

261.1: Redeeming the Living and the Dead (D&C Gospel Doctrine Lesson 39, Updated)  
[“The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn to Their Fathers”](#)

Manual Goal: To help class members understand the need to seek out their ancestors and receive priesthood ordinances in their behalf.

Engaging Gospel Doctrine Goal: To help class members enrich their temple service by better appreciating what temple work does for them.

New Resources

[Lesson 39: “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn to Their Fathers”](#)

- [“Susa Young Gates and the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead”](#): This article gives context for the vision that has been canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 138. I was deeply moved by this resource. It begins with the story of Susa Young Gates, then expands outward to the broader context, all around mortality and temple work.
- [“Glad Tidings: The History of Baptisms for the Dead”](#): This seven-minute video discusses how Alvin Smith’s death helped shape the questions that led to revelation on baptism for the dead. Well done dramatization of Joseph’s family life, brings up the balance of need for ordinances and opportunity through temple work.
- [“Ministry of Wilford Woodruff: The Work of the Temple”](#): This two-minute video highlights Wilford Woodruff’s teachings on redeeming the dead. Straightforward review with historical pictures.
- [“Ministry of Joseph F. Smith: A Vision of the Redemption of the Dead”](#): This three-minute video introduces the vision recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 138. Mostly a dramatic reading of portions of D&C 138.

Productive Sunday School

Let’s have an honest, engaged discussion. What is your personal relationship to the temple? Throw away the automatic answers. Let’s even be bolder. Let’s assume that the dead don’t need us... at least right now (in the full episode I talk about the Millennium and math). How does temple attendance help you, the living, right here, right now?

What does serving in the temple do for you? What is your favorite part of the temple? Which part of temple service do you have the hardest time with? Which parts seem most clear to you? Which parts seem most confusing?

Ritual: The temple is at the center of Mormonism, and also nothing like Mormonism. It is ritualistic, formal, “high church”. The temple has embodied worship more than anything else we do. Yet we don’t talk about it much. There is incredible power in this level of ritual. Doing the same things again and again, over the course of your life.

Reminder: I love the doctrines that are taught in the temple. Spiritual creation carried out slowly in the physical world, symbolically passing from Telestial, to Terrestrial, to Celestial realms.... Covenanting to greater agency and connection, unity with self, community, God.

Presence: The way temples are set up reduce distraction and help us be fully present in what we are doing. We humans are so distracable and limited that most of us do not spend a single hour with full attention on where we are, what we are experiencing... in other words, few of us are every truly, fully alive. Temple service builds up this skill and discipline.

Meditation: One of the paradoxical secrets of life is that clearing your mind, setting concerns aside, and being mindful is tremendously beneficial. The temple can function as meditation, and one that engages your whole body.

Perspective: Not only being reminded of our identity, our covenants, our community, but the practice of taking a few hours out of the month, away from our hectic lives, to recenter, reconnect with ourselves.

Really figure out your own list, your own reasons, your own relationship. Once do you do, temple work will become rewarding, even apart from the blessings of serving the dead (though that is an important part too, one that we have already covered)

#### Covenants

- 1: Obedience: love because you are told to love
- 2: Gospel: love because you are loved by God
- 3: Fidelity: Love because you choose to love/are in a relationship to love
- 4: Consecration: Obey/love because you have become love