adam and Eve 😊
- **“A House for Our God”**: This article discusses the roles revelation and sacrifice played in the planning and construction of the Kirtland Temple. I appreciate the emphasis on careful preparation “for the ministry”. I am so inspired by the vision of Joseph and the other leaders of the church, as they strove and sacrificed to build a community worth of God’s plans and purposes.
- **“Teachings of Joseph Smith: Temple Ordinances”**: This two-minute video uses quotes from Joseph Smith to give an overview of the reasons for temple building. Well done video, dramatizing the building of the Kirtland temple in the context of Joseph’s teachings.
- **“Sealed Together: The Manaus Temple Caravan”**: This 14-minute video describes the long journey Saints from Manaus, deep in the Amazon, made in order to attend the São Paulo Brazil Temple. Great documentary video of the story of these saints. I like that it is in Portuguese with subtitles.
- **“Ministry of Howard W. Hunter: Love for the Temple”**: This two-minute video describes Howard W. Hunter’s joy when his parents were sealed in the temple. I vividly remember being impacted by President Hunter’s pleas about temple worship.
- **“Six Things to Remember About the Kirtland Temple”** Learn about the role the Kirtland Temple played in the lives of the early Saints. Excellent resource. Very much worth looking through and reflecting on. I liked seeing “photos courtesy of the Community of Christ”...

I wish we talked more about our Mormon cousins. Community of Christ is really a beautiful religion. (The description of “temples, chapels, and schools” made me think of Muslim mosques. I would love it if our temples still served all three functions). This resource gave me the idea for the central framing of the lesson. I loved this description: “The Saints ascended these stone steps to the temple numerous times a week to express their faith in various ways. As a result, the temple was in continual use. In addition to the Sabbath worship services and Thursday prayer meetings, the quorums of elders, high priests, Seventies, and Apostles and the high council used various spaces in the temple during weekly meetings in the evenings. On weekdays, more than a hundred students entered the temple for scholastic study. On Sunday evenings, a choir school was held to practice worship service accompaniment...In these rooms on the third floor of the temple, as many as 140 Saints came together during weekdays to study a variety of subjects, including reading, writing, history, and geography. Here Joseph Smith and others studied Hebrew grammar to aid their understanding of the Old Testament. The second floor was also used primarily as a space for instruction.” (I actually did my undergrad Honors Thesis on Joseph’s study and use of Hebrew and other languages). I adore sacred spaces such as temples and cathedrals, and inspiring architecture in general.

III. Productive Sunday Schooling

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- iv. What do you love about the temple?
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Prayer (bedroom for me, nature as well)

Fasting (need some alone time to make it meaningful)

Faith When I journal, process where I am in my goals, struggles, improvement. Also supporting and being supported by those close to me.

Learning (of all sorts...) I have my bookshelves really organized, with meaningful books in my bedroom. Learning from others is also very important to me, and learning from experiences.

Glory (where do we experience the majesty and glory of God?) Human vulnerability for me. And excellence. A starry sky. Really good food. I also feel glory of God when I am empowered to do what I need to in my life.

Order (I always feel better when I have a clean house! Little planners are really important to me too, and to do lists in general)

God (presence of God) When I check in with myself, clear away other concerns. I see God in the souls of those whom I encounter.