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Latter-day Saint Women Podcast Transcript

Ryan Saltzgiver and Neelima Surisetty Rayudu | Women Endowed with Power

SHALYN.

Hello, and welcome to the Latter-day Saint Women podcast, where we share the legacy of women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You'll get to know the faithful women who shaped our past and hear from inspiring women and men of faith today. I'm Shalyn Back.

KARLIE.

And I'm Karlie Guymon. We are your cohosts. Today, we're excited to welcome Ryan Saltzgiver to the studio as our guest. Ryan, welcome, or rather, welcome back.

RYAN.

Thank you for having me back.

KARLIE.

Yeah.

SHALYN.

We can't stop asking you to come back; these episodes are so good.

RYAN.

Thank you.

KARLIE.

Yes, so longtime listeners of the podcast will remember an episode that we did last year with Ryan. We shared stories of women from the



Church History Department's Global Histories project, and this was one of our favorite episodes. We'll be sure to link to it in the show notes. We also interviewed Ryan's colleague, Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye on this as well. So we'll link to both of those. And we're excited to have Ryan back on the show to share more stories and insights of women around the world. And today, we're particularly focusing on the stories of women and temples.

So, excited about that. To briefly introduce Ryan to new listeners, Ryan Saltzgeber is a historian and writer with the Church History Department, and he writes on the archaeology of Latter-day Saint communities and the globalization of the Church. So we'll just jump right in. We're really excited about our conversation today with Ryan.

RYAN.

Sounds good.

SHALYN.

Ryan, you've studied the global Church for the better part of a decade and have led the Global Histories project, gathering and sharing records of the remarkable faith and devotion of members of the Church around the world. Can you tell us what you've learned about the sacrifices members of the Church worldwide have made specifically to travel and attend the temple? Why are these sacrifices so significant and how have they inspired you?

RYAN.

You know, there are some topics that sometimes you struggle to find enough material on, and in this case, the struggle was to not have too much. There are just so many of these great stories, and I think it actually comes back to something that President Nelson said in the last conference, where he said, "Everything we believe and every promise God has made to His covenant people come together in the temple." And so from the first generation of the Church, Saints have always tried to bring themselves to the temple. That's been a motivating factor for a lot of things that people have done. I was listening recently to the new Nauvoo Temple podcast, and there are so many things in there where they're talking about Saints in England in particular, where, as Joseph Smith is revealing baptisms for the dead and other temple ordinances, the Apostles are on a mission. They're not there as he's revealing these new doctrines. And so Heber



C. Kimball, for example, receives a letter from his wife, Vilate, where she reports on the funeral of Seymour Brunson, where Joseph Smith introduces baptisms for the dead for the first time. And Joseph Smith asked them not to say too much about it because it was still influx, but they started sharing this letter a little bit. And we have some great converts who come out of that, including the Moon family; that's the family of William Clayton and his wife, Ruth Moon Clayton.

And so we have these well-known members of the Church who are coming out of that tradition. In particular, one of the women that I was studying just recently, was a woman named Elizabeth Howard. She joins the Church in 1851 in Belfast. And it's just a couple of years before this, there was a cholera epidemic in Belfast that killed her infant son, and then her father died shortly after that—I don't believe of cholera—but he died shortly after that. She called this some of the greatest griefs of her life. And when she was introduced to the Church, she reads about baptisms for the dead, and she says, "That's the thing that my soul had longed for." And she joins the Church pretty quickly. And then she discovers that in order to participate in baptisms for the dead for these loved ones that have passed, she has to move to Utah because that's the only place—

KARLIE.

The only place at the time.

RYAN.

Yeah, there's only one place, and actually, in this case, there isn't quite yet a place. So she moves here in 1853, and 1854 is when the Endowment House is first dedicated, and that's when baptisms for the dead start in Utah.

But she pretty quickly is able to do that, but she said it was one of the sincere sorrows of her life to have to leave her beloved motherland. And so these members have made those types of sacrifices all throughout our history. And then since the Church has kind of expanded more globally and even as we've started to build temples, you have members doing similar things where they're giving up their livelihoods to move to where the temple is. In Tonga, we tell a story of Vili and Lu'isa Kongaika who are from a village called Ha'apai. And they have an opportunity in 1958 to travel to the temple in New Zealand. And at the time, they have enough money to allow the parents to go alone to be sealed. And there are other people



who are taking that opportunity to be sealed with the hope that eventually their children can come with them.

