

Take Your Selfie to the Temple

By Jessica Hansen and Tiffany Pontius

The challenge: encourage members of the ward to attend the temple. The solution? Selfies.

Jessica: As a newly called ward temple committee leader, I heard the bishop's words to me ringing in my head for months: "Sister Hansen, let's not be afraid to do more than just plan a regularly scheduled temple trip." I knew that Heavenly Father wanted our ward to be more diligent in attending the temple—especially since we lived in an area with temples nearby—but I wasn't sure how to make that happen. I talked to people, prayed about it, studied the topic often, and slowly I started to see pieces of what the Lord wanted us to do.

Then one Sunday I woke up knowing exactly what to do. We would call it #takeyourselfietothetemple.

A Miracle Unfolds

Every week for nine weeks we would attend the temple. Afterward we would each take a picture (or "selfie") in front of the temple and post the photo, along with our testimony, on social media.

Over the next nine weeks we watched a miracle unfold. Members of our ward were attending the temple and posting their selfies and testimonies constantly. They were taking their friends and family with them. Members who were normally silent or shy at church suddenly had a lot to share in their posts. And for some, like Tiffany, this activity was an answer to prayers.

A Lack of Motivation

Tiffany: Growing up as a member of the Church in Texas, USA, had its challenges, one of which was access to the temple. As a child, I traveled five hours with my family to visit the temple in Dallas. Then the Houston Texas Temple was built only two hours away.

We've all been counseled to attend the temple as often as our circumstances allow, but for us that was usually only once a quarter.

In college, I lived only minutes away from a temple, yet I rarely attended. It just wasn't high on my list of priorities. After college, I moved to an area where there was more than one temple nearby, and in three and a half years I had been to only one of them.

I always felt like I should increase my temple attendance but had no motivation to do so. I've always been a very spiritual person and felt like I didn't need the temple to increase my spirituality.

One day I found myself talking to a friend about my lack of testimony concerning the temple, and he suggested that it could be from a lack of consistent temple attendance. I started praying for the desire to attend the temple.

And then our ward invited us to #takeyourselfietothetemple.

No More Excuses

Suddenly I couldn't make excuses not to attend the temple. People were depending on me, and I wanted to be a good example by participating. My friends on Facebook who weren't even members of my ward started

commenting on what we were doing and—amazingly—started participating as well. Everyone had a newfound enthusiasm for attending the temple and sharing gospel truths through social media.

But the most amazing thing was how people's testimonies of the temple—mine included—changed as they shared them. We went from sharing simple truths to sharing profound and personal thoughts. The sacred and peaceful feelings of the temple stayed with those who participated—and with friends who saw their selfies and testimonies on social media.

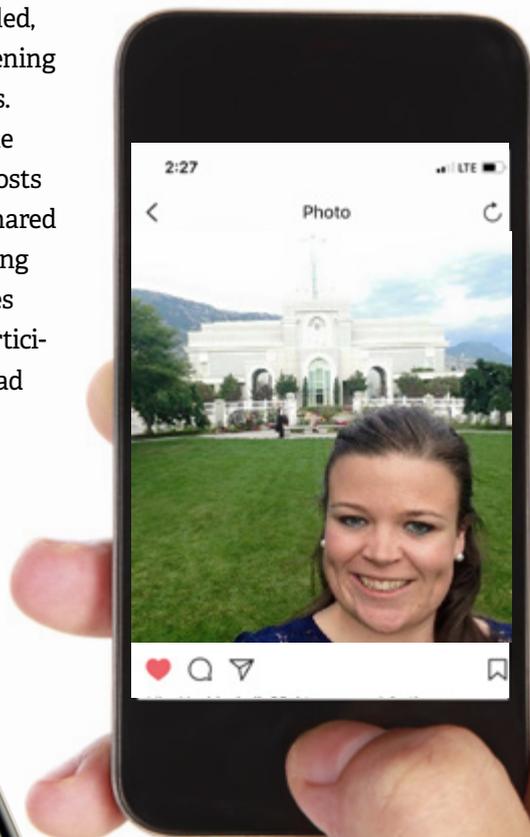
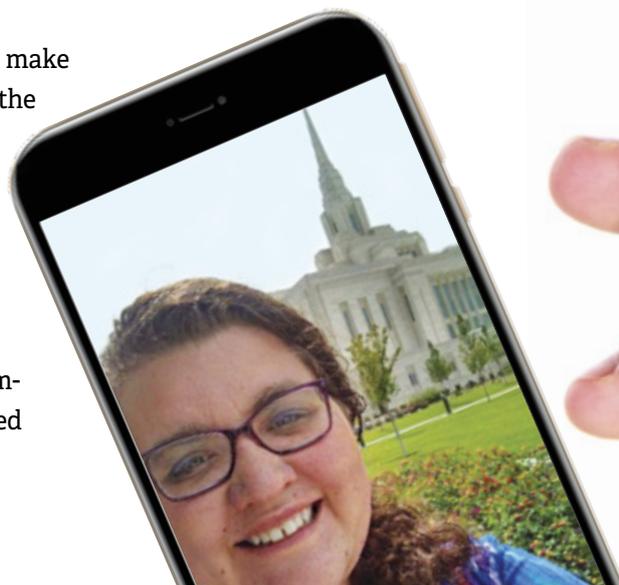
Reflecting on Our Experiences

When the nine weeks ended, our ward hosted a home evening to reflect on our experiences. We watched a video of all the selfies (there were over 80 posts on social media) and then shared our testimonies. The following Sunday our ward boundaries changed. Some who had participated felt that the temple had

given us the spiritual strength we needed to prepare us for whatever Heavenly Father had in store for us.

Jessica and I both took note of the miracles we personally experienced. Jessica felt the Lord guiding her in her calling, allowing her to touch the lives of ward members needing spiritual strength. I gained a testimony of the blessings of attending the temple, and I now attend regularly. Both of us saw answers to our prayers—and the miracles that happen when you make the effort and sacrifice to attend the temple. ■

Tiffany Pontius (below right) lives in Utah, USA. Jessica Hansen (below left) now lives in Wyoming, USA.



SELFIE OF JESSICA HANSEN IN FRONT OF OGDEN UTAH TEMPLE; SELFIE OF TIFFANY PONTIUS IN FRONT OF MOUNT TIMPANOGOS UTAH TEMPLE; IMAGES OF PHONES FROM GETTY IMAGES