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*Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

## Recommended to the Lord

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*Begin the process now to become “recommended to the Lord” so that His Spirit will be with you in abundance.*

Good morning, brothers and sisters. As a disciple of our Savior, Jesus Christ, I have been looking forward to gathering virtually from all corners of the world for this conference.

This has been a most unusual year. For me it began with an assignment from the First Presidency to dedicate a holy temple to the Lord in Durban, South Africa. I will never forget the grandeur of the building. But

more than the setting, I will always treasure the dignity of the people who were so well prepared to enter that sacred edifice. They came ready to partake of one of the crowning blessings of the Restoration: the dedication of a house of the Lord. They came with hearts filled with love for Him and His Atonement. They came filled with thanks to our Father in Heaven for providing



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sacred ordinances that would lead to exaltation. They came worthy.

Temples, no matter where they are, rise above the ways of the world. Every Latter-day Saint temple in the world—all 168 of them—stand as testaments to our faith in eternal life and the joy of spending it with our families and our Heavenly Father. Attending the temple increases our understanding of the Godhead and the everlasting gospel, our commitment to live and teach truth, and our willingness to follow the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

On the outside of every temple in the Church are the fitting words “Holiness to the Lord.” The temple is the Lord’s house and a sanctuary from the world. His Spirit envelops those who worship within those sacred walls. He sets the standards by which we enter as His guests.

My father-in-law, Blaine Twitchell, one of the best men I have ever known, taught me a great lesson. Sister Rasband and I went to visit him when he was nearing the end of his mortal journey. As we entered his room, his bishop was just leaving.

As we greeted the bishop, I thought, “What a nice bishop. He’s here doing his ministering to a faithful member of his ward.”

I mentioned to Blaine, “Wasn’t that nice of the bishop to come visit.”

Blaine looked at me and responded, “It was far more than that. I asked for the bishop to come because I wanted my temple recommend interview. I want to go *recommended to the Lord*.” And he did!

That phrase, “recommended to the Lord,” has stayed with me. It has put a whole new perspective on being interviewed regularly by our Church leaders. So important is a temple recommend that in the early Church, until 1891, each temple recommend was endorsed by the President of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

Whether for youth or adults, your temple recommend interview is not about do’s and don’ts. A recommend is not a checklist, a hall pass, or a ticket for special seating. It has a much higher and holier purpose. To qualify for the honor of a temple recommend, you must live in harmony with the teachings of The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In your interview you have the opportunity to search your soul about your personal faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement. You have the blessing to express your testimony of the restored gospel; your willingness to sustain those whom the Lord has called to lead His Church; your faith in the doctrine of the gospel; your fulfillment of family responsibilities; and your qualities of honesty, chastity, fidelity, obedience, and observance of the Word of Wisdom, the law of tithing, and the sanctity of the Sabbath day. Those are bedrock principles of a life devoted to Jesus Christ and His work.

Your temple recommend reflects a deep, spiritual intent that you are striving to live the laws of the Lord and love what He loves: humility, meekness, steadfastness, charity, courage, compassion, forgiveness, and obedience. And you commit yourself to those standards when you sign your name to that sacred document.

Your temple recommend opens the gates of heaven for you and others with rites and ordinances of eternal

significance, including baptisms, endowments, marriages, and sealings.

To be “recommended to the Lord” is to be reminded of what is expected of a covenant-keeping Latter-day Saint. My father-in-law, Blaine, saw it as invaluable preparation for the day when he would humbly stand before the Lord.

Consider when Moses climbed Mount Horeb and the Lord Jehovah appeared to him in a burning bush. God told him, “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”<sup>2</sup>

Putting off our shoes at the door of the temple is letting go of worldly desires or pleasures that distract us from spiritual growth, setting aside those things which sidetrack our precious mortality, rising above contentious behavior, and seeking time to be holy.

By divine design, our physical body is a creation of God, a temple for our spirit, and should be treated with reverence. So true are the words of the Primary song: “My body is a temple [that] needs the greatest care.”<sup>3</sup> When the Lord appeared to



the Nephites, He commanded, “Be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me.”<sup>4</sup> “What manner of men ought ye to be?” asked the Lord and then answered, “Even as I am.”<sup>5</sup> To be “recommended to the Lord,” we strive to be like Him.

I remember hearing President Howard W. Hunter in his first general conference address as the 14th President of the Church. He said: “It is the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church worthy to enter the temple. It would please the Lord if every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend.”<sup>6</sup> I would add that a limited-use recommend will set a clear path for our precious youth.

