



# Covenants

## TWO-WAY PROMISES WITH GOD

*We increase in spiritual power with each covenant we make with God: baptism and confirmation, priesthood ordination, temple endowment, and sealing.*

**By LaRene Porter Gaunt**

Church Magazines

**W**hat exactly is a covenant? “A covenant,” Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explains, “is a binding spiritual contract, a solemn promise to God our Father that we will live and think and act in a certain way—the way of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In return, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost promise us the full splendor of eternal life.”<sup>1</sup> The better we understand the two-way promises of covenants between us and God, the better we will be able to honor the covenants we have made.

Whether we are baptized at age eight or as an adult, the powerful blessings are the same and are dependent on our worthiness. As we move along the covenant path by having the priesthood conferred upon worthy male members, being endowed in the temple, and finally being sealed as a couple or family, we learn line upon line.

Each person’s journey of covenant making may be slightly different, but each of us will increase in understanding as we strive to remain faithful and worthy. For example, when I was baptized at age eight, I didn’t really understand the full meaning of baptism. My husband, however, joined the Church at age 24 after a year of attending church, reading the Book of Mormon, and studying the doctrine. He understood this covenant much better than I did at age eight. He was ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood a week after he was baptized and to the

Melchizedek Priesthood before we went to the temple. We were endowed the day before our sealing, and everything in those ordinances was new to us. Because of distance, we could only attend the temple once a year.

I think our deep understanding of all the covenants, especially the covenants we made when we were sealed in the temple, came during the years each of our first three babies died in infancy. We were so grateful they had been born in the covenant, and we were motivated to be faithful so we could be with them again. We adopted a baby girl and had her sealed to us in the temple a year later. We wept with gratitude. Blessings continued when two more babies were born to us and lived.

Understanding covenants is a lifelong process. Returning to the temple to serve as proxy for our deceased ancestors allows us to perform the ordinances along the covenant path for them. In the process, we are reminded of what we covenanted to do and we increase in our understanding.

What do you remember of your promises and God’s promises as you have made your covenants along your path to eternal life? Do you still have covenants you need to make? Following are reminders of some of the promises we make and some of God’s promises to us if we are faithful. As we keep our covenants, we will increase in understanding and anchor our lives firmly in God’s laws.

## Baptism and Confirmation

Baptism and confirmation are the first saving ordinances of the gospel. When we are immersed in water at baptism, we witness to our Heavenly Father that we will be obedient in keeping His commandments (see 2 Nephi 31:7). Confirmation, which is done by the laying on of hands, certifies us as members of the Lord's Church and allows us to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Through baptism and confirmation, we covenant, among other things, to take Christ's name upon us (see D&C 20:37), to serve God and keep His commandments (see Mosiah 18:10; D&C 20:37), and to stand as witnesses of God and Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 18:9). We are also willing to bear each other's burdens (see Mosiah 18:8), to repent of our sins (see D&C 20:37), and to receive the Holy Ghost as a constant companion (see 2 Nephi 31:18).

If we are faithful, God's promises include pouring out His Spirit upon us (see Mosiah 18:10), redeeming us from our sins as we repent (see Mosiah 18:9; D&C 20:37), and bringing us forth in the First Resurrection (see Mosiah 18:9). He also gives us the gift of the Holy Ghost (see 2 Nephi 31:12; Moroni 6:4) and admits us as members of His Church (see Moroni 6:4; D&C 20:37).<sup>2</sup>



### PARTAKING OF THE SACRAMENT

"We can be washed clean weekly as we worthily partake of His sacrament. As we renew and honor our covenants, our burdens can be lightened and we can continually become purified and strengthened."

Linda S. Reeves, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, "Claim the Blessings of Your Covenants," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 120.



## Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

The priesthood is conferred upon worthy male members of the Church. The priesthood “is the power and authority that God gives to man to act in all things necessary for the salvation of God’s children.”<sup>3</sup>

In the oath and covenant of the priesthood, priesthood holders covenant, among other things, to faithfully receive the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods and to magnify their callings and fulfill priesthood responsibilities (see D&C 84:33). They also willingly receive the Lord’s servants (see D&C 84:35–36) and live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (see D&C 84:43–44).

If priesthood holders are faithful, God’s promises include sanctifying them by the Spirit (see D&C 84:33), numbering them with the elect of God (see D&C 84:34), and giving them all that He has (see D&C 84:38).<sup>4</sup>



### **BLESSINGS OF THE PRIESTHOOD**

“A man may open the drapes so the warm sunlight comes into the room, but the man does not own the sun or the light or the warmth it brings. The blessings of the priesthood are infinitely greater than the one who is asked to administer the gift.”

