For a faithful Latter-day Saint, there is only one way to be married—the Lord’s way, in one of his holy temples. There, in the terminology of the temple and the Church, the bride and groom are sealed in the temple ordinance. The ramifications and nuances surrounding the word sealing make it of much greater significance than simply being married.

One of the most important lessons to learn about a temple sealing or marriage is that you cannot just decide to get married and then run off to the nearest temple.

There are considerable details that must be attended to before you can be married in the temple. Some have to do with the laws of the Church and some have to do with the laws of the land. And since the Church’s thirteen operating temples are in thirteen different locations—in five different countries—there are different legal requirements that must be met.

A most important point to underline is that if you are considering marriage in a certain temple, you should definitely write or contact in person the president of that temple and request the necessary information. (See addresses in box.)

Following are some of the details that you will have to consider:

**Laws of the Land**

1. **Serological Tests.** Nearly every government where temples are located requires blood tests for detection of venereal disease. Where this requirement exists, a certificate showing the results of those tests is required, and later should be attached to the marriage license. Generally, a licensed physician can perform the test. However, it takes time to get the results back—from three days to a week in California, for example. Usually out-of-state certificates are acceptable (however, first check to see if your state’s test is accepted in the state in which the temple is located) if the test was taken within thirty days prior to your application for your marriage license. But in Canada, the tests must be made within two weeks of the application. Utah accepts tests from any other state, as well as from Canada, if they’re made within thirty days prior to your application for a marriage license.

2. **Marriage License.** In the United States and Canada you must take to the temple a legal license that permits you to marry. This license can be obtained in the county or state in which the temple is located. In some locations you might have to qualify in residency before a license can be granted. Hence, the first rule is to find out what you have to do to get a license that will be applicable at
the temple in which you desire to be sealed. Then find out when and where you can apply for the license. To obtain a license, a nominal charge of $3 to $5 is usually required by the government.

3. Consent. Even if you qualify for a license, you may have to have your parents with you to give written consent for you to marry, depending upon your age. For example, if you wish to marry in the temple in Alberta, Canada, and are between eighteen and twenty-one years of age, you must be accompanied to the Issuer of Licenses by one parent or guardian who must sign written consent. Persons between sixteen and eighteen must be accompanied by both parents, and both must give written consent. In Utah, if the bridegroom is under twenty-one or the bride under eighteen, a license may be obtained provided the bridegroom and/or bride presents a notarized statement giving consent of his/her father, mother, or legal guardian if one of these cannot be present. Again—learn the local requirements.

4. Waiting Period. Some governmental entities require a waiting period between the date you apply for your license and the date that you may receive it. For example, residents of Hawaii must wait four days; however, the waiting period is waived for nonresidents. Some states require that the marriage not be performed until two to four days after the license is received. To learn these details; investigate!

5. Civil Ceremony Preceding Temple Sealing. Marriages in temples in the United States and Canada are recognized by the law of the land as approved marriages, but laws in London, Switzerland, and New Zealand require persons desiring to be sealed in these temples to be married civilly first. In New Zealand, for example, the law requires that all marriages be performed in a place that is open to the public. Consequently, couples are generally married civilly first in the visitors center chapel or one of the ward chapels, following which they go immediately to the temple for their sealing. Obviously, all this influences somewhat your plans for your wedding day.

Laws of Both Land and Church

Witnesses. Witnesses who can attest to the fact that you were indeed married are usually required throughout the world, and there is no exception in the temple. The Lord requires witnesses of this event—two male members of the Church who have valid and current temple recommends. When convenient, you may arrange for the selection of your two witnesses, who will sign your marriage papers at the temple. However, if you go alone to the temple and do not have witnesses available, the temple will provide them.

Laws and Procedures of the Church

1. Temple Marriage Recommend. No person may enter the temple for marriage—or even view a temple marriage—who does not have a valid and current temple recommend. These recommends are secured from your own bishop and stake president after a searching interview with them. (See page 26 for a review of some of the points of discussion.) However, the recommend for a temple sealing or marriage is filled out differently from one you might have received before. Consequently a new recommend must be secured for the marriage. On it, your baptismal date must be entered, and there must be indication that this recommend is for marriage.
2. Less than a Year. The general rule of the Church is that a person may not apply for a temple recommend until he has been a member of the Church for one year, unless he receives written permission from the First Presidency granting permission for his sealing and/or early endowment. This letter must be presented with the temple recommend. Also, if a couple are civilly married and then decide later that they wish to be sealed in the temple (in contrast to special conditions, such as those in New Zealand, as noted above in number five), the general rule of the Church is that they may not apply for a temple recommend until one year from the date of their civil marriage. Any exception must be in writing from the First Presidency granting permission for the sealing. Permission in both instances is received through priesthood channels that begin with the bishop.

3. Time and Date. A very common mistake is for couples to make their wedding plans and then discover that they cannot be married at the hour, day, or even week that they have planned. The first rule, in this regard, is to determine when the temple in which you wish to be married is open for marriages. For example, all temples are closed on Monday evenings (home evening Church-wide). Hence, don’t plan a Monday night marriage. In fact, for the Arizona, Hawaii, Idaho Falls, Los Angeles, Manti, New Zealand, Oakland, St. George, and Swiss temples, don’t even plan on Monday. These temples are closed all day Mondays. Next, determine the time of day temple marriage sessions are conducted. For example, it won’t do you any good to come to the Oakland Temple Wednesday at 2:00 P.M. hoping to have a temple marriage. Marriage sessions are only at 8:00 A.M. Tuesday through Friday, 7:45 A.M. Saturday, and 7:00 P.M. Tuesday. Each temple has its own schedule, a copy of which has been provided your bishop. Space does not permit printing here all of their schedules, but you should consult them in advance. In fact, nearly all temples appreciate your contacting them in advance to make reservations.

