

# UNDERSTANDING OUR Covenants WITH God

AN OVERVIEW  
OF OUR MOST  
IMPORTANT  
PROMISES



As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” explains President Thomas S. Monson, “sacred covenants are to be revered by us, and faithfulness to them is a requirement for happiness. Yes, I speak of the covenant of baptism, the covenant of the priesthood, and the covenant of marriage as examples.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Church, an ordinance is a sacred, formal act performed by the authority of the priesthood. Some ordinances are essential to our salvation. As part of these “saving ordinances,” we enter into solemn covenants with God.<sup>2</sup>

A covenant is a two-way promise, the conditions of which are set by God.<sup>3</sup> When we enter into a covenant with God, we promise to keep those conditions. He promises us certain blessings in return.

When we receive these saving ordinances and keep the associated covenants, the Atonement of Jesus Christ

becomes effective in our lives, and we can receive the greatest blessing God can give us—eternal life (see D&C 14:7).

Because keeping our covenants is essential to our happiness now and to eventually receiving eternal life, it is important to understand what we have promised our Heavenly Father. The following is an overview of the covenants we make in association with saving ordinances and suggestions for where you can learn more.

## **Baptism and Confirmation**

Baptism by immersion in water, performed by one having authority, is the first saving ordinance of the gospel and is necessary for an individual to become a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Inseparable from baptism is its companion ordinance of confirmation—the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.



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When we are baptized, we covenant to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, to always remember Him, and to keep His commandments. We also promise “to serve him to the end” (D&C 20:37; see also Mosiah 18:8–10).

In return, Heavenly Father promises that if we repent of our sins, we can be forgiven (see Alma 7:14) and “always have His Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77), a promise made possible, in part, through receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The ordinances of baptism and confirmation are the gate through which all who seek eternal life must enter (see John 3:3–5). Honoring our baptismal covenants leads to and is an important part of making the covenants associated with all of the other saving ordinances on the path to eternal life (see 2 Nephi 31:17–21).

#### **LEARN MORE ABOUT BAPTISM**

See Robert D. Hales, “The Covenant of Baptism: To Be in the Kingdom and of the Kingdom,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 6.

### **The Sacrament**

Those who have received the saving ordinances of baptism and confirmation partake of the sacrament each week to renew those covenants. While partaking of the bread and water, we remember the sacrifice the Savior made for us. In addition, we ponder the covenants we have made to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments. In turn, God

extends the promise that His Spirit may be with us always (see D&C 20:77, 79).

The ordinance of the sacrament is an opportunity each week to renew sacred covenants that allow us to be partakers of the Savior’s atoning grace with the same spiritually cleansing effect of baptism and confirmation.

Church leaders have also taught that when we take the sacrament, we renew not only our baptismal covenants but “all covenants entered into with the Lord.”<sup>4</sup>

#### **LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SACRAMENT**

See Dallin H. Oaks, “Sacrament Meeting and the Sacrament,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 17.

### **The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood**

Heavenly Father gives His oath (guarantee) to bestow certain blessings upon those who keep the covenants associated with receiving the priesthood.

When men live worthy to obtain the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods and “[magnify] their calling,” God promises they will be “sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.” They become heirs of the promises made to Moses, Aaron, and Abraham. (See D&C 84:33–34.)

Holding the Melchizedek Priesthood is necessary for men to qualify to enter the temple. There, men and women may receive a fulness of priesthood blessings together in marriage.

## ANSWERING QUESTIONS

**Y**ou or someone you have contact with may wonder, “Why aren’t temples open to the public?” Latter-day Saint temples are not used for our weekly Sunday worship, where all are welcome to attend. Sacred ordinances are performed in temples, so temples are open only to baptized members who qualify themselves to receive those ordinances.

After a new temple is built, the public may tour it during an open house. After the temple is dedicated to the Lord, the public may visit the grounds, but the temple is open only to those with a valid temple recommend.

For more information, see “Temples” under Frequently Asked Questions at [Mormon.org](http://Mormon.org).

