

“Lessons Learned from the Salt Lake Temple”

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I am standing on Temple Square — the scene behind me looks much different than it did just one year ago! Extensive renovations are being made to the Salt Lake Temple to shore up the foundation. It is time consuming, it is expensive, and it is messy! Do you ever feel like your life is a bit like this? You want to be the very best possible version of yourself and that renovation process can be messy as well.

I am reminded of the quote from C. S. Lewis: “Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of — throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.”¹

I see Temple Square nearly every day and have thought a lot about this reconstruction process and lessons learned. I’d like to share just a few of these lessons with you wonderful students studying with BYU-Pathway Worldwide.

Lesson #1: Much of revelation is not about the “what,” but about the “when.”

I heard Elder David A. Bednar teach this truth when talking about this massive project. He said that Church leaders have known for some time of the work needed to bring the temple up to modern building codes, but the time was not right. The technology, the equipment, and the right team were not available. Now they are, and look at what’s happening! Sometimes we know something needs to happen in our lives. We may pray for an answer and feel like we are not getting it. Trust the Lord and His timing. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows what and who we need now and what and who we will need tomorrow. If we trust Him, He will get us up to code to last for the eternities.

Lesson #2: Worthwhile endeavors take much time and much effort.

The Salt Lake Temple took 40 years to build! The pioneers experienced many setbacks, and the process was slow and grueling. What if those pioneers had given up? What if they said, “This is just too hard” and quit? The renovation on this temple will take years — not 40 years, but the process will not be quick! Some of the worthy dreams and goals in our lives are not going to be reached in a day, a month, or even a year — and reaching them will not always be easy. Just think of what you are in the process of achieving right now as you continue your education! Don’t give up on those things you feel prompted to do. Think of this temple and keep working toward your goals and righteous desires. It is worth it.

Lesson #3: Repentance makes us stronger and is a lifelong process.

The current renovation is just the latest in a long history of renovations. The temple has been almost constantly repaired and renovated since it was dedicated. Walls have been moved, air conditioning added, electrical systems changed, along with many other things. Our lives are also in constant need of repair and upgrade. The process of repentance, self-improvement, and testimony building is a lifetime endeavor.

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952), 205

The temple foundation is being strengthened by pumping in a special concrete to fill in any cracks that may have been left during the original construction or that have developed over the years. This temple is built of granite, and it weighs as much as an aircraft carrier. The cracks in the foundation needed to be fixed even though no one could see them. There are cracks in all of our lives, challenges that perhaps no one else can see. These cracks can be filled in as we repent — cracks that can be filled in because Jesus Christ atoned for every one of our sins and shortcomings, because His grace can make us whole. Actually, repentance is not just about fixing cracks but making us stronger and better than we were before, just like the temple.

Lesson #4: We can reflect the light of Christ.

I am standing at one of my favorite spots on Temple Square — a place where you can see the Salt Lake Temple reflected in this beautiful calm pool of water.

The prophet Alma in the Book of Mormon asks the members of the Church some important questions. One of them is: “Can ye look up to God ... with a pure heart and clean hands ... having the image of God engraven upon your countenances?”² In other words, when others look at you, can they see the light of Christ reflected?

To see a reflection, there must be light. When we know who and whose we are — beloved sons and daughters of heavenly parents with divine natures and an eternal destiny³ — we will be more likely to reflect the light of Jesus Christ. We will be more likely to see clearly in a world that is increasingly dark.

Lesson #5: No one ever drifted into holiness.

In this reflecting pool, one can see the windows, the doors, the spires of the temple, and the inscribed words, “Holiness to the Lord.” I am reminded that John Stott, an Anglican priest, said, “No one ever drifted into holiness.”⁴ Echoing that thought, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught that “nothing worthwhile ever just happens.”⁵ In other words, we need to be intentional and deliberate about developing the quality of holiness in our lives! Even the most ordinary of tasks, done with intention, can help our efforts to be more holy.

If holiness is what we seek, then we need to be found in holy places. These places include temples, our churches, and our homes. One of the reasons these places are holy is because they are dedicated. To dedicate means “to set apart ... for a sacred purpose.”⁶ It is a verb — an action word. If temples, chapels, and homes are dedicated as holy places — and if I want my life to be holy — then I must dedicate my life to that purpose. “Holiness to the Lord”: These words carved into this temple and every temple are words I want carved into my heart.

A foundation. Light. Water. Holiness. Visual reminders of our sure foundation, the Light of the World, Living Water, The Holy One of Israel. I testify that Jesus Christ lives, that His light and His love are real, and that He is doing His work within us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

² [Alma 5:19](#)

³ See “[The Family: A Proclamation to the World](#),” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129

⁴ John R.W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians, The Bible Speaks Today* (1982)

⁵ Jeffrey R. Holland, “[Face to Face with Young Single Adults with Elder Holland](#)” (Worldwide YSA event, March 8, 2016), churchofjesuschrist.org/broadcasts

⁶ *Dictionary.com*, s.v. “[dedicate](#),” accessed Sept. 10, 2020, dictionary.com/browse/dedicate