“What are the requirements for a person to receive a temple recommend for marriage?”

Answer/Brother Malcolm S. Jeppsen

“The temple has always been mysterious to me,” said Mary, as she and Phil visited with me, her bishop, that Sunday afternoon. They were planning a marriage in the temple in June, and already it was the end of March. “I have always wondered what goes on inside and can hardly believe that I have become old enough to be married there for time and eternity.”

First let me congratulate you for your wisdom in coming to me early and letting me help you with your temple plans,” I said. “You know, many young people wait until late in their plans to visit with their bishop, and occasionally this causes real problems. Especially can this be true if announcements have already been sent out telling of a planned temple marriage. But most important, let me talk to you about some of the things required of you and Phil to enter the temple and be married there. I congratulate you two for your desire to go to this sacred place and there begin your married life together. Those who do so have an eternity of possibilities before them, you know.”

Mary asked what the requirements were to enter the temple. “You know, it’s really not mysterious,” I said, “but rather something that is too sacred to discuss except within the walls of the Lord’s holy house. There are several basic requirements for a temple recommend that you and Phil have already accomplished. Let me tell you what they are. You have both been baptized by the authority of the priesthood and confirmed members of the Church. Phil, you’re already an elder and hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, and that’s a requirement. Next, you both need a testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel. President Joseph Fielding Smith said in his book The Way to Perfection that no man or woman should ever enter the holy temples of our Father in heaven before having a testimony of the truthfulness of the restored gospel. And you’ll need to each have your own endowments before you can be married for time and eternity.”

At this point Phil interrupted. “What is having one’s own endowment?”

“The endowment,” I continued, “is instruction coupled with covenants that prepare us to enter into the highest order of eternal marriage and jointly be candidates for godhood. Brigham Young said of it, ‘Let me give you a definition in brief. Your endowment is to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled...”
to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell.’” (Journal of Discourses, 2:31.)

“What other requirements are there,” asked Mary. I then told her how important it was to be personally worthy.

“Probably more young couples fail to meet the requirements relating to this than any other,” I continued. “There must have been no unrepented moral uncleanness prior to marriage, including heavy petting, fornication, homosexuality, or similar transgression, because the powers of procreation are most sacred. Only the simplest forms of affection should be expressed between those who date, and when passions become unrestrained during that time, it is most offensive to the Lord. Even immoral thoughts are displeasing to him. If transgressions have occurred, repentance must be complete, including sufficient time elapse before one can be admitted to the temple.”

At this point I read to them from the Doctrine and Covenants 97:15–17: “And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it;

“Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God.

“But if it be defiled I will not come into it, and my glory shall not be there; for I will not come into unholy temples.” [D&C 97:15–17]

“Can you see how important it is to be morally clean before entering the Lord’s holy place?” I said.

President Marion G. Romney said in the Improvement Era (February 1965, p. 120), “God grant that we may be worthy to stand in His presence when we come here. To come unworthily into this temple and receive our endowments will not prove to be a blessing to us.”

“I can see that one must be really morally worthy to enter His house,” said Mary.

Then I outlined several other requirements. “One must live the Word of Wisdom, including abstaining from coffee, tea, alcohol, and tobacco. Abusive use of drugs should also be avoided. And one must live the law of tithing and receive the blessings that come from this expression of unselfishness.”

“These things aren’t difficult for us,” said Phil. “Are there others?”

“Yes,” I said. “It’s a requirement that you be willing to sustain the local leaders and the General Authorities of the Church. Only as we stand in obedience to the teachings and commandments of the Lord, including those he gives through his living prophet and those who preside with him, can the atonement of Jesus Christ apply to us, and we be worthy to enter the temple. It’s important that we be honest in everything we do, really honest in dealing with our fellowman. We have to live righteous lives in all that we do, striving to keep all the rules, laws, and commandments of the gospel, and to attend sacrament, priesthood, and other meetings designed for our spiritual improvement. And one
other thing. You can’t have any sympathetic feelings toward any of the apostate groups whose teachings are counter to the accepted doctrines of the Church.