KARLIE.

Interesting.

RYAN.

But Vili immediately says, “No, if we go, we all go.” And so they start selling everything. His wife said, “We put a ‘for sale’ sign on everything, and we just started selling.” And when they couldn’t sell their home, they ended up just taking it apart and they sold the roofing, and they sold the furniture, and they sold the stove, they sold his bike, they sold her sewing machine. They sold everything. They stayed with family members for a while because they had nowhere to stay until they could build a little *fale*, a hut, for them to live in. But they were able to take the entire family to New Zealand; everyone was sealed. And then when they returned, they were basically destitute. They had nothing. But a couple of months later, a hurricane destroys their entire village, and that’s a horrible tragedy for everyone. And the mother, Lu’isa, she reflected on it and said, “You know, we all ended up in the same position, but the difference was that we were eternally sealed.”

KARLIE.

Wow.

RYAN.

So there are these things all over the world. There are members of the Church who are giving up things like that. There are temple caravans, where we have members who will come together and they will do these massive fundraisers where they’ll sell handmade goods. They’ll record record albums with their choirs and sell those. In French Polynesia, one of the members was a pearl merchant. And he gave over his business, essentially, for a little while for them to dive his pearls, make the jewelry, and sell it to fund everyone going to the temple.

KARLIE.

Wow.



RYAN.

They'll drive long distances—four, five, six, seven days. We just did a story for some Saints in Cameroon. In 2005, they went to the temple in a bus, but it took them 25 hours to make one-third of the journey because their buses got stuck in the mud. And so they actually ended up getting out of the van and pushing the van as it went through these mud puddles. And the missionary that was with them said, "We could go at a better time when it's less rainy and it's a better season." And they said, "No, this is"—

KARLIE.

We want to go now.

RYAN.

"This is our chance to go." So anyway, there are so many of these just great inspiring stories. Global Histories is full of them, and that is really the history of the legacy that everything that we do in the Church comes back to that. And these things become unifying events for the Saints in those places as they come together, they band together, they unify to make sure that everyone can go there to ultimately give them eternal unity in the temple.

SHALYN.

Absolutely. Thank you.

KARLIE.

And I love the context you gave that that was part of the drive, to move across an ocean or to go across the plains. That was kind of at the core of it, was to either get to a temple or the hope that a temple would be there eventually for them to be able to make these covenants and have these eternal blessings with their families.

RYAN.

Absolutely. Just as we were walking in, I made the comment that one thing that bothers me about the way we go to trek is that we talk about hard things. And those Saints didn't come to Salt Lake because it was hard; they came because they had either made covenants that they were keeping or there were promised covenants and blessings that they knew that they needed to make.



KARLIE.

That awaited them. Yeah.

RYAN.

And that is such a better message.

KARLIE.

And you've already started telling us some of these great stories, but these long distances or great hardship or difficulty that members are overcoming in order to attend the temple is just inspiring and humbling. I traveled about five minutes to be endowed.

SHALYN.

Right.

KARLIE.

And that is not the case for everyone in the world, obviously. But for many of us, temples are getting closer and closer to us, and these stories are more unfamiliar. So in preparation for this interview, you shared with us a particular story about a sister named Felicia Zeldania, who was injured in a bus accident in Mexico as she traveled from her home in El Salvador to attend the temple in Arizona. And we'd love for you to share this story.

RYAN.

In 1975, the Central America Mission had been organizing temple caravans for about a decade, mostly through the mission and the district in Guatemala. So in 1975, in November of that year, there's a temple caravan of Saints from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras—I think Costa Ricans are also included in this. About 49 Saints are on a bus.

KARLIE.

Which is just really hard for me to believe. Imagine a bus across Central America to Arizona. That's—

RYAN.



Right, through Mexico. So from her home in Ahuachapán, El Salvador, to Mesa, Arizona, which is the closest temple in 1975 to her, is 4,000 kilometers—so 2,500 miles.

KARLIE.

Wow.

RYAN.

