

Temple-Going Teens

BY JANESSA CLOWARD



Like most 18-year-old- almost-19-year-old young men in the Church, Cameron Smiley is busily preparing to serve a full-time mission. But unlike most young men his age, Cameron has already participated in the baptisms and confirmation of hundreds of people. In the temple, that is.

Cameron is building on a heritage that started years ago in his ward. He is one of a continuing number of young men since that time who have become interested in temple work while earning the Genealogy merit badge in Boy Scouts. Like so many of them before him, Cameron loves to go to the temple.

“When I’m there I can just forget about everything—trouble with school or friends—and concentrate on helping people,” he says.

This legacy began about 10 years ago when some Aaronic Priesthood holders in the Canyon View Seventh Ward in the Orem



Utah Canyon View Stake decided they wanted to earn the Genealogy merit badge, so they worked with the ward’s family history consultant to research their families and get names ready for the temple.

“We had so many names we couldn’t do them all in one trip!” their former Scoutmaster, Lani Hatch, remembers. “We had to go back four or five times to finish up the family file cards from that merit badge project.”

Young Women in the ward also became interested and found opportunities to help with family history research and to go to the temple.

Today many of the young men from that first Scout troop have already returned from their missions. Others are preparing to serve. And with each new Beehive or deacon, the interest in the temple continues.

In front of the Mount Timpanogos Utah Temple, Rachel Luke and David Bergeson (far left) show a photo of a ward member’s ancestors. Many of the youth in the ward (below) have participated in baptisms and confirmations for the dead.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY; HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF WARD MEMBERS

Elizabeth Sartori is grateful to know youth of the ward are participating in temple work that will bless her ancestors, and she enjoys sharing family photos and talking about her heritage.

From Temple Work to Missionary Work

Daniel Jacobs, who recently returned from his mission to Tallahassee, Florida, remembers being part of the original temple-going group. Even though he sometimes had to get up early to go, he never thought of it as a sacrifice. “How could it be a sacrifice when we felt so good doing it?”



All we had to do was wake up, and we had all the energy we needed,” he remembers. “It was a powerful lesson to me—that making time for the gospel is not a matter of convenience. You show your devotion to the Lord by putting His work first, and He blesses you with the strength to do it.”

He says that lesson helped him endure the challenges he faced on his mission. “When things were hard, I would think back to that experience and put more effort into serving the Lord. I know He will support me as I do His work.”



Richy Judd, who recently returned from serving in the Ohio Cleveland Mission, says one of his most memorable experiences in the temple happened when he was the one baptizing and confirming.



“I went to the temple with the youth one more time before my mission, when I had already received my endowment,” he explains. “I actually got to do the baptizing and confirming, and it just really got me excited to go out there and baptize and confirm people. I wanted to find the families I was supposed to teach and bring into the Church.” And every time he baptized someone on his mission, “I’d remember being at the temple as a teenager,” he adds.

Richy says going to the temple reminded him how important it was to stay worthy. It motivated him to make right choices. When his bishop and stake president interviewed him before ordaining him an elder, Richy





Recently returned from the Ohio Cleveland Mission, Richy Judd (center) explains to Garrett Bergeson (left) and Joe Rivest (right) how going to the temple prepared him to be a better missionary.

could confidently say that he was living all of the standards. "It made the transition a lot easier," he says.

Growing Up at the Temple

Brother Hatch's daughter, Keilani, had wanted to go to the temple with her dad for as long as she can remember. She prepared and planned, and when she turned 12 last year, she eagerly set her alarm. Then she realized how tired she was. "We went early in the morning and I was really grumpy when I got there, but the temple workers brought my spirits up," she remembers. "Then, when it was time for my dad to confirm me on behalf of someone else, I could feel the Spirit so strongly. I realized why I was there, and I just felt happy."

She says going to the temple helps her stay true to her standards because she wants to be worthy to go back. She remembers a time when those standards were tested by some of her friends, who wanted her to help them cheat on an exam. "I wasn't allowed to help, but I was alone in the room

with my friends, and they were begging me to," she explains. "It's really hard to tell your friends no, but it was easier because I had gone to the temple that day. I made a choice to put God first in my life."



For McKinzie Mower, going to the temple helped her testimony develop at a time when it could have easily wavered. She remembers attending church and praying regularly, but "I was just going through the motions."

"Then one day, Brother Hatch told me they were going to the temple and said I would be welcome if I could come," she continues. "I didn't really want to do it, but then I thought about it and decided to go. After that first time, I just started going as often as I could, and as I did, spiritual things became more important in my life."

McKinzie says the best part of going to the temple is the good feelings she gets from serving others. "I love doing something for people that they can't do for themselves," she explains. "Temple work is the ultimate example of that." **NE**

PREPARATION FOR THE TEMPLE

The temple is sacred. It is a great privilege for youth to enter the house of the Lord to perform baptisms for the dead. Likewise, the endowment is a sacred blessing. It requires worthiness, preparation, and maturity and is most often received just before temple marriage or a full-time mission. Even though it may be years before you receive your endowment, you can prepare for the temple today by keeping the commandments and living so that you will be worthy.

