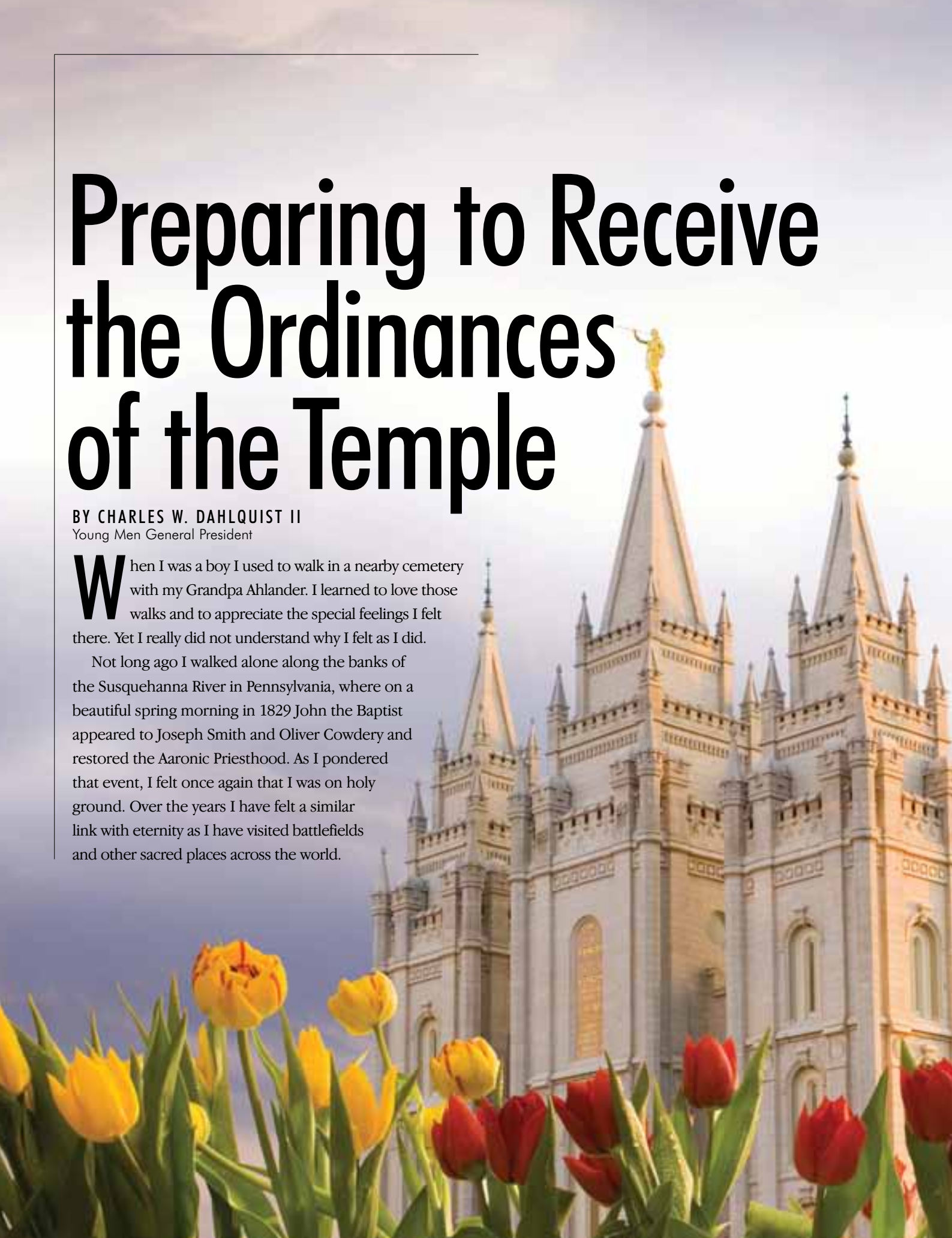


Preparing to Receive the Ordinances of the Temple

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When I was a boy I used to walk in a nearby cemetery with my Grandpa Ahlander. I learned to love those walks and to appreciate the special feelings I felt there. Yet I really did not understand why I felt as I did.

Not long ago I walked alone along the banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania, where on a beautiful spring morning in 1829 John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and restored the Aaronic Priesthood. As I pondered that event, I felt once again that I was on holy ground. Over the years I have felt a similar link with eternity as I have visited battlefields and other sacred places across the world.



In each of these places, it seemed that the veil between mortality and eternity was very thin. In each was the lingering reassurance that life does not begin with the cry of a baby or end with mortal death, but it continues on.

Today I again stood on holy ground in one of God’s holy temples, and once again the feelings of eternity were very near. I had the same feeling as I entered temples recently in Finland, Switzerland, Hong Kong, and Costa Rica. Each temple is a sacred haven, a sanctuary from the storm of the world, a place of peace where we can participate in sacred ordinances for ourselves and others and personally be strengthened and prepared to stand for truth and righteousness.

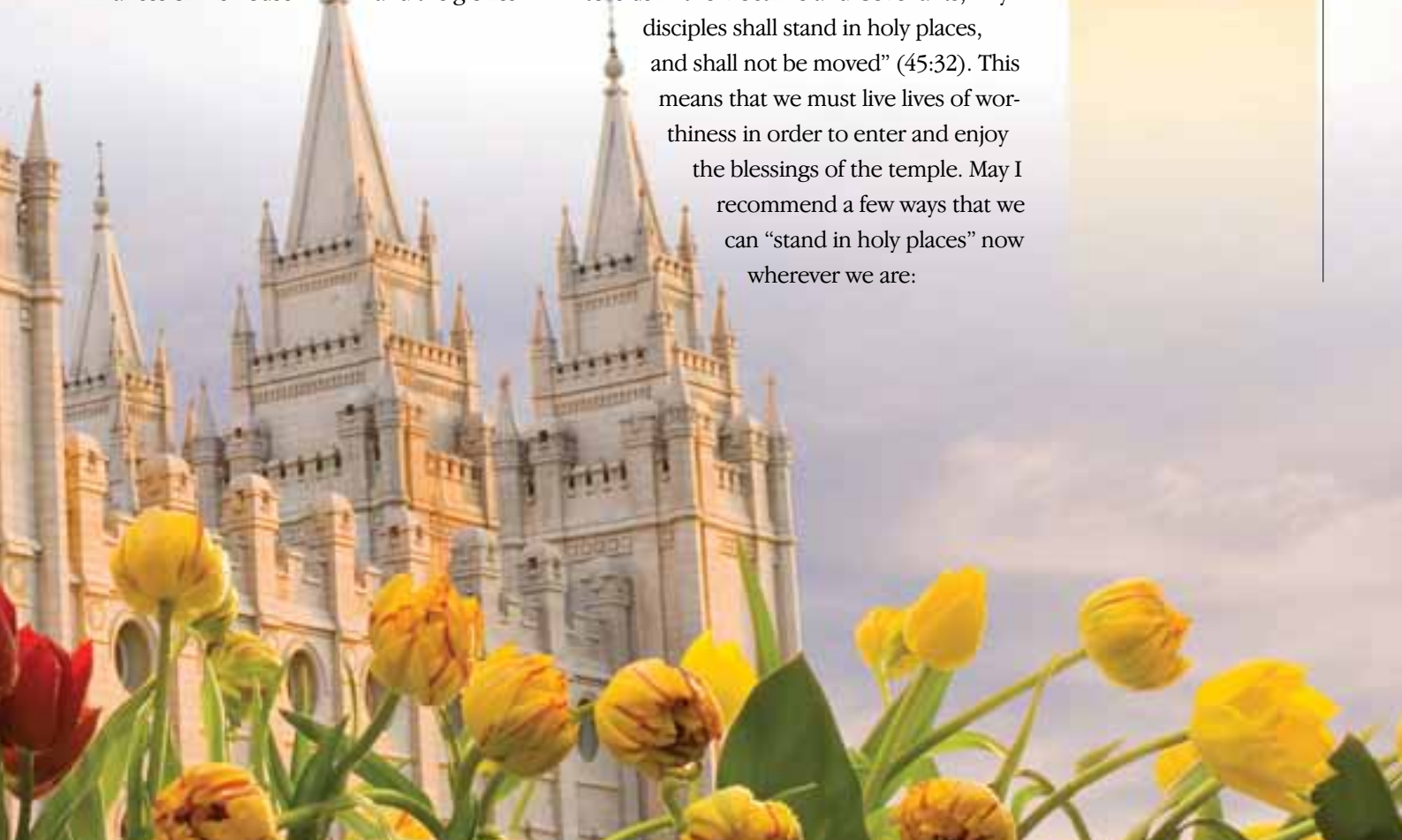
The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the temple is a place where God can “reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories

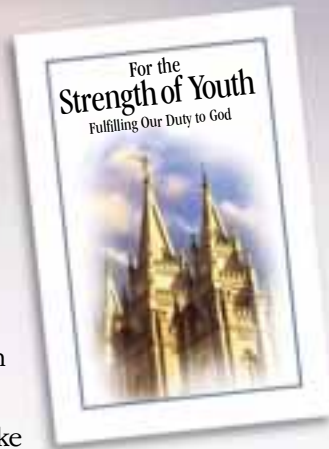
of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation.”¹ President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) stated, “I urge our people everywhere, with all of the persuasiveness of which I am capable, to live worthy to hold a temple recommend, to secure one and regard it as a precious asset, and to make a greater effort to go to the house of the Lord and partake of the spirit and the blessings to be had therein.”²

Today we have temples throughout the world to bless the Saints. Although you may not be old enough to participate in all the ordinances of the temple, you can participate in the blessings of the temple by doing baptisms for the dead when you become 12 years of age. And whether we live next door to a temple or thousands of miles away, we can live worthy each day of enjoying the blessings of temple attendance. The Lord tells us in the Doctrine and Covenants, “My disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved” (45:32). This means that we must live lives of worthiness in order to enter and enjoy the blessings of the temple. May I recommend a few ways that we can “stand in holy places” now wherever we are:



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1 **Always live the standards in the For the Strength of Youth pamphlet, and avoid “unholy places.”** To enter the temple, we must be worthy. It helps when we stand in holy places now. That means avoiding places and times when we would be tempted to make wrong choices. I recall a story by President J. Reuben Clark Jr. (1871–1961), a counselor in the First Presidency, about his teenage daughter. She was leaving for a dance, and he said, “Have fun, my dear. Be back by midnight.” She replied, “Daddy, this is the night of the prom. We go to the dance and are not back until early morning.” President Clark responded, “Yes, I know that is what many will be doing. But you must be back before midnight.” She, then, in desperation said, “Daddy, you just don’t trust me!” To which he replied, “My dear, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, I don’t even trust myself. Be back by midnight.”³

You make similar decisions everywhere you go. Wherever you are, ask yourself, “Is this a place where the Spirit can dwell?” If not, have the courage to leave. If your room (including the pictures on the wall) is not someplace the Spirit can dwell, change it so it is. Learn early to stand in holy places, to associate with good friends, so that you will be supported in your quest to always be worthy to enter the Lord’s house.

2 **Stay close to and help strengthen your family.** The message of the temple is a message about families—eternal families. Our homes can be places of holiness and strength. The



For the Strength of Youth pamphlet teaches: “Being part of a family is a great blessing. Your family can provide you with companionship and happiness, help you learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and help you prepare for eternal life. Not all families are

the same, but each is important in Heavenly Father’s plan.

“Do your part to build a happy home. Be cheerful, helpful, and considerate of others. . . . Seek to be a peacemaker rather than to tease, fight, and quarrel. Remember that the family is the most sacred unit of the Church.”⁴

3 **Make scripture study a part of your life**—not only by reading regularly but also by relying on the scriptures to help you make important decisions.

When I was a mission president in northern Germany, I had a very difficult problem. I had searched in vain for an answer for many weeks. One morning I was reading in the Book of Mormon where Nephi was commanded to build a



ship: “And I, Nephi, did go into the mount oft, and I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord showed unto me great things” (1 Nephi 18:3). As I read that small passage, the impression came to me, “That is what I need to do.” I pondered and prayed, and finally the answer came, and I knew what I needed to do. I am grateful for that little window of inspiration that came—as I was searching the scriptures. As I received my answer, I felt that I was “standing in a holy place.” I know that you too can have similar experiences as you search, ponder, and pray about the scriptures.

4 **Attend seminary when you are old enough.** I have found that regular attendance in seminary helps youth remember that they are indeed sons and daughters of God, that they can always ask Him for help in making choices, and that He answers their prayers. It is also a place where they are reminded that they are not alone and that there are many others around the world who are striving to stand in holy places and live worthy lives.

5 **Fill your mind with positive, clean, and uplifting thoughts.** My patriarchal blessing promises, “Look to the light above, and those who go with you will know that you seek for something higher.” I have found that the best way to keep my sights on the light above is to control my thoughts by memorizing scriptures, poetry, hymns, and other uplifting material. Then when we are tempted by unclean or negative thoughts, we can substitute those positive thoughts and drive out the unclean and impure ones.

6 **Have a picture of a temple in your room.** When our children were young, we asked each of them to select a temple that had particular meaning to them. We then purchased pictures of the selected temples for their rooms to help them remember the importance of the temple and of always being worthy to enter the temple. There is something powerful about seeing a picture of the temple day after day and using that to recommit ourselves to remain worthy to attend the temple. You might even want to put your own picture next to the temple to remind yourself that you belong in the temple!

7 **Spend time developing your talents and becoming what our Heavenly Father expects you to become.** We are blessed to have the Young Women Personal Progress program and the Aaronic Priesthood Duty to God program. The purpose of each is to help us become like the Savior by setting and accomplishing worthy goals, developing character and life skills, strengthening our families, and helping us develop faith in Jesus Christ.

8 **When you become 12 years of age, attend the temple to do baptisms for the dead whenever you can.** We live in a blessed day when 124 temples dot the earth. Many of you can attend the temple as youth groups and as families. But even if you do not have a temple near you, you can enjoy the blessings of the temple by learning more about the temple and always being worthy to hold a temple recommend. When I was a mission president, our mission did not have a temple, so our missionaries were not able to attend the temple during their missions. At first I did not think to encourage them to keep a current temple recommend. Then in late 1994 President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) counseled adult members of the Church to have a current temple recommend—even if they did not live near a temple.⁵ During the next interviews with our missionaries, I taught this principle and conducted a temple recommend interview for each of our missionaries. What a blessing that was

for our mission and our missionaries!

May our Heavenly Father bless you that you might continually prepare, with each decision you make, to stand in holy places now so that you will always be worthy to enter the Lord’s holy temple. You are the “youth of the noble birthright”⁶ of whom we sing. You are the “hope of Israel.”⁷ You must be prepared to accomplish the great works of

righteousness that the Lord has sent you here to do. May God bless you, my dear young friends, to prepare diligently to be worthy to enter the temple and partake of the sacred ordinances our Heavenly Father has for each of us. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 416.
2. “Of Missions, Temples, and Stewardship,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.
3. See *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 629.
4. (2001), 10.
5. See “The Great Symbol of Our Membership,” *Tambuli*, Nov. 1994, 6; *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 5.
6. “Carry On,” *Hymns*, no. 255.
7. “Hope of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 259.