And it's a massive journey. This is going to take a long time for them to do. When they're about 325 kilometers south of the border—so 200 miles south of Mesa—they are traveling on a two-lane highway, and a truck carrying a trailer is passing them on the other side. As it comes around to bend, the trailer comes unhitched, swerves into their lane, and slams into their bus. And so almost everybody on the bus is injured. The *Church News* runs an article about it where they talk about a child, a babe in arms, that gets thrown across the bus and people who fracture arms and legs. And then Felicia actually has multiple injuries. Basically head to toe, she has broken bones. And she's rushed to the hospital in Nogales, Mexico. And in Nogales, she's undergoing treatment for that, and they believe that she's going to be paralyzed. Those members of the caravan who can are quickly released. And they make their way to the stake center across the street from the Mesa Temple. And as luck would have it—the Lord's hand was in this—President Spencer W. Kimball, who's President of the Church, is in Mesa reorganizing a stake that weekend.

And he hears about what has happened, and he goes to the the stake center and he meets with them. And it says that he expressed his love and sympathy and gave them his blessings, and then he promised them that they would be remembered in the prayers of the General Authorities in the Salt Lake Temple the next day. And then they were able to go to the temple. But during that meeting, at some point, Felicia's brother and her mother were able to talk to President Kimball and to make him aware that Felicia was still in Nogales. And according to Felicia, President Kimball traveled to Nogales, where he met with her, gave her a blessing, and within two weeks, she was able to be released from the hospital and join her brother and her mother in Mesa, where she had her endowment, she was sealed to her family. And because there was no patriarch in Central America, she also received her patriarchal blessing while she was there. And she said that the things that she experienced there and the blessing that she had, the patriarchal blessing, made her feel like there was a place and a work for



her to do still. And she actually was able to recover enough to be the first sister missionary from her hometown. She served in her own country in El Salvador. And for a while, she didn't know that she could serve because she couldn't walk very fast. But she actually had a mission companion at one point who said, "If I didn't know you'd been in this accident, I would never know because you walk so fast." And so she was able to be healed of that.

KARLIE.

I'm curious how these stories have impacted you and how that's changed the way you view temples or covenants and ordinances that we participate in in temples.

RYAN.

Yeah, you mentioned that it took five minutes to drive to the temple when you were endowed. When I was endowed, the Mount Timpanogos Temple was closed for cleaning that week, and I just couldn't wait. So we had to go all the way to the Jordan River. It took us an extra 20 minutes to get to the temple. And so, you know, that extra 20 minutes at the time maybe seemed like a bit of an extra—

KARLIE.

Inconvenience.

RYAN.

—inconvenience, for sure. But then in the process of what I've been doing over the six years now that I've been working on Global Histories, I've come to see that as me being a little bit too privileged and a little bit too comfortable in my privilege of having the temple right there all the time. A few years ago, when President Nelson announced the temple in Orem, my brother immediately started—he's going to be mad at me for telling this story. He immediately started texting, "Oh, yay, yay, yay! There's a temple in Orem." And I don't think that he appreciated me immediately saying, "Great, temple in Orem, but temple in Sierra Leone." There are 10 stakes in Sierra Leone. This is one of the few places in the world where during a conflict there—there was a civil war there—they built three stakes. They converted three stakes worth of people during a civil war in Sierra Leone. And until that temple is built in Freetown, the closest temple is in Ghana. And that's just an



incredible moment for them. Yeah, we get one that's five minutes closer to us, but they get one that is three countries closer to them. And that's incredible.

SHALYN.

Well, as you mentioned that new temple in Sierra Leone, it's amazing to me that President Nelson has announced 83 new temples in the nearly four years he has served as President of the Church, including 13 temples announced just at the most recent October 2021 general conference. And this brings us to a total count of 265 temples announced, under construction, or operating, which is astounding. I remember even when I was young, it was less than half that. It's just amazing how accelerated the work has become.

RYAN.

I was reading this morning, his talk from 2018, when he first started the dozens each time.

KARLIE.

Yeah, right?

RYAN.

He said 159 at that point. And he was using just operating temples, so you're using the operating, under construction, or announced, but it's a significant number more though.

SHALYN.