By receiving all of the saving ordinances of the priesthood, all people can receive the promise of “all that [the] Father hath” (see D&C 84:35–38).

“Incredible blessings flow from this oath and covenant to worthy men, women, and children in all the world,” taught Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.<sup>5</sup>

### LEARN MORE ABOUT THE OATH AND COVENANT OF THE PRIESTHOOD

See Henry B. Eyring, “Faith and the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 61.

### The Endowment

The temple endowment is a gift that provides perspective and power.

During the temple endowment we receive instructions and make covenants related to our eternal exaltation. Associated with the endowment are the ordinances of washing and anointing and being clothed in temple garments as a reminder of sacred covenants.<sup>6</sup> Temple ordinances and covenants are so sacred that they are not discussed in detail outside of the temple. Because of that, President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, advised, “It is important that you listen carefully as these ordinances are administered and that you try to remember the blessings promised and the conditions upon which they will be realized.”<sup>7</sup>

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that the key to receiving divine power to overcome opposition and move the Church forward “is the covenant we make in the temple—our promise to obey and sacrifice, to consecrate unto the Father, and His promise to empower us with ‘a great endowment.’”<sup>8</sup>

You can learn more about the principles behind the covenants we make in the endowment by studying the following:

- “Obedience,” *Gospel Principles* (2009), 200–206.
- M. Russell Ballard, “The Law of Sacrifice,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1998, 6.
- On “the law of [the] gospel” (D&C 104:18), see Doctrine and Covenants 42.
- “The Law of Chastity,” *Gospel Principles* (2009), 224–32.
- D. Todd Christofferson, “Reflections on a Consecrated Life,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 16.

### LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ENDOWMENT

See *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple* (2002), 28–35; David A. Bednar, “Honorably Hold a Name and Standing,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 97.

### The Sealing

The temple ordinance referred to as “temple marriage” or “being sealed” creates an eternal relationship between husband and wife that can last beyond death if the spouses are faithful. Parent and child relationships can also be perpetuated beyond mortality, linking generations together in eternal family relationships.

When an individual enters into the covenant of marriage in the temple, he or she makes covenants with both God *and* with his or her spouse. Spouses promise faithfulness to each other and to God. They are promised exaltation and that their family relationships can continue throughout eternity (see D&C 132:19–20). Children born to a couple who were sealed in the temple or children who are later sealed to their parents have the right to be part of an eternal family.

As in other ordinances, individual faithfulness to our covenants is required for the earthly ordinance to be sealed, or made valid,



in heaven by the Holy Spirit of Promise.<sup>9</sup> Individuals who keep their covenants—even when their spouse does not—do not forfeit the blessings promised in the sealing.

#### LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SEALING

See Russell M. Nelson, “Generations Linked in Love,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 91.

### Making and Keeping Sacred Covenants

As we enter into these important covenants, we become partakers of the new and everlasting covenant, “even the fulness of [the gospel of Jesus Christ]” (D&C 66:2). The new and everlasting covenant is “the sum total of all gospel covenants and obligations” we’ve made,<sup>10</sup> and the resulting blessings include all that the Father has, including eternal life.

As we strive to understand and keep our covenants, we should remember that keeping our covenants is not merely a list of things to do but a commitment to *become* like the Savior.

“The Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*,” taught Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “It is an



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acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have *become*. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.”<sup>11</sup> ■

#### NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Happiness—the Universal Quest,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1993, 4.
2. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 20.1.
3. See Russell M. Nelson, “Covenants,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 86.
4. Delbert L. Stapley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1965, 14; see also *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 561; *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 220.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Covenants,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 88.
6. See Russell M. Nelson, “Prepare for the Blessings of the Temple,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2010, 46.
7. Boyd K. Packer, “Come to the Temple,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2007, 20.
8. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Keeping Covenants: A Message for Those Who Will Serve a Mission,” *New Era*, Jan. 2012, 4.
9. See “Holy Ghost,” *True to the Faith* (2004), 82; see also D&C 132:7, 18–19, 26.
10. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:156.
11. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32.