“In summary,” I said, “it’s required of all who would enter into the temple for the purpose of celestial marriage that they be prepared, worthy, and valiant in the kingdom of God on earth. Then their blessings will abound and the Spirit of the Lord will be felt.

“There is another requirement I’d like to mention,” I said. “Because of the sacred nature of celestial or eternal marriage, it becomes doubly important that those who enter into it would be prepared to do so. I would almost think that it was a requirement that there be an intellectual preparation, if you see what I mean. Those who would so marry should be mature and in full control of their emotions. They should have, it seems to me, a distinct willingness to share and a commitment to live by principles. Someone getting married in the temple should have the ability to control his life and himself and be willing and able to sacrifice for the future.”

Mary and Phil sat thoughtfully for a moment and reflected on the discussion that they had been involved in. “Let me read you two sentences from President Harold B. Lee’s article in the Improvement Era for June 1967 (p. 144),” I said. “‘When you enter a holy temple, you are by that course gaining fellowship with the saints in God’s eternal kingdom, where time is no more. In the temples of your God you are endowed not with a rich legacy of worldly treasure, but with a wealth of eternal riches that are above price. The temple ceremonies are designed by a wise Heavenly Father who has revealed them to us in these last days as a guide and a protection throughout our lives, that you and I might not fail to merit exaltation in the celestial kingdom where God and Christ dwell.’”

“That’s quite a list of requirements and lots to ponder,” said Mary.

“I agree,” I said. “But when you kneel across the altar with your chosen companion and you know you are worthy to be in the house of the Lord, you will personally know that every effort was really worth it.”

“How can you keep a reception or open house more personal and in the spirit of the occasion?”

Answer/Sister Ruth Hardy Funk

The six golden spires above the gleaming white, seven-story building shone in the November sun. It was a windy day. It was an inspiring day. The Washington Temple was being dedicated, and thousands had traveled thousands of miles to participate. Standing outside after one of the meetings was a young bishop and his wife. They came from Indianapolis with four teenage youths to participate in this glorious occasion.

The President of the Church was about to exit the temple. The bishop and those with him waited patiently to catch a glimpse of the man they sustain as prophet, seer, and revelator. There he was! As he came through the doors, he looked over the crowd of Saints who had been asked to clear a path for his departure. He moved through them unhurried, shaking hands and smiling warmly. He extended his arms as far back into the crowd as he could to reach as many hands as possible.

He finally reached young Bishop Gurney, his wife, and their small party of youths. Linda Surface
was one of them. She was noticeably self-conscious, and as her hair tossed and swirled in the whip-
ning wind, she fought with both hands to control it. President Kimball saw her, took her nervous
hand, and comforted her: “Don’t worry about your hair, you are beautiful as you are.”

Then he took the bishop’s wife by the hand: “Thank you so much for waiting for me.” And to the
bishop he gave a similar grateful greeting.

How can you keep a reception or open house more personal and in the spirit of the occasion—or
any social gathering for that matter?

As in all things our president sets the example. And he follows the example of the Master: “By this
shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:35.) President
Kimball demonstrated in those simple acts outside the Washington Temple that November day the
graciousness, love, and concern for others that show “love one to another.” That mark alone will
make any social gathering warm, pleasant, and filled with the proper spirit.

Our concern for others makes a difference in our attitude, our treatment of others, our preparation,
and our own enjoyment of an occasion. When we have concern for others, the preparation for an
occasion of any nature is something special. Expense is not the key to successful preparation; the
key is the care taken with each detail to ensure that each person invited will be comfortable and
treated with graciousness. People are inestimably more important than things.

Have in mind for whom you are preparing—your loved ones, dear friends, people you want to make
feel welcome and at home. What would they enjoy? When they come, what will make them feel at
ease? How would they like to be greeted? Consider fresh or dried flowers to add color and a feeling
of happiness; music, the singing of children or favorite friends; specially prepared foods, etc. The
extra touch of preparedness tells people you care about them.

During the occasion seek those who seem to be alone—help them to become acquainted with oth-
ers. Let each person know you are sincerely happy to see them. If embarrassing situations arise, trust
in the medicine of quiet laughter, and then quickly divert attention away from the incident.

