

Marriage in the Lord's Way, Part One & Two

Elder Cree-L Kofford

Dear Kerstyn and Tom, I was delighted to receive the announcement of your upcoming wedding. I was even more delighted to see that you have chosen to start your life together in the temple of the Lord. Congratulations! You have made the right choice.

You'll love it in the temple—it's like no other place you have ever been. Just think, you have been invited into the Lord's house—His house upon the earth! His house of prayer, His house of fasting, His house of faith, His house of learning, His house of glory, His house of order—yes, the house of God (see D&C 88:119).

Physical Beauty

You will be impressed by the understated elegance of His house. I have always felt that the magnificent simplicity of the temple tells a lot about its owner. The feeling there reminds me of how I feel when I sit in the mountains and watch a beautiful stream tumble over the rocks above, winding its way to the valley below. It's a feeling you sense more than see. That's the way you'll feel as you experience the physical beauty of the temple.

Spiritual Beauty

But as architecturally beautiful as is His house, it is not in the physical beauty that you will find your greatest sensation. Rather, it is in the emotion you will experience as you visit His house. Everything there will awaken your senses to a deeper feeling of love and reverence—for each other, for your respective families, for other people, for your Heavenly Father, and for His Son, Jesus Christ.

You will find yourself saying, "Now I know why the Prophet Joseph and the early Saints gave all that they had—and more—to build a temple."

As the spirit of His house touches your soul, you will wonder, "Where have I felt this before?" You will search your memory, and in your search you will recall the love you felt as a child. You will remember the first time you were able to say, "I know the Book of Mormon is true," and the first time you began to glimpse the genuine love the Savior has for each of us. But as you search, you will come to realize that this time the feeling is even deeper. It will touch the very depths of your being. Kerstyn and Tom, I wish I had the ability to describe how you'll feel in the temple, but I don't. Perhaps it's because I'm limited to man's words in trying to describe the Lord's way.

The Lord's Way

Know this: your feelings will be greatly different than those you have seen in evidence at marriages conducted in country clubs, wedding parlors, cathedrals, or even Latter-day Saint chapels. You'll quickly realize that the temple is the *real* thing.

Once in a while, I'll talk to a young Latter-day Saint couple who think it's more important to "walk down the aisle" or "have a big wedding" or be surrounded by human symbols of beauty—my heart aches for them. They simply do not understand. You cannot improve on the Lord's way. It was planned by Him. The ordinance is His. The authority is His. The words are His, and the house is His. Who would dare to compare the tinsel of the temporal with the gold of God? I commend you for understanding the difference.

How Is Temple Marriage Different?

Kerstyn, you asked the question, "How is being married in the temple different?" First, let me say I prefer to call the Lord's way of marriage the "sealing ordinance" or "being sealed" rather than just "being married in the temple." All too often, our young men and women form the erroneous conclusion that the only difference from a civil marriage is the location. While marriage in a chapel allows you to be married for time only, the sealing ordinance makes you eligible to have your marriage last forever. To compare a civil marriage to one performed in the Lord's way is like comparing a big flashlight to the sun.

A civil marriage has two basic ingredients:

1. The bride and groom make certain promises to each other.
2. The bride and groom can then legally live together under the laws of the land.

Of course, the one officiating will dress it up as much as possible. There will be counsel about the role of the husband and the wife and the need for love. There will also be sage comments about the institution of marriage.

But no matter how it's packaged, that's all a civil marriage will ever be. The addition of words from scriptures, so often incorporated into civil ceremonies, such as "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6), does not change that fact. Just as the baptisms conducted without authority in the meridian of time (see Acts 19:2–5) were eternally powerless, so too is a civil marriage powerless to do anything but qualify the man and the woman to live together under the laws of the land. Adorning the ceremony with a minister or even an LDS bishop, a beautiful church or other building, tuxedos, limousines, music, and all of the other trappings will not change that. An empty box is not given substance by the most beautiful gift wrapping. So it is with a civil marriage. It is not the Lord's way, and no amount of rationalizing will ever change that unchangeable fact.

In the temple you make covenants and promises to Heavenly Father. The authority for the promises in a celestial marriage comes from God, and the consequences of your failure to honor those promises also will come from God. In a civil marriage, the authority for the promises between bride and groom is the integrity of the two people. It rises no higher than that. It cannot. Its authority comes from man and not from God.