Very significant. One of these recently announced temples is in Liberia, which you said you just rejoiced over knowing the story of a woman named Clara Cooper, who is a mother who lost children in a civil war in Liberia and made great sacrifices to travel to the temple that was closest to her then in Johannesburg, South Africa. Ryan, will share Clara's story with our listeners and what prompted her to make her journey to the temple?

RYAN.

Absolutely. So Clara joins the Church in 1987. Two years later—they call it the First Liberian Civil War—it begins in 1989. It was really a



regional conflict. It's the same conflict that I was talking about in Sierra Leone. It spills over from Côte d'Ivoire into Liberia, eventually into Sierra Leone, and then makes its way back across that region. And it was a period of ethnic violence. There were members of certain ethnic groups, particularly men from certain ethnic groups, that weren't allowed to leave their homes because they would be the targets of violence. And Clara's husband was William; he was a member of that ethnic group that could not leave the home. And so during this civil war, Clara and her children are going out each day to find food. And they're scavenging leaves from the side of the road. Occasionally, they'll be in bread lines where they can receive some assistance that way. And she actually said that each morning she would pack her bag with two things—with her Book of Mormon and with a little brown hymnal. And she would go and stand in these lines, and she would either read her Book of Mormon or she would sing hymns from the hymnal to pass the time. And on a couple of occasions, she actually gave those things to the soldiers who were guarding the breadlines, and it allowed her to get through.

But as the war went on and supplies became less and less, the family suffered some malnutrition. And eventually two of her children—a seven-year-old and an infant—passed away from their malnutrition. And this whole time, Clara and William keep having impressions that they need to do something about that. And after the death of their son, he starts visiting her in dreams. He comes to her, and he just says, “Mama, go. Just go. I need you to go. I'm waiting.” And so she wakes up and she talks to William about these things, and eventually they're able to determine that what he means is “Go to the temple. I'm waiting for you there.” It takes several years, not just because of the civil war but because of the expense of—at that time, the nearest temple, as you said, is in Johannesburg.

KARLIE.

Across a continent.

RYAN.

Yeah.

SHALYN.

Right.



RYAN.

A massive continent as well. And so it takes them some time to get the necessary funding, to get the documents that they need to travel, to get their temple recommends—all of that kind of stuff. And with some assistance from the missionaries, they're able to make their way to the temple.

And by the time they get there, Clara has another baby. And just after they're sealed, she's in the mother's lounge nursing her newborn. And she starts to dose off, and as she doses off, her son comes to her, and he said, "Mama, thank you." And then he walked away, and she said she hasn't seen him since that day. But she knows that they are eternally sealed. And so when the temple in Monrovia was announced this conference, that is one of those times that I sincerely wept just to know that people like Clara now have a temple there.

KARLIE.

Thank you for sharing that. And we'll be sure to link as well—another Church historian has shared this, and included in his presentation is a video of Clara in her own words telling the story and describing her experience. So we'll link to that so people can watch that and see and hear from her directly.

RYAN.

Thank you.

KARLIE.

So another of these recently announced temples during the service of President Nelson is in Hungary. And you told us that this temple announcement made you think of another woman, Sister Margiet Toff—one of only two members of the Church in Hungary during the Communist era. Let's have you share Margiet's story and the impact she and her family have had on growth in this area of the Church.

RYAN.

Yeah, absolutely. So from 1914 to 1937, there was one member of the Church living in a little town called Debrecen in Hungary. His name was Janos Sendorfer. He was part of the Austro-Hungarian army in World



War I. He was injured. He was taken care of by the sisters in Vienna and then sent home to Debrecen. And so from 1914 until 1937, he's in that part of Hungary. And there are some great stories about him. Please—when that one is published—go and look up him. Janos Sendorfer was just an amazing man and the only Melchizedek Priesthood holder in the area for quite a while.

But in 1937, Margiet Toff is living in Switzerland. And in Switzerland, she joins the Church. And then during World War II, she goes back to Debrecen. And so, there are these two members, Janos Sendorfer and Margiet Toff, who are living in this one city in Hungary, where they can't talk about their religion with anybody but each other. They don't share it with their families; their children don't know that they're Latter-day Saints. They just know that there are these friends that they have. And at one point, actually in 1957—so 20 years into this—Margiet gets very, very sick, and Janos wants to give her a blessing. And so he decides it's time to figure out how to get some oil and to bless her. He can't find olive oil, but he can find cooking oil.