During the entire event your concern for others will automatically blossom into glowing warmth felt
by everyone. There is great joy and pleasure in making our first concern the benefit of others.

The sensitive comments of President Kimball that November day outside the Washington Temple—
those of love toward others—should be our guide in all we do. The act is simple if the correct prin-
ciple is followed. The correct principle, as King Benjamin counseled, is forgetting ourselves and
acting on our concern for others so we “might rejoice and be filled with love towards God and all
men.” (Mosiah 2:4.)

“What will I be allowed to wear my wedding dress to my temple marriage or sealing? If so,
are there special requirements that I can know about before my marriage so that I can
design my dress accordingly?”

Answer/Sister Jasmine R. Edmunds
This is your wedding day! From the time you were a little girl you began to weave in your mind dreams of this day—this glorious time when you would have found the perfect man who loved you and wanted you beside him through all the years to come. You will be so beautiful for him today! You will wear a marvelous gown; your face and eyes are glowing with happiness and expectation, and he will think you are the loveliest bride in all the world.

You are one of the daughters of Zion—a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Your marriage this day will have a special quality; you and your sweetheart have kept yourselves clean and pure, and you are one of those blessed couples who are eligible to be married in the house of the Lord—his holy temple. This, you know, will entitle you to receive all the blessings of eternal life if, together, you will be true and faithful.

Years ago you began preparations for this day of days. Recently your mind has been crowded with questions: Can you wear your beautiful wedding-reception dress to your temple ceremony? You want it to be the most beautiful dress in all the world, with lace, or beads and embroidery, and maybe even a train. And your shoes? Can they have high heels? Will your mother or one you love be allowed to assist you in the temple as you dress for your wedding? Can you have outside photographs taken in your wedding dress and veil with the temple in the background? For all these questions you need answers so that this wedding day of yours will be perfect. You want to come to the house of the Lord with assurance and love and joy in your heart, ready to feel his Spirit and receive the blessings reserved for you.

In the Salt Lake Temple, and in all the temples of the Church, the dress requirements are much the same. You can, indeed, wear your lovely bridal gown for your marriage (or temple sealing). It may be made in any appropriate style becoming to you. The gown must be white, including trim. It may be decorated with lace and/or seed pearls or small beads. However, sequins or very showy trim is inappropriate. You may have a train on your gown, but for your convenience, it should be so arranged that you can comfortably carry it. Your wedding gown should have long sleeves and a modestly high neck. If, for any reason, your gown does not meet the full requirements of the temple, the bride’s room is supplied with lovely yokes and sleeve linings in all materials to match and enhance your gown so that it will be acceptable for your temple ceremony.

The all-white slippers worn by you in the temple with your gown should have no heels or very low heels and should be simple in style. You may wear a higher heel when you have photographs taken outside in the temple gardens.

If you have parents or family members who do not hold temple recommends, they may wait in the temple foyer while you are being married and then join you in the temple gardens for pictures. In the temple you will not have use for your “illusion” or wedding veil, but you may bring it with you and use it for your photographs on the temple grounds.

The giving or exchange of wedding rings is not part of the temple marriage ceremony, but it is a beautiful custom and is permitted in the temple.

Corsages and wedding bouquets are not used in the temple.

If you desire to use your wedding gown in subsequent temple visits, you will want to design your
gown very simply and probably plan removable trim and decoration. Simplicity of dress is in keeping with the spirit in the house of the Lord.

If for some reason you do not have or do not desire to prepare a special wedding gown of your own, you will find lovely wedding dresses in the Salt Lake Temple that can be rented by you for use in the temple.

Your mother or one who is near to you may accompany and assist you throughout your temple marriage ceremony (provided, of course, she has her temple recommend):

And now, at last, that most important day of your life is here. As you come to the temple of the Lord, you come knowing that the gifts and blessings given you this day will make it possible for you to receive exaltation or eternal life. You are today’s precious youth; you are coming to the temple to be united for all eternity to the one you love. Yes, come and don your beautiful wedding gown; come with your hair shining and bright; come with your eyes glowing like stars; come to be married in the house of the Lord! But know always that it is your pure heart and clean mind, your love for each other and for all mankind, your faith, your humility, your willingness to walk in His paths and obey His laws that will keep that glorious joy in your hearts. You lovely brides and young men of the royal priesthood of God, come to the temple on your wedding day—and may you resolve to keep those laws that will assure you an everlasting joy and an eternal marriage.

“How long is the temple marriage ceremony?”

Answer/Brother Robert L. Backman

The actual temple marriage ceremony lasts less than five minutes, but the beautiful relationship that begins at that altar in God’s holy house will extend beyond the grave and throughout eternity, dependent only on the faithfulness of the marriage partners.

Being the crowning ordinance of the gospel of Jesus Christ, this sealing ceremony opens the door to exaltation and eternal lives in the celestial kingdom. Without exchanging those glorious covenants and promises with God and our beloved; we close the door on achieving those celestial goals. The Lord has warned us in no uncertain terms that temple marriage is absolutely essential to our inheriting eternal lives. In the great revelation he gave to Joseph Smith on eternal marriage, the Lord declared:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.” (D&C 132:21.)

In the Salt Lake Temple where I serve as a sealer, the couple to be married may approach marriage in one of two ways. They may go to the temple to receive their endowments and then make an appointment for the marriage ceremony on a subsequent date, or they may proceed directly from the endowment session to the marriage. In any event each couple is given a half-hour reservation of a sealing room where this sacred ordinance will be performed.

The couple is asked to be at the temple an hour before the appointed time so temple officials can check the marriage license and related papers and prepare the necessary documents for the record-
ing of the marriage. The bride then proceeds to the lovely bride’s room where she can change into her wedding gown and temple robes. At the same time the bridegroom dresses in his temple clothes. In both cases temple workers are on hand to give very special care and attention to the couple on such an important occasion.

Everything in the temple enhances the sacred importance of the wedding day so that the experience in the house of the Lord is a never-to-be-forgotten event in the lives of both bride and groom.

The sealing room is large enough to seat family and close friends but small enough to provide an intimate atmosphere for all who are present. There could be no more sacred setting for a marriage.

Prior to performing the marriage ceremony the sealer will talk to the couple, giving them solid advice and counsel about their marriage and their new life together. He may point out to them the new dimensions of their lives and give them some guidelines by which they can build a successful relationship in unity and love. He may stress the vital importance of the covenants of an eternal marriage and the responsibility of the couple to live worthy of fulfillment of the celestial blessings that are the promise of a temple marriage. Every sealer draws on his own experience to make these few minutes a very personal prelude to the sealing ordinance. These are very tender moments for the bride, groom, and everyone present.

There are few sights so touching and inspiring as a handsome couple kneeling across from each other at the altar. Often I have asked the groom if he has ever seen anyone more beautiful than his radiant bride. One young man responded, “No artist could paint such a lovely picture.” His eloquent reply expresses the feelings of all his fellow grooms on that special occasion.

As the couple gaze into each other’s eyes with complete trust and confidence, knowing that they are clean and worthy of exchanging eternal promises with each other and with the Lord, they often shed unrestrained tears of joy during the course of the ceremony. As often as I have repeated the words of that beautiful ceremony, I always sense a real thrill in realizing that I am a conduit between God and the couple in sealing them for eternity. It is the greatest privilege of my life!

Because of the sacred nature of the ceremony, I am unable to share the wording of the marriage. Suffice it to say that the ceremony contains the most glorious promises to which man can aspire. I would encourage you to read the Doctrine and Covenants, section 132 [D&C 132], to gain understanding of the vital importance of eternal marriage.

I pray with all my heart and soul that you great young people will prepare for a temple marriage. It requires firm faith, personal integrity, prayerful thought, maturity, unselfishness, moral courage—all the great virtues that lead to happiness and fulfillment. It requires being a Latter-day Saint in every respect. Nothing is worth the risk of being denied the privilege of a celestial marriage.

From my own experience I can promise you that your preparation for those precious five minutes—and for eternity—is worth it. So live that you may count on such a beautiful beginning to an eternal marriage, confident that your Father in heaven loves you as his children and has prepared the way for you to return to his presence as joint heirs to exaltation and eternal lives.