President Russell M. Nelson recalled President Hunter’s words: “On that day, June 6, 1994, the temple recommend that we carry became a different object in my wallet. Before that, it was a means to an end. It was the means to allow me to enter a sacred house of the Lord; but after he made that declaration, that became an end in itself. It became my badge of obedience to a prophet of God.”<sup>7</sup>

If you have yet to receive a recommend or if your recommend has lapsed, line up at the door of the bishop just as the early Saints lined up at the door of the Nauvoo Temple in 1846.<sup>8</sup> My ancestors were among those faithful. They were abandoning their beautiful city and going west, but they knew that there were sacred experiences awaiting them in the temple. Wrote Sarah Rich from the rugged trail in Iowa, “If it had not been for the faith and knowledge that was bestowed upon us in that temple . . . , our journey would have been like . . . taking a leap in the dark.”<sup>9</sup> That is what we are missing if we are going through this life alone without the inspiration and peace promised in the temple.

Begin the process now to become “recommended to the Lord” so that His Spirit will be with you in abundance and His standards will bring you “peace of conscience.”<sup>10</sup>

Your youth leaders, elders quorum president, Relief Society president, and ministering brothers and sisters will help you prepare, and your bishop or branch president lovingly will guide you.

We have been experiencing a time when temples have been closed or limited in use. For President Nelson and those of us who serve at his side, the inspired decision to close the



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temples was “painful” and “wracked with worry.” President Nelson found himself asking, “What would I say to the Prophet Joseph Smith? What would I say to Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff and the other Presidents, on up to President Thomas S. Monson?”<sup>11</sup>

Now, we gradually and gratefully are reopening temples for sealings and endowments on a limited scale.

Being worthy to attend the temple, however, has not been suspended. Let me emphasize, whether you have access to a temple or not, you need a current temple recommend to stay firmly on the covenant path.

Late last year Sister Rasband and I were on assignment in New Zealand speaking with a large group of young single adults. They had no easy access to a temple; the one in Hamilton was being renovated, and they were still awaiting the groundbreaking for the temple in Auckland. However, I felt prompted to encourage them to renew or receive temple recommends.

Even though they could not present them at the temple, they would be presenting themselves before the Lord pure and prepared to serve Him. Being worthy to hold a current temple recommend is both a protection from the adversary, because you have made a firm commitment to the Lord about your life, and a promise that the Spirit will be with you.

We do temple work when we search for our ancestors and submit their names for ordinances. While our temples have been closed, we have still been able to research our families. With the Spirit of God in our hearts, we are, by proxy, standing in for them to be “recommended to the Lord.”

When I was serving as the Executive Director of the Temple

Department, I heard President Gordon B. Hinckley refer to this scripture spoken by the Lord about the Nauvoo Temple: “Let the work of my temple, and all the works which I have appointed unto you, be continued on and not cease; and let your diligence, and your perseverance, and patience, and your works be redoubled, and you shall in nowise lose your reward, saith the Lord of Hosts.”<sup>12</sup>

Our work in the temple is tied to our eternal reward. Recently we have been put to the test. The Lord has called us to work in the temples with “diligence, . . . perseverance, and patience.”<sup>13</sup> Being “recommended to the Lord” requires those qualities. We must be diligent in living the commandments, persevere in our attention to our temple covenants, and be grateful for what the Lord continues to teach about them and be patient as we wait for temples to reopen in their fulness.

When the Lord calls for us to “redouble” our efforts, He is asking that we increase in righteousness. For example, we may expand our study of the scriptures, our family history research, and our prayers of faith that we may share our love for the Lord’s house with those preparing to receive a temple recommend, our family members in particular.

I promise you as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ that as you strive to redouble your righteous efforts, you will feel renewed in your devotion to God the Father and Jesus Christ, you will feel an abundance of the



Salzburg, Austria

Holy Ghost guiding you, you will be grateful for your sacred covenants, and you will feel peace knowing you are “recommended to the Lord.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833–1964*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 3:229.
2. Exodus 3:5.
3. “My Body Is a Temple,” *The Children Sing* (1951), no. 99.
4. 3 Nephi 27:20.
5. 3 Nephi 27:27.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Howard W. Hunter* (2015), 180.
7. *Teachings of Russell M. Nelson* (2018), 373.
8. See *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*, vol. 1, *The Standard of Truth, 1815–1846* (2018), 582–83.
9. Sarah P. Rich, *Autobiography, 1885–1890*, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, 66.
10. Mosiah 4:3.
11. Sarah Jane Weaver, “President Nelson Talks about the ‘Painful’ Decision to Close Temples amid COVID-19,” *Church News*, July 27, 2020, thechurchnews.com.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 127:4.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 127:4.