

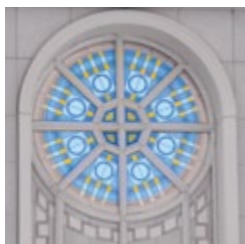
UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD

By Julie Thompson

A few years ago, I arrived at the Bountiful Utah Temple to fulfill a late-night cleaning assignment. The turnout for the assignment was impressive, and I wondered for a moment if some would be sent home. I was more than ready to volunteer to leave early. Then I cynically thought to myself, “Of course they won’t let us go early. They will find menial jobs for all of us, thinking it is their duty to keep us here the entire two hours.” I remembered a previous assignment during which I had dusted for more than an hour, only to return a cloth that looked as clean as it had been when it was given to me. I prepared myself to spend two hours cleaning things that didn’t appear to need cleaning. Obviously, I had come to the temple that night out of a sense of duty more than from a desire to serve.

Our group was led to a small chapel for a devotional. The custodian who conducted the devotional said something that will forever change the way I look at temple cleaning assignments. After welcoming us, he proceeded to explain that we were not there to clean things that didn’t need cleaning but to keep the Lord’s house from ever becoming dirty. As stewards of one of the most sacred places on earth, we had a responsibility to keep it spotless.

His message penetrated my heart, and I proceeded to my assigned area with a new



I wondered why I was at the temple to clean when nothing was dirty. But I soon realized that cleaning wasn't really the point.

enthusiasm to protect the Lord’s house. I spent time with a soft-bristled paintbrush, dusting the tiny grooves in door frames, baseboards, and the legs of tables and chairs. Had I been given this assignment on an earlier visit, I might have thought it ridiculous and carelessly brushed over the areas in an effort to appear busy. But this time, I made sure the bristles reached into the tiniest of crevices.

Because this job was neither physically nor mentally taxing, I was blessed with time to ponder while I worked. I first realized that I never paid attention to such minute details in my own home but cleaned those areas that others would see first, neglecting those known only to members of my family and me.

I next realized that there were times when I had lived the gospel in a similar fashion—living those principles and fulfilling those assignments that were most obvious to those around me while ignoring things that seemed known only to my immediate family or me. I attended church, held callings, fulfilled assignments, went visiting teaching—all in full view of members of our ward—but neglected to attend the temple regularly, have personal and family scripture study and prayer, and hold family home evening. I taught lessons and spoke in church but sometimes lacked true charity in my heart when it came to interactions with others.

That night in the temple, I studied the paintbrush in my hand and asked myself, “What are the little crevices in my life that need more attention?” I resolved that rather than plan to repeatedly clean the areas of my life that needed attention, I would try harder never to let them become dirty.

I remember my temple-cleaning lesson each time we are reminded to keep ourselves “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). ■