

# Turning Hearts in a Land of Temples

BY ADAM C. OLSON  
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As members or missionaries talked about their baptisms with Li Chiun-tsan in preparation for his own in 1971, they described a powerful, invigorating experience. So the overwhelming weakness that Brother Li felt after emerging from the waters of baptism was not what he was expecting and was certainly out of the ordinary.

Baptized and confirmed in Taipei, Taiwan, at the age of 17, Brother Li had accepted Christianity several years earlier, but he didn't find the peace he was looking for until the Book of Mormon touched his heart.

"I felt the Spirit very strongly," he says. "The Holy Ghost told me this was the true Church."

So he couldn't understand why he felt so weak now that he was a member, and he prayed to find out why he suddenly lacked strength. The unexpected answer set his life's course.

"I would find strength as I searched out my ancestors to do their temple work," he remembers the Spirit whispering.

Over the past 35-plus years, Brother Li, a member of the Hu Wei Ward, Chung Hsing Taiwan Stake, has dedicated himself to family history and temple work. He and his wife,



**The Taipei Taiwan Temple (above and opposite page inset) offers members like the Li family (opposite page inset) a place where honoring one's ancestors takes on eternal significance. They live in a land where honoring one's ancestors has long been an important part of life, as shown by Taiwan's many traditional temples (right).**

Li-hsueh, have traced his family line back nearly 5,000 years to the Yellow Emperor, said to be the ancestor of all Han Chinese. They have submitted more than 100,000 names to the temple.

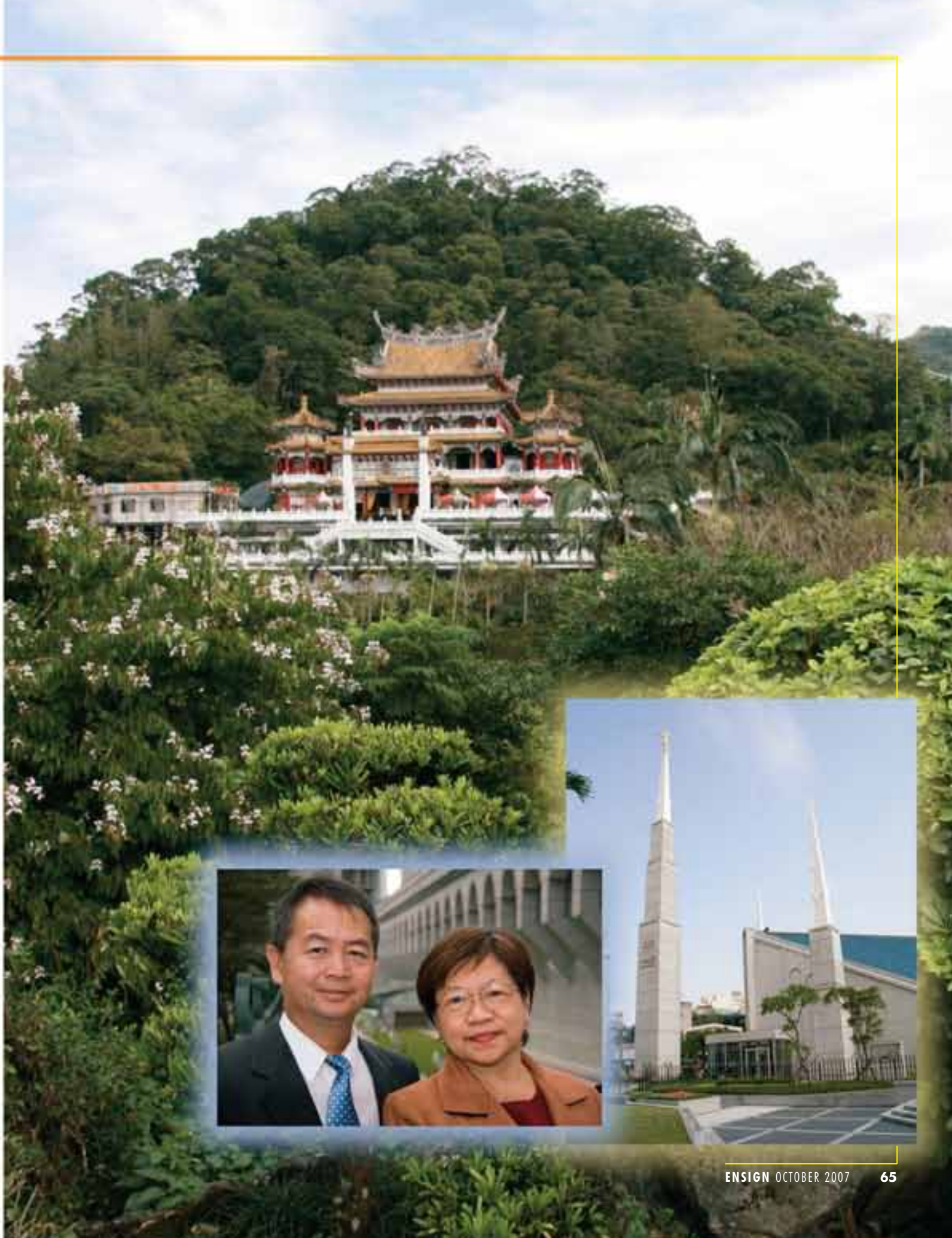
"Family history work can seem overwhelming sometimes," Brother Li says. "But the desire to bless one's ancestors is richly rewarded."