Even the counsel you hear in the temple takes on more significance when received within the confines of His sacred house in the context of an eternal priesthood ordinance.

What Does Being “Sealed” Mean?

Some of your friends may have a misunderstanding about the phrase “being sealed.” Sometimes the word “sealed” is visualized as attaching or bonding a man and a woman together. While that is one of the results of being sealed, it is much too restrictive to be accurate. It has always seemed to me that the word “sealed” refers much more to the act of conferring the blessings of God upon the husband and wife *individually* and *jointly* (and *upon their children*) than it does to just “uniting” a man and a woman.

The word “sealed” also indicates that God is putting His seal or stamp of approval upon the ordinance in which you will participate. The term “celestial marriage” is also appropriate to describe what occurs in the sealing ordinance. That is because the two words together constitute a title which describes not only the joining of a man and a woman together in marriage but also all of the other elements of the sealing ordinance.

The Sealing Ordinance

You see, Kerstyn and Tom, the sealing ordinance isn’t a marriage in the way that word is commonly used. When you go to the temple to become man and wife, you are really going to participate in a sacred and divinely appointed ordinance called the “sealing ordinance.” It is an ordinance established by God and is the same as that ordinance by which Adam and Eve were joined together as husband and wife in the Garden of Eden. Oh, it’s true that one result of being sealed in a celestial marriage is that you are authorized to live together as husband and wife under the laws of the land and you do make certain promises to each other, but that is the beginning and end of any similarity between a civil marriage and the sealing ordinance.

As you have already learned from your seminary and institute classes, a religious ordinance in the Church is a specific rite or ceremony performed under the power of the holy priesthood. In the sealing ordinance, a major requirement has been added: the one officiating must hold the power to perform the sealing ordinance. This power is referred to as the sealing authority—the power by which, conditioned upon obedience to the covenants made, eternal family units are formed.

As President Boyd K. Packer, now Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has observed: “In the Church we build other buildings of many kinds. In them we worship, we teach, we find recreation, we organize. We can organize stakes and wards and missions and quorums and Relief Societies in these buildings or even in rented halls. But, when we organize families according to the order that the Lord has revealed, we organize them in the temples. Temple marriage, that sealing ordinance, is a crowning blessing that you may claim in the holy temple” (*The Holy Temple* [1980], 8).

To help you understand just how different it is from a civil marriage, let’s review what is encompassed in the sealing ordinance.

Elements of the Sealing Ordinance

Having already received your individual endowment and dressed in appropriate temple clothing, both of you will kneel on opposite sides of an altar in the sealing room and there you will receive good and proper counsel. Then, under the direction of the officiator—one of those few men on the earth upon whom the prophet of the Lord has authorized the sealing power to be conferred—you will participate in the ordinance of celestial marriage.

1. *Individual covenants and blessings.* Each of you will *individually* and *separately* make promises, commitments, and covenants with your Heavenly Father and will *individually* receive promises of blessings conditioned on your individual worthiness. The individual nature of these promises is such that even if one of you were to cease being obedient following your participation in the sealing ordinance and so lose the promises made to you, the other partner who remained faithful would continue to be eligible to receive the promised blessings.
2. *Joint covenants and blessings.* The two of you *jointly* will make promises, commitments, and covenants with your Heavenly Father and will make covenants to receive each other as husband and wife. You then will *jointly* receive promises of blessings conditioned upon your joint faithfulness. The continued faithful obedience of both of you is essential if the promised blessings are to be received jointly. This is because the promises are made to you as one—that is, as a single unit consisting of two halves.
3. *Joining in celestial marriage.* This element qualifies you to live together as husband and wife under the laws of the land. It is here that you are united forever, becoming one flesh before the Lord and forming a new family unit that, if you are faithful and obedient, will last forever.
4. *Blessings for children born in the covenant.* All children born to the two of you are born under the blessings of the sealing covenant; thus, it is common to say that your children are “born in the covenant.” They are entitled to blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, including:
 1. The gospel
 2. The priesthood
 3. Celestial marriage
 4. Eternal life (see Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 13).

It is revealing to know that even if the two of you cease to be faithful in keeping the covenants you make in the temple, these blessings will still flow to your children. It is equally comforting to know the Lord has provided that adopted children and children born to a couple before they are sealed in the temple (as with new converts to the Church) may be sealed to their parents, and upon such sealing they also become entitled to these same promises and blessings.