And so he goes, and he buys some cooking oil. He stops on the side of the road and in a secret place, he blesses it, consecrates the oil, and then he goes and he gives her a blessing. And she's actually healed as a result of that. But they spend a significant amount of time—almost 50 years—together, just the two of them, every once in a while getting contact from members of the Church, every once in a while getting a Church magazine or something like that, and just privately showing their devotion. And actually, Janos keeps his tithing in a ledger the entire time, and he eventually was able to pay that tithing. But Margiet—in 1987, when the Church is able to reenter Hungary, Margiet and Janos are the only two that are there with a newly democratic government and the ability to talk about her faith. She actually starts teaching the gospel to her children. And as a result of that, they are able to go to the temple in Switzerland in 1987 and to be sealed there. But even today, there's not a whole lot of membership in Budapest, really in kind of Eastern Europe in general.

KARLIE.

Which makes sense when you—it's just not been that long—

SHALYN.

When you understand the history. Yeah.



KARLIE.

—since this time that they weren't able to talk about it, like you said, even with their own family.

RYAN.

Right. This year is the 30th anniversary of most of the missions in Eastern Europe and the former Communist nations. It's only been 30 years since we've been there, and they had before that 60 years of really no religious teaching. And so there is that that's going on there. And we're growing. Budapest has some membership, and it's an ever-growing membership. It's a very small but very faithful membership in that area of the world. And so when President Nelson says a temple is going to be built in Budapest, that's something that I looked on and I said, "That's a really incredible announcement." And there are lots of those. He's made a few announcements for places where, you know, in the past, maybe traditionally, we would have waited until we had a certain number of stakes. But I love this, that President Nelson has this vision of places where temples will be the catalyst for the growth of the Church.

KARLIE.

And the fortification, I think.

SHALYN.

Definitely.

RYAN.

Yeah, and really for the gathering of Israel to take place. In the recent general conference, President Nelson said, "The ultimate objective of the gathering of Israel is to bring the blessings of the temple to God's faithful children." And I just love the direction of that. It's not "Let's go take the gospel to them, and then they can come to the temple." It's "Let's take the temple and its blessings and covenants to them." And so there are these places where we're now trying to be ambitious and to build temples in places to make the sacrifices on our end to help to bring that gathering about. And that's not—it's not like a Savior complex or anything like that. But it is something that changes the direction of these things. It makes it so that we don't have members throughout the world who are selling their houses piecemeal—



SHALYN.

Right.

RYAN.

—to make that trip to the temple.

KARLIE.

Right.

SHALYN.

Well, and then we read in the Doctrine and Covenants that when you attend the temple and when you're endowed, you have power. And so it's just amazing that now these members will have greater power and this access to be able to live the gospel, to be able to share it. It will really build them individually and as a gospel community in that area.

RYAN.

Yeah, absolutely.

KARLIE.

And again, I think of your thought that we are so privileged, those of us who live near a temple, that it's not even really a thought.

SHALYN.

No.

KARLIE.

You just have to right now make an appointment or make some plans in your schedule. And I think providing greater equality so that there isn't such a—

SHALYN.

Disparity between—



KARLIE.

—disparity between the sacrifices people are making—

RYAN.

Right.

KARLIE.

—to receive these ordinances.

RYAN.

I don't want to sound disparaging to the Latter-day Saints in the United States, but when the biggest obstacles that you have are logging online to set an appointment and wearing a mask—

SHALYN.

Or like trying to find a babysitter.

KARLIE.

Some things you have to plan for and—

RYAN.

Right. But that's not a 25-hour mud puddle. Right?

KARLIE.

Right. We need a little perspective.

RYAN.

And like I said earlier, I was excited also to have one in my hometown.

That's cool!

SHALYN.



Of course.

RYAN.

But at the same time, like—

KARLIE.

You have some perspective.

RYAN.