Then there is the matter of vacations. Some temples close during general conferences of the Church. Three temples in Utah close during the month of July. The Los Angeles Temple is closed all during August and into September; the Arizona Temple is closed during August; the New Zealand Temple is closed most of January and into February. Knowing the time of year in which you wish to be married, you must then see if the temple is open at that time. Often, during a vacation or holiday period, the temple may be opened for one day for marriage sessions. Check to find out which day this is. This pattern generally applies to the Christmas holiday period; most temples close a week before Christmas and open after the New Year begins, with perhaps one day open in the holiday period to accommodate marriages. You must check the temple of your choice to discover these dates.

4. Endowment and Sealing. No person may be sealed in marriage until he has received his endowment. However, there are three ways you may arrange for the two events—the endowment session and the temple sealing. (1) You may receive both your own endowment and your temple marriage on the same day. This is the way many brides plan their day. (2) You may receive your own endowment prior to your wedding day (allowing you to go through the temple one or more times before your sealing so you feel comfortable in the temple and understand fully the purposes of the temple). In this case you may plan what is called a “scheduled marriage”; that is, the couple enters only for the sealing. However, when this is the case, arrangements and scheduling are required in advance. (3) Couples who have received their endowments prior to their wedding day may desire to attend an endowment session preceding their marriage so that the great purposes of the temple will be clearly in mind when they are sealed.

The advantages of each method will probably be determined in part by the circumstances surround-
ing each individual couple. In terms of planning, from the time you enter the temple until you leave, you should plan to spend three and a half to four hours for a first-time endowment session and your marriage. The sealing experience alone, together with counsel given by the person who officiates, will generally average approximately twenty minutes. Another factor affecting time is that you are usually required to be at the temple from thirty to forty-five minutes early when you receive your own endowments on your wedding day, and sometimes a half hour early for a scheduled sealing (that is, if you are not attending a session).

5. Temple Clothing. Special clothing is required within the temple, and a discussion with your bishop will acquaint you with information as to appropriate clothing.

6. Wedding Dresses. Brides may wear their wedding dresses through the temple if these dresses meet accepted standards: white, high-neck or provided with a dickie, wrist-length sleeves, long skirt length. Trains are not recommended and hence should be detachable. Large hoop dresses are generally not recommended either, so the hoop should be detachable if your dress has one. Incidentally, there are many shades of white, so do not be too concerned about the shade, as long as it is white. All temples have white dresses that are satisfactory for a temple sealing in case you do not have your own wedding dress. Ask the temple matron about this, if it applies.

7. Storage of the Wedding Dress. Most temples have arrangements whereby wedding gowns may be delivered to the temple prior to your arrival. The gowns will be taken to a bride’s dressing room and held for you. Advise the temple in advance, however, so the attendants can look for your dress’s arrival.

8. Number of Guests. Because the sealing rooms vary in their capacity, you should inform the temple presidency (when you make reservations) how many guests you expect to witness your sealing. Again, only persons who have received their own endowments may witness the sealing, and they must have current and valid temple recommends. In terms of the number of guests, you should remember to invite a limited number—a number appropriate to an intimate and sacred ceremony.

9. Inform Guests of Time and Clothing Requirements. You may wish some guests to attend with you during your endowment session (if you select this alternative). Other guests may have time only to witness your sealing. In either case you must inform these guests when they should arrive at the temple. Double-check this information with the temple—many mistakes happen here. Most temples require that guests dress in temple clothing, even if they come only to witness your sealing. A few temples, because of the arrangement of their rooms (Salt Lake and Swiss temples, for example) permit guests with temple recommends to witness the sealing dressed in street clothing, if dressed modestly: men with white, long-sleeved shirt, tie, and jacket, and women appropriately dressed—no miniskirts or slacks. Check with the presidency of the temple in which you are interested.

10. Officiator. Most temple presidents make sealing assignments among the presidency and other officially ordained temple sealers to handle temple marriages. However, if you know someone who has the authority to perform sealings, and if you desire him to marry you, permission is often arranged through the temple presidency if you make your desires known. Because the General Authorities have heavy schedules, the Saints have been asked not to request them to perform marriages, except in cases of relatives and close acquaintances of the General Authorities.
11. **Language.** In a worldwide church it is natural that language should become an important factor. It would be unfortunate if you were to plan your wedding on a day or at a time when the language at the temple was other than English. The Arizona, Los Angeles, Hawaii, Oakland, and Swiss temples all have sessions in languages other than English. Again, check with the temple president to verify that your marriage is scheduled at a time when English will be spoken.

12. **Picture-taking on the Grounds.** Cameras are not permitted in the temple. Since pictures of the bride in her wedding dress and the groom in his street clothes are often permitted on the temple grounds following the marriage, you may use a photographer who does not have a recommend. Consequently, those taking pictures must wait in the temple’s outer foyer until you are ready to have your picture taken on the temple grounds. You may wish to telephone the photographer when you are ready, allowing him sufficient time to arrive.

13. **Other Information.** Each temple will supply you or your bishop with all the necessary information that you need to know in order to adequately plan your temple marriage. You are always at liberty to telephone the temple (ask for the marriage clerk) or to write to the temple president.

One final thought: This list may seem overwhelming, but it’s not. It’s really very simple, and there are many persons who are eager to help you. Furthermore, no wedding should be planned without attention given to the myriads of details that go into making your wedding day the beginning of the rest of your life.