In the temple all of the promises, commitments, and covenants you make will be witnessed by two Melchizedek Priesthood holders of your choosing and will be recorded in heaven as well as on earth.

Importance of the Sealing Ordinance

We learn from a revelation received by the Prophet Joseph Smith that the sealing ordinance, which eternally unites man and woman, is a requirement for exaltation, which means living with God our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ His Son in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom, where the power for continuing to extend the family throughout eternity is present. That revelation, found in section 131 of the Doctrine and Covenants, reads as follows:

“In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

“And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

“And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

“He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase” (D&C 131:1–4).

Many people reading this section of the Doctrine and Covenants do not grasp its full import. Accordingly, I thought both of you might benefit from a brief comment or two about its meaning. The gospel, which is called “the new and everlasting covenant,” includes many specific covenants, one being called “the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.” This title, or name, is simply another way of saying “patriarchal order.” Thus, that portion of section 131 could read: “And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into the patriarchal order of the priesthood.”

The patriarchal order refers to priesthood government by family organization. It originated in the time of Adam and extended down to the days of Moses, when that order was withdrawn (see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* [1956], 3:83–84). It has been restored in our day and time (see D&C 110). You will want to know that the city of Enoch, which because of its righteousness was taken into heaven, was also established on the patriarchal order (see Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], 271).

Furthermore, we learn that “the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood is patriarchal authority” and that “the patriarchal order of the priesthood is the right of worthy priesthood-holding fathers to preside over their descendants through all ages; it includes the ordinances and blessings of the fulness of the priesthood shared by husbands and wives who are sealed in the temple” (in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. [1992], 3:1067, 1135).

The Lord has told us that the patriarchal order will be the order of things in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom; thus, without participation in the sealing ordinance, you simply cannot qualify for admission to that high and holy place. Of course, some individuals, through no fault of their own, may not have the opportunity to marry in this life; they will yet have that opportunity (see Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde G. Williams [1996], 256–57).

Perhaps now you can see why I prefer to use the term “sealing ordinance”; it is more—so much more—than what the term *marriage* suggests to most.

I hope you have both begun to grasp the tremendous depth of the sealing ordinance and the significance attached to it. Can you now begin to understand why my heart weeps for those people who say they can't see much difference between this magnificent ordinance and the "fool's gold" of a civil marriage?

The Holy Spirit of Promise

There is one more thing pertaining to your upcoming sealing I really want you to think about. Don't forget that every blessing promised to you in the temple, whether individually or jointly, is conditioned upon your faithful obedience to the covenants you make in the temple. If you cease to be obedient to those covenants, you lose blessings associated with the covenants. Of course, the repentance process may requalify you for those blessings.

The principle of obedience is outlined specifically in section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which essentially teaches:

1. The ordinance must be performed by someone who possesses the sealing power. As we've already discussed, the authority to confer the sealing power rests with the President of the Church and is conferred by the laying on of hands, either by the President or as he may direct by other members of the First Presidency or the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.
2. The covenants, commitments, and promises that each of you make (verse 7 calls them "covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations") must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise.

The Holy Spirit of Promise is another way of saying the Holy Ghost. What the scriptures mean when they say that something must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise is that it must receive the approval of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost can see into the heart of each of us and can consequently discern deceit, half-truths, or misrepresentations. Thus, when a sealing ordinance is "sealed by the Holy Spirit," the Holy Ghost is satisfied that the parties to the sealing ordinance have been obedient in order to enter into the sealing ordinance and afterward obedient to the covenants they have made.

There is much more that needs to be said, so I'll write you again as soon as I am able. Remember, some of what I have written will require careful reading, pondering, and prayer to fully understand. I urge you to do so.

Your friend,

Elder Cree-L Kofford

Part 2

Kerstyn and Tom, It was thoughtful of you to respond to my recent letter (see *Ensign*, June, 1998, 6). I will attempt to answer the various questions you raised and add a few thoughts of my own. You will recall that we earlier discussed many aspects of the Lord's way, including the

physical and spiritual beauty of His home, why temple marriage is different, what the sealing ordinance is, and the significance of the Holy Spirit of Promise.

Why Should You Marry in the Temple?