Sierra Leone and Liberia and Budapest and India and Russia and China and these places where people just don't have that access, they haven't had that access, and where so many faithful Saints have given everything, literally everything, just like these pioneers that we always talk about. We have pioneers today who are doing exactly the same thing. And in fact, in some cases, even more. They're giving up their jobs, and they're returning. They're not coming to Utah and finding a place where they can stay. Like Elizabeth Howard ended up being fairly well-to-do in Salt Lake City. That's not happening for the Saints who come to these temples now. They're going back, and now they're having to figure out how to rebuild their lives after they've made these massive sacrifices. And that may be the one time in their life that they go to the temple—that one week in the temple where they do as much work as they can.

SHALYN.

Wow.

KARLIE.

So I'm really excited because as we prepared for this interview, talking about sacrifices made and also the excitement of maybe having a temple closer than you'd ever anticipated, I thought of my dear friend and a former mission companion, Neelima Surisetty Rayudu, who joined the Church with her mom as a teenager in India and then later served a mission in the Philippines. And Neelima and her mom, Padmati, made great sacrifices to attend the nearest temple in Hong Kong to receive their endowments and be sealed as a family to her deceased father. And then after her mission to the Philippines, where we met, Neelima met and married her husband, Suniel, and they traveled to the Philippines to be sealed. So we actually had a chance to talk with Neelima, and she shared more



about these experiences and how she felt when she heard President Nelson's 2018 announcement that a temple would be built in her home country in India. So let's listen to what Neelima said.

KARLIE.

Neelima, can you tell us about you and your mom's decision to travel to the temple in Hong Kong before your mission? Tell us about the time and money that was required to make that trip and what your journey was like from India to Hong Kong.

NEELIMA.

So we know that the nearest one is Hong Kong. And there is a flight, they're giving an offer. And you need to book it a year ahead. So we have a little amount, and we just borrowed a little bit. And then we finally booked the flight. And then we are literally waiting, "When can we go?" And so we wait literally for one year. And then I draw up my mission papers. So they both happen in the same year—our temple visit and also my mission. So we are like super excited for the next year. And finally the day came, and so we had to start a journey from India to China,—which is an 11-hour journey by train—and then from there to Singapore and then Malaysia. We took so many flights because it's a cheap flight. So we need to go to different flights. Finally we—it's like a very long journey. Then it's our first time flying on a flight, going on a flight, going to a different place. And we don't know English. We don't know how we're going to make that journey. But all we want is to just go there and to be sealed. That's the only thing on our minds.

So we went there, and we were so happy. And then we just got there, and we are like just standing there with our luggage in front of the temple and seeing the temple. It still feels like a dream, because we never thought we would go there because it's too far away. And we never thought, you know, we'd have that money to go there. We never imagined in our lives. So we are like—it was still like a dream for us. When we are returning home, we still feel like it is a dream. Especially because in our family, we have our deceased father, and my younger brother also died. So we really wanted to get sealed with them, just very special experiences we had inside of the temple.

I don't feel it as a sacrifice. I should say, "Well, what about the journey? What about the money we spent?" I don't feel it as big things to do that



ordinance, which is so important to return back to our Heavenly Father. I think that is the happiest moment in both of our lives.

KARLIE.

So, Neelima, you mentioned you traveled to the Hong Kong Temple to be endowed before your mission. You were called to serve in the Philippines Cebu Mission, which is how I know you, because we were mission companions there. And you served there, which was so neat for all of us to be able to serve somewhere where there was a temple. A temple had recently been dedicated on the island of Cebu in the Philippines. So then you completed your mission, you returned home, and you met Suniel Rayudu, who you then married in India. And then you and Suniel traveled back to the Philippines to be sealed in the temple in 2015. So again, another experience making a pretty big journey, a big sacrifice to go and participate in temple ordinances there in the Philippines. Can you tell us about that experience and some of the challenges you faced?

NEELIMA.

I strongly believe that when we have the desire, I think God will really help us in different ways. I still remember the day that Suniel and me, we both went to a wedding of two returned missionaries. And at that time, we don't have actually much money and we are still struggling to save and all. But we want to give a little money for them to help them. So that day, our friends, I still remember at that same time I received in my bank account for my friends, the amount I needed to go to the temple. It is a huge miracle, because we thought it was never going to happen.

KARLIE.

It was just the two of you that traveled for your sealing, but you had friends in the Philippines who came to support you and to celebrate with you.

NEELIMA.

Yes, but the main part is being in the temple again. It's the huge blessing, I should say, because me and Suniel, we both wanted to be sealed as soon as possible. The day we got sealed is a miracle again, because we feel so happy.



KARLIE.

So with these being your experiences with the temple, Neelima, what was it like for you when you heard President Nelson’s 2018 announcement that a temple would be built in India?

NEELIMA.

Oh, my gosh. I think when I heard that, I was like, “Is it real what I heard? Did I hear it properly, you know, in English?” Then I was like, “Okay, it is true! It is real!” With me, I think all the things, they are so happy. It’s like God is with us. God is coming near to you. You feel it like the Church is growing, and we are close to the ordinances. And for every member, it’s kind of accessible. So it is such great news.

KARLIE.

Thinking, too, that instead of the temple being a onetime visit, the members in India would get to visit the temple more than just once or twice. They can go—

NEELIMA.

Yeah, yes. Absolutely.

KARLIE.

—often.

NEELIMA.

Because it’s very difficult, again, to make that huge amount to go there.

KARLIE.

I mean, it’s still a big distance for many people in India but closer than these other temples where they’d been traveling to.

NEELIMA.

Yeah, but as once, I think, President Thomas S. Monson has said, “No sacrifice is too great when you really know what you’re doing is the right thing.”



SHALYN.

I loved hearing Neelima's story and just can't help but think she is a pioneer. We think of the pioneers crossing the plains, but it's amazing that she sacrificed so much for something that was so important to her. And I just am so glad that she was able to share her story with us.

KARLIE.

She's such an example to me. She's a real friend, yeah.

RYAN.

It was interesting that it actually made me think of another Indian Saint, a woman named Elizabeth Xavier Tate, who joined the Church in 1851 in Pune, India. And in 1855, she and her husband, William, who was a British soldier, they immigrated to Utah to be near the temple and were actually members of the Martin and Willie handcart companies. They survived. They made it. And she was able to be here in the United States and to participate in temple ordinances.

KARLIE.

I think something, too, that all of these stories do for me is I think that we can get caught up in the challenges of sometimes being a Latter-day Saint. You know, there are things that we have questions about or things that we struggle with, but I think for me, going back to my friend Neelima or hearing these other stories, it's like these people believe deep down that this was so important that they would make any sacrifice necessary to secure this assurance that their family could be eternal or that they were making these covenants required for them to progress spiritually. That helps me a lot. Hopefully it helps people listening, that it's like if people were to make those sacrifices all around the world with a variety of backgrounds, there must be something to this. And maybe if I can put myself out there a little bit to make additional sacrifices, to prioritize temple worship, or to prioritize making an effort toward getting a temple recommend or working towards that, that maybe I can also feel that deep testimony within me that this is also important.

RYAN.

I want to be clear that I don't want anyone to feel guilty about living in a place where they have a temple close. I don't want them to feel guilty



about sometimes having challenges in their lives that make it difficult to be at to the temple. Those are real; that's honest. You know, Shalyn, you said earlier that sometimes the babysitter is the difficulty, but really that sometimes is the difficulty. And I don't want anyone to feel guilty about those things. But I do, like you said, Karlie, I want people to feel inspired by what they're saying here. And actually in preparation I reread President Nelson's talk where he spoke very specifically about the temple in the last general conference. And he said, "The Lord is the one who wants you to experience fully His sacred ordinances. He wants you to comprehend your privilege, promise, and responsibilities. This He desires for all temple patrons, no matter where they live." That for me says, wherever you live, wherever you are, the privileges that you have in that place, the promises that you have in the temple, and the responsibilities you have as a Latter-day Saint are the important things. And if that means that your privileges are to be five minutes away and to work harder to get a babysitter or your privilege is to be in a place where you have to take a 20-hour train ride—

KARLIE.

Kind of a onetime—

RYAN.

—or if it's that you have to make these monumental sacrifices, that might be it. But also if it's our responsibility to do what we can, to understand the struggles of other Saints, and to rejoice with them when they get a temple, and to see them getting that as just this wonderful moment. I love a temple in Billings, Montana, but a temple in Freetown makes my heart sing.

SHALYN.