The experiences of Latter-day Saints in Taiwan bear testimony to the blessings of participating in the tightly intertwined responsibilities of family history and temple work.

## A Land of Temples

Taiwan is a land of many different temples, a land where honoring one's ancestors is part of a long, rich history. Many families keep records that trace their patriarchal line back many generations. Countless traditional temples and shrines provide places where people believe they can connect with their ancestors. These carefully crafted, sometimes centuries-old buildings peek from around almost every corner in bustling Taipei and seem to spring from the lush vegetation that covers the quiet countryside.

"Our people's traditional beliefs put much emphasis on ancestors," Brother Li says. "Turning our hearts to our fathers is a part of our culture."





While most people use these traditional temples to seek blessings *from* their ancestors, there is a different temple in Taiwan in which people bring about blessings *for* their ancestors through the ordinances of the restored gospel.

Since the Taipei Taiwan Temple was dedicated in 1984, it has provided Church members the opportunity to obtain blessings for themselves, and by providing the opportunity to bless their kindred dead, it has also given eternal significance to their family history records.

#### **A Special Connection**

Like the Li family, the Wu family has also traced their family line back to the emperor. In doing so, they discovered that the Wu children were part of the 150th generation since the emperor. The story caught the attention of the media, and in 2005, Wilford Wu, then 19, was selected to represent the young people of Taiwan during an annual ceremony at the traditional tomb of the Yellow Emperor.

For the Wu family, members of the Ching Hsin Ward, Taipei Taiwan West Stake, family history has been a family effort. Brother Wu Chi-Li and his wife, Shirley, did much of the research, and Wilford and his older sister, Camilla, have helped organize it and participate in temple ordinances for more than 3,000 of their ancestors.

Working together has helped bring the Wu family closer



together. They say it has also helped them feel a special connection with their ancestors.

“Doing the work for my parents brought a happiness from heaven I had never felt before,” says Sister Wu. “I have a great desire to be eternally united with my ancestors. I pray that they will be prepared.”

### **A Lot of Help**

Connecting 150 generations was not easy. Like many others who are involved in searching out their ancestors, the Wu family acknowledges that they had help.

After going back 26 generations, they got stuck.

“About all we had was a nickname,” Sister Wu says.

On the final day of the Chinese New Year, Sister Wu had plans to attend a holiday celebration after serving in the temple. But when a friend on the shift mentioned she was going to stop by the family history center located on the temple grounds, Sister Wu felt impressed to go with her.

She went to a book containing information on people with the surname of the ancestor the family couldn’t find. When she opened the book, it fell open to a page that listed information on this particular ancestor. With that information, they were able to connect to other lines that led back many generations.

“It was a very special experience for me,” Sister Wu says. “I can feel that our ancestors are very anxious to have their ordinances done.”

### **A Blessing to Posterity**

The desire to participate in the blessings of the temple has led Chiang Jung-feng

and his wife, Chun-mei, of the Chi An Branch, Hua Lien Taiwan District, to experience another aspect of Malachi’s promise (see Malachi 4:6). Along with having their hearts turned to their fathers, as parents their hearts have been turned to their children.

Brother and Sister Chiang belong to a growing number of Church members in Taiwan who head three-generation families who have all been sealed together.

“It’s our pleasure to see our grandchildren come to church,” says Brother Chiang, who was recently released as first counselor in the Taiwan Taipei Temple presidency. “It is our great duty to help them come unto Christ through the ordinances of the gospel. We cannot break the chain.”

The Li family believes the effects of temple ordinances begin with a couple.

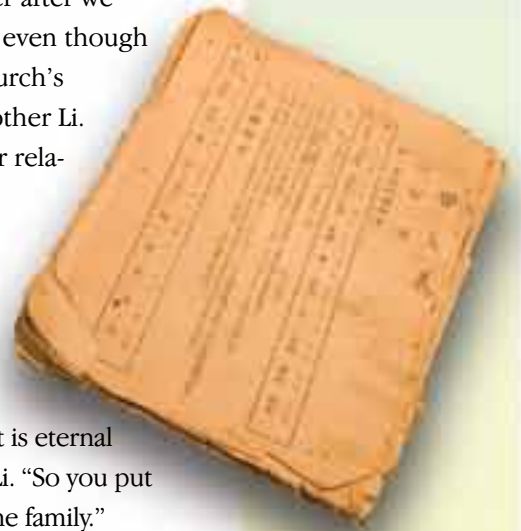
“Our marriage was better after we were sealed in the temple, even though we already lived by the Church’s standards before,” says Brother Li. “Being sealed changes your relationship. When your life is over, you lose everything you’ve worked for in life—your car, job, house, money. But you don’t have to lose your family.”