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Power in the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 92.

## The Temple Endowment

“The word *endowment* means ‘gift,’ and the temple endowment truly is a gift of spiritual power from God.”<sup>5</sup> The endowment “consists of a course of instruction, receiving saving ordinances, and making covenants.”<sup>6</sup> Our temple covenants are sacred, so we do not discuss them in detail outside of the temple.

We covenant, among other things, to obey the gospel, to observe the law of chastity, and to be charitable, benevolent, tolerant, and pure. We also strive to devote time, talents, and resources to the Lord’s kingdom.<sup>7</sup>

If we are faithful, God’s promises include giving us inspiration and instruction through personal revelation.<sup>8</sup> He will also protect us from temptation,<sup>9</sup> prepare us to be His disciples,<sup>10</sup> and make us joint-heirs with Jesus Christ of all our Father has.<sup>11</sup>

## Sealing for Time and All Eternity

The sealing of a man and a woman in temple marriage creates an eternal relationship between them and their children that can last beyond death. The sealing of children to parents links generations together in eternal family relationships. These ordinances can take place only in a dedicated temple of God and are administered by those who have been ordained with the sealing power of the priesthood. Whether in this life or the next, all worthy sons and daughters of God will have the opportunity to be sealed to an eternal companion.<sup>12</sup>



### BLESSINGS OF THE TEMPLE

“When men and women go to the temple, they are both endowed with the same power, which by definition is priesthood power. . . . The endowment is literally a gift of power.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Let Us Think Straight” (Brigham Young University Education Week devotional, Aug. 20, 2013), 7, [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu).



We covenant, among other things, to maintain complete fidelity to our spouse and to live in ways that contribute to a happy and successful family life.<sup>13</sup> We are also willing to have children and teach them the gospel.<sup>14</sup>

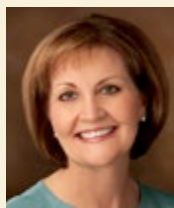
If we are faithful, God's promises include sealing our spouses and children to us for eternity and granting us the blessings of posterity in the eternities. He will also help us come to know Him and His Son, Jesus Christ (see D&C 132:48–50), and will exalt us in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom (see D&C 131:1–4).<sup>15</sup>

### Putting God and His Covenants First

Making and keeping sacred covenants protects and empowers us, enables us to bless others, and makes eternal life possible. “We who know God’s plan . . . must never deviate from our paramount desire, which is to achieve eternal life,” said Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “We must never dilute our first priority—to have no other gods and to serve no other priorities ahead of God the Father and His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.”<sup>16</sup>

May we keep our covenants. They are sacred and lead us back to our Heavenly Father and eternal life with Him and our families. ■

This article is in support of October 2013 general conference. Go to [lds.org/topics/covenant/covenant-path](http://lds.org/topics/covenant/covenant-path) for more information to increase your understanding of the covenant path; see also “Understanding Our Covenants with God,” *Ensign*, July 2012, 22–25.



#### HONORING OUR COVENANTS

“Making and keeping our covenants is an expression of our commitment to become like the Savior.”

Linda K. Burton, Relief Society general president, “The Power, Joy, and Love of Covenant Keeping,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 111.



#### NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Keeping Covenants: A Message for Those Who Will Serve a Mission,” *New Era*, Jan. 2012, 3.
2. See *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood, Part A* (2000), 215–22; *Eternal Marriage Student Manual* (2003), 41–42; [lds.org/topics/baptism](http://lds.org/topics/baptism).
3. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2; see also 7.1; 20.7; Official Declaration 2.
4. See *Eternal Marriage Student Manual*, 44.
5. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 171.
6. *Eternal Marriage Student Manual*, 45.
7. See *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple* (2002), 34–35.
8. See “Endowed with Covenants and Blessings” *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 40.
9. See Joseph Fielding Smith, “The Pearl of Great Price,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, July 1930, 103.
10. See Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:259.
11. See M. Russell Ballard, “Let Us Think Straight” (Brigham Young University Education Week devotional, Aug. 20, 2013), 7, [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu).
12. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow* (2012), 130–31.
13. See *Eternal Marriage Student Manual*, 46.
14. See J. Ballard Washburn, “The Temple Is a Family Affair,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 12.
15. See *Eternal Marriage Student Manual*, 46.
16. Dallin H. Oaks, “No Other Gods,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 75.