Tom, you mentioned that one of your friends couldn't see why you felt it was so important to have your marriage solemnized in the temple. I hope you took the opportunity to share parts of my earlier letter with him. You might find the following list of reasons useful in your future discussions:

1. Because God said so. I don't mean to be disrespectful, but I don't know any other way to say it. It seems to me that the Lord has said in about as many ways as it can be said that there is only one way—His way. I don't know that those who would like to be Saints of God need any reason other than that.
2. Because being sealed in the temple is the only way you can begin to qualify to:
 1. Have your marriage continue forever.
 2. Have your family, stretching in both directions from you, joined together in a family organization forever.
 3. Have the opportunity of eternal increase.
 4. Have the opportunity one day to become like our Heavenly Father.
3. Because there are special blessings for which you qualify by having your marriage solemnized in the temple. These blessings flow out of your obedience and will continue to come as you continue to be obedient to your covenants.
4. Because it tells you a lot about your wife, with whom you're going to be spending the rest of this life and all of eternity:
 1. She believes as you do and has the same spiritual goals you have.
 2. She has been obedient to the commandments of God and hence qualifies to be allowed to enter the house of the Lord.
 3. She is willing to make commitments to God, to you, and to herself that will lead to eternal life.
5. Because it serves as a great self-assessment for you as to your individual worthiness and commitment.

What Should You Do to Prepare to Go to the Temple?

Preparing to go to the temple involves the obvious steps of living the commandments, fasting, and praying. Beyond the obvious, I recommend the following steps. I suggest you:

1. Carefully and honestly evaluate your level of obedience to God's commandments. To do that, find some place to be alone. I suggest you take a piece of paper and write down every commandment you have been counseled to live. Arrange those commandments in descending order with the hardest for you to live on the top. Then figuratively look yourself in the eye and do an inventory on how you are doing on each of those items. I hope you will not stop that self-interview until you have committed yourself to full and total obedience. Then go out and be obedient.

All too often, we get ourselves enmeshed in the process of trying to understand why God gave us a particular commandment. We want to rationalize. I don't know where that is more evident than in watching movies. Young people know they should not watch R- or X-rated movies, and yet time after time I hear them say, "Well it's only rated R because it's violent." What difference does it make why it is rated R? The fact is, a prophet of God has said not to go to R-rated movies (see, for example, Ezra Taft Benson, "To the 'Youth of the Noble Birthright,'" *Ensign*, May 1986, 45). That ought to be good enough.

There is no substitute for obedience.

Obedience has been described as the first law of heaven, and the longer I live, the more convinced of that I become. I never cease to thrill at the story of Helaman and his stripling warriors told in the Book of Mormon. Even though 2,060 of the young men "fought most desperately" (Alma 57:19) in battle, not one lost his life. What everyone may not know is that they qualified for this mighty miracle by their obedience. Their leader, Helaman, says of them: "They did obey and observe to perform *every* word of command with *exactness*" (Alma 57:21; emphasis added).

2. Using the Topical Guide in the LDS scriptures, read and ponder the references under "endowment," "marriage," and "temples."

3. Seek to find out as much as possible about the temple from published sources. In that regard, I would particularly recommend the following:

1. *The Holy Temple*, by President Boyd K. Packer.
2. *Ensign*, February 1995, 2–5, 32–51.
3. *New Era*, June 1971, February 1987, and March 1997.

4. Participate in a stake-sponsored temple preparation class. Every stake or district in the Church has, or should have, a program designed to review with every person going to the temple for the first time various items of information which have been made available from Church headquarters. Usually this is done on a stakewide or districtwide basis by someone designated by the presiding authority. The resource material provides great help.

5. Seek to focus yourself spiritually so you are spiritually prepared when you enter the temple. In this way the techniques of instruction used in the temple will be more understandable to you, and you will be thrilled by the depth and beauty of the teachings you will experience.

Why Do You Need a Recommend to Go to the Temple?

As both of you already know, you are required to obtain authorization from your bishop and your stake president before you're allowed to enter the house of the Lord. If you qualify, they will issue you a temple recommend. Before they issue that recommend, they will each interview you thoroughly. They will ask you a series of questions from which you and they will make a determination as to your readiness to enter the house of the Lord. Among other things, those questions will deal with testimony, integrity, chastity, faithfulness in living various

commandments, personal habits, and affiliations. Your bishop will be happy to review these with you. Set up an early interview with your bishop or branch president to review the temple recommend questions and to ensure you can honestly and properly answer each of those questions. In that way, if a change of conduct or repentance will be required, you will be able to discuss it with your bishop or branch president in adequate time to allow it to occur before seeking a recommend.

Occasionally, someone will want to know why you have to have a temple recommend to get in the temple. The following thoughts may help you answer the question:

1. First, once you enter the temple, you are expected and required to live the covenants you will make there. If you have any doubt about your willingness or ability to live those covenants, then my counsel is that you wait to go to the temple until you don't have any doubts.

One scripture which deals with this is Doctrine and Covenants 132:3 [D&C 132:3]: "Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those *who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same*" (emphasis added).

If you understand that scripture, you begin to understand why the Lord has set sentries at His doors for the protection of those who would unwittingly enter in and become subject to living covenants which they are not prepared to live. Thus, in a real way, the temple recommend is an indication of the Lord's love for His children, a measure to ensure our readiness to attend the temple. The temple recommend interview allows us to evaluate ourselves and determine whether or not we are prepared to undertake the covenants that we will make. When a recommend is not issued, far from indicating the person has been rejected, it is in reality an expression of caring concern for the unprepared.

2. A second reason is suggested by several scriptures, one of them recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 109:20 [D&C 109:20]: "No unclean [unworthy] thing shall be permitted to come into thy house to pollute it."

This and similar verses place a commandment upon those who are administratively responsible to safeguard the temples that no unclean thing should enter. Thus, the temple recommend not only serves as a safeguard for the person seeking admission to the temple but also serves to allow those who have responsibility for guarding the gateway to the temple to discharge their duty and to fulfill their covenants. A stake president or a bishop who knowingly or negligently allows someone who is unclean to enter the house of the Lord is accountable for that disobedience. Similarly, an individual seeking to gain admission to the temple who lies or withholds important information during the interview process likewise is held accountable.

Thus, as this principle applies to you, a temple recommend interview allows you, as an individual son or daughter of God, to determine if, in fact, you are sufficiently worthy to enter the house of the Lord. Thus, once you have given full and honest answers to the interview questions, and have been found by yourself and your priesthood leaders to be worthy to enter the house of the Lord, you may know that you are there in compliance with the admonition that no unclean thing should enter His house. I have always taken great comfort from the fact that even

though I am not perfect, and even though I make mistakes, I am living at a level satisfactory to allow me entrance to the Lord's house. That comfort is based upon the availability of the temple recommend interview.

Should You Receive Your Endowment on the Day Scheduled for Your Sealing?

Kerstyn, I know you've been wrestling with whether you should receive your endowment before the day you're scheduled to be sealed. I'm unaware of any edict or requirement one way or the other, but in my opinion it is preferable, where possible, to go to the temple and receive your endowment a few days before the sealing.

Occasionally, I am asked whether I think a young couple should go through an endowment session on the day of their sealing but prior to being sealed, even though they have been previously endowed. I think that is a matter of individual preference, even though I think it tends to put your mind in the proper frame to participate in the sealing ordinance. A challenge to receiving your endowment and participating in the sealing ordinance on the same day is that sometimes the exhaustion factor can make it hard to fully appreciate your experience in the temple. Just try to understand yourself, know what the advantages and disadvantages are, and then make a decision based upon your individual circumstances.

Is There Anything Special You Should Do on the Day You Go to the Temple?

During our discussions, we've talked a time or two about the day you go to the temple, whether that's for your own endowment, as will be the case with Kerstyn, or whether it's to participate in the sealing ordinance. Here are one or two suggestions I hope will be helpful:

1. Try to organize your activities, time, and commitments in the days prior to going to the temple in such a way as to get quality rest and appropriate exercise so that on the day of the temple experience you will be in good physical condition.
2. Read, meditate, and study the scriptures on a regular basis. In suggesting this, I'm not so concerned about your learning new things from the scriptures as I am about refining your spirit. Reading and pondering the scriptures simply has a way of doing that.
3. Some time shortly before you go to the temple ask your father and mother to dedicate a family home evening to instruction on the temple, followed by a period of testimony sharing and expressions of family love. If your circumstances are such that this is not possible, then perhaps a period of time with your home teachers, your priesthood or Relief Society leaders, or the bishop would be helpful.
4. On the day of attending the temple, wear appropriate clothing so that as you enter the house of the Lord, you do so as a welcome guest. Avoid immodest clothing and ostentatious jewelry.
5. Plan the activities of the temple day such that they focus on the spiritual. I realize that is extremely hard to do when you're talking about being sealed. There are many times when people come from out of town who want to express their best wishes. Sometimes there is a meal; usually

there is a reception. All too often you are so exhausted you are unable to comprehend the significance of what you have experienced. Frequently you become so caught up in the things of the world that it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to fully appreciate the things of God. Realizing that sometimes it simply can't be done, do everything you can to move as many social commitments off that day as possible. Often we cheat ourselves out of the greatest spiritual experiences of our lifetime by being too wrapped up in temporal things.

6. Remember that your wedding day is not a social experience with a tinge of the spiritual, but rather it is a spiritual experience with a tinge of the social.

How Many Should You Invite to Witness Your Sealing?

At different times during our talks, you have both raised the question of how many you should invite to go with you to the temple. I hope that by now you've had enough counsel in my letters that you can answer that question yourselves. However, just to be sure that we understand each other, let's review one or two facts:

1. The sealing ordinance is a crowning ordinance of the temple.
2. The sealing ordinance is the gateway to eternal life—that is, the kind of life God lives.
3. The sealing ordinance has been established by God for His children, and as such it is the Lord's way.

Based on the foregoing, my opinion would be that you invite those people to participate in witnessing your sealing who meet the following criteria:

1. Their relationship is so meaningful to you that it would contribute to the spiritual character of that which you are about to experience.
2. They have the spiritual maturity to understand what is occurring and provide you with the spiritual support which you will need and desire.

Usually these guidelines mean fewer people, not more. I realize there are some practicalities involved in the counsel I'm giving. I know there is always a brother, sister, aunt, uncle, or someone else who really doesn't fit what I've outlined but who would be highly offended if they were not invited. In those circumstances, I would seek the counsel of your parents or bishop.

What about Nonmember Parents or Relatives?

Kerstyn, you have expressed concern about the nonmembers in your family. One of the greatest emotional pressures on brides or grooms is when parents or other close relatives are not members of the Church. They generally don't understand what's going on, nor do they have any appreciation for it. In the case of parents, their whole lives have been lived in anticipation of the time when they would see their son or daughter married in the only kind of marriage with which they have any familiarity. So when you announce to them that you are going to the temple and they cannot attend, they naturally feel a great loss and a great exclusion. What do you do? How do you handle it? The answers are probably as different as the various kinds of individuals involved, but here are a few ideas that might help:

1. First, be *very understanding* of their feelings, and, as much as possible, help them comprehend what's going to occur and why they can't be with you. Some of the thoughts I have already expressed may be of some help in accomplishing this objective.
2. Even as you do that, however, I would not do it in a tone of apology but in great love. You need not be apologetic about God's ways. You should, however, be empathetic and understanding of their emotions.
3. Try to make them feel as much a part of what's going on that day as you can. Invite them to come to the temple, and arrange for someone to be with them while you are in the temple. It's possible they might like to go through the visitors' center, if available, or do any of a number of other activities available, including just enjoying the beautiful grounds that surround the temple. As you leave the temple for pictures and other activities, you can rejoin your relatives and involve them in all that's going on.

You may want to arrange with your bishop to hold a meeting for those who don't have temple recommends. This meeting could include prayer, music, and remarks by a priesthood holder, but it should not include a ceremony or the exchange of vows.

Over the years, I've seen such activities a number of times, and when they were handled properly I have never yet seen a nonmember or less-active member take offense. If they know how much this temple ordinance means to you, they will give you the support you desire.

4. The Brethren counsel Church members not to perform a marriage ceremony following the temple sealing. Occasionally, you'll find a young couple who will want to do a mock ceremony "so my mother won't feel left out." But that makes a mockery out of your temple sealing. It will impact all that happens to you in the temple. You will not enjoy the same level of spiritual involvement and spiritual enlightenment you would otherwise have received. And you will find that you do not satisfy those not able to attend the temple ceremony. Your bishop will be happy to discuss with you those kinds of activities which would be appropriate following the temple sealing.

What Should You Know about Wearing the Temple Garment?

Kerstyn, having never been to the temple, you're going to have questions about how to wear the temple garment. You'll have the