“It helps you realize what is eternal and what isn’t,” says Sister Li. “So you put your effort and focus into the family.”

From there the effects spread.

“When you know you’re an eternal family, you love your spouse more and you love your children more,” Brother Li says. “As a result our home is warmer. It is more comfortable there. The Spirit is there.”

**Opposite page: The Wu family has gained some local media attention for tracing their family back 150 generations to the Yellow Emperor using historical records (below).**



### **A Crowning Blessing**

These Taiwanese families say family history and temple work have blessed their families in this life, and they find comfort in the promised blessings in eternity.

“As we have worked in the temple, we have experienced a gradual change in our lives,” says Brother Chiang, who has done the work for 16 generations of his family line with his wife. “We have experienced a rejuvenation in the gospel.”

Brother Chiang also believes that Satan’s influence is lessened in the lives of those who participate in temple work. “Attending the temple brings reverence to our



***Doing temple work for more than 16 generations has not only blessed the Chiang family’s ancestors; it has also helped strengthen their posterity.***

hearts,” says Brother Chiang. “We forget worldly things.”

Brother Wu agrees: “If we can learn to take the spirituality and happiness we find there back home with us, it will help our families overcome the pull of worldly things and be nearer to God.”

These families believe that receiving temple ordinances and providing them for those who did not receive them in this life are essential to reaching their eternal goals.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has taught, “The temple ordinances become the crowning blessings the Church has to offer.”<sup>1</sup>

“The ultimate goal of our membership is to return to our Heavenly Father as eternal families,” says Brother Chiang. “For that we must receive *all* of the essential ordinances found in the temple.”

### **A Manifestation of Love**

On her mission, Camilla Wu learned just how important each soul is to God. Camilla felt a great outpouring of the Savior’s love for each of the many people she was able to teach.

“When I came home and got involved with our family history,” she says, “I realized that I could maybe have just as great an influence on the salvation of souls by doing family history and temple work.”

The Wu family feels that the temple is one of the greatest manifestations of Heavenly Father’s love for His children for all that it offers.

“The meaning I find in the temple,” says Camilla’s brother, Wilford, “is God’s love for His children.” ■

#### **NOTE**

1. “New Temples to Provide ‘Crowning Blessings’ of the Gospel,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 87.



**To Chen Yang Su-yuan, family history and temple work are inseparable.**

## SEEING A CONNECTION

Chen Yang Su-yuan has been blind since 1981, when she developed complications after cataract surgery. But losing her eyesight helped her find the gospel and ultimately helped her see the importance of temple and family history work.

Having recently gone blind, Sister Chen didn't realize that the two young ladies at her door asking for a glass of water were missionaries. Inviting them in made all the difference in her life.

"Most people considered me useless because I was blind," Sister Chen says. "But that's not what God wanted to tell me. He sent me missionaries after I lost my sight to teach me that we are all the children of God and that He ransomed us at a great price. I learned my worth because of the ransom Jesus paid. I am priceless."

Since then, Sister Chen has served in many callings in the Chung Li First Ward, Tao Yuan Taiwan Stake, as well as serving in the temple since 1992.

But losing her sight wouldn't be the only trial Sister Chen would have to face. In 1987 she almost died after developing a large cyst that required the removal of a rib. She survived, but the medical bills wiped out her life savings. She wondered why God hadn't just taken her.

She said His response was, "You have many things left to do."

Not long after, she felt the call of family history.

"I wondered, how am I going to do genealogy if I can't see?" she says. "But the feeling didn't go away."

With the help of a dear friend, she has researched 22 generations of her main family line and done all of the ordinances for the women herself. She is now working on related branches. Along the way, she has come to appreciate the inseparable connection between temple work and family history.

"There are many ordinances we receive in the temple, and they are all important," Sister Chen says. "But we must do our family

history. We can't give these ordinances to our ancestors without doing our genealogy."

"Family history and temple work are one work," said Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Seventy. "Family history research should be the primary source

of names for temple ordinances, and temple ordinances are the primary reason for family history research."<sup>1</sup>

Sister Chen is now battling a new disease and the aftereffects of a minor heart attack. Twenty years after first asking God why He had left her, she found herself asking the same question—and receiving the same answer. "Haven't I already told you?" she felt Him say. "You still have temple work to do."

So Sister Chen continues to spend one week per month at the temple.

"These are things we have to do for our ancestors that they cannot do for themselves," she says. "With my situation, I don't have the time commitments that others have with work and such. I need to work hard now while I can." ■

### NOTE

1. "Bridges and Eternal Keepsakes," *Liabona*, July 1999, 100; *Ensign*, May 1999, 83.