Absolutely. Well, and I keep thinking that regardless of where we are, regardless of if we go to the temple once in our lives or every month, the ordinances are the same. The covenants are the same; the promises are the same. The blessings that we receive, we're promised all the same blessings. And it just shows me how much Heavenly Father loves us that He is really trying, through President Nelson, to get temples around the world and to help everybody make these promises and receive these blessings.

RYAN.

Well, we know from the Apostle Paul that the Savior won't return until we come to the unity of the faith. And the temple is that place where we



truly become unified in our faith, in our covenants, and the promises, where we become one global family, where everyone's adopted, everyone is a part of that. And each time that a new place gets a temple, each time that President Nelson acts on that inspiration, whether it's an ambitious temple or it's a temple that's long overdue, he announces a temple in these places, that is a sacred moment. That is a sacred moment for the people and the Saints in those places, and it's a sacred moment for all of us as we watch the unfolding of the restored gospel and the building of God's kingdom today. It's just s—this is the temples dotting the earth, right? That's the prophecy that we all look to, and it's so much better for me. It's been such a privilege to be able to sit there and listen to and to read about these wonderful Saints who are waiting for that, who are making desperate sacrifices at times to be there. And again, the problem is that there are just so many of them that I can't even—

Please, go look at Global Histories. Find those places in there where the temples are. We've got more coming. There's a plethora of them right now, and we have so many more coming that I'm just so excited for people to read and to hear about.

KARLIE.

And I think the plug that we give every time we do an episode about Global Histories is to read them and use them. Use them if you're giving a talk on a topic. Search through a few stories, and you are bound to find a story of a woman or a man or a family to illustrate a gospel topic or principle around the world.

SHALYN.

They're so engaging.

KARLIE.

So engaging and inspiring.

SHALYN.

So compelling.

KARLIE.



So inspiring for a talk or for a lesson or for a family discussion or a family night or an uplifting inspiring thing to send to a missionary. So many great stories.

RYAN.

So the great thing is the stories in Global Histories are 500 words. And just for perspective—I don't know why this helps me a lot—but for perspective, the longest of Jesus's parables is 500 words. And so that is the kind of writing that we've tried to do here, where they're very small; they're very short. That's a minute and a half, two minutes to read the whole story. And if you read that in a talk, you share that in a lesson, you open the discussion that way, you bring in experience. And there's nothing, I think, more powerful than personal testimony, personal witness. And if you can add a second witness, of course, we know that's when the Spirit really comes and testifies of the truth of that principle.

KARLIE.

Awesome.

SHALYN.

Well, Ryan, thank you so much for being with us here today. I just hope that our listeners feel like I do, this motivation to recommit to the temple, especially now as they're opening more and more and we have more opportunities to go. I think that's a really exciting time to, like Karlie said, either plan more trips or more opportunities to go or recommit to receiving your temple recommend or getting it renewed. And I just really appreciate these inspiring stories that you've shared that help us feel that motivation. So thank you.

RYAN.

Thank you.

KARLIE.

Yeah. Thanks, Ryan. We love having you on.

RYAN.

Thanks.



KARLIE.

To our listeners, thank you for tuning in to this episode of the Latter-day Saint Women podcast. We have new episodes released every week, and we hope you'll continue to tune in and share these episodes with your friends and family members. We'll link to Ryan's other episode. We'll link to his colleague Melissa Inouye's episode. Check those out; they're also inspiring and wonderful. We've been so grateful to hear from so many listeners via email and on Apple Podcasts reviews, and we hope you'll continue to share your thoughts and feedback there. We love hearing from you. Feel free to contact us at podcast@ChurchofJesusChrist.org with any suggestions for topics or guests.

SHALYN.

And as you're sharing these episodes with your family and friends, we just want to make you aware that this podcast is available just about anywhere you listen to podcasts. It's on the Church's website, also available on the Gospel Library app, Saints Channel, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, anywhere. So tune in, subscribe, and continue to share these voices and stories of women and men of faith. Finally, we'd like to thank our wonderful editor, Curt Dahl, and our producer, Matthew Mangum, and the many others who support this podcast. Until next week. I'm Shalyn Back.

KARLIE.

And I'm Karlie Guymon. Thanks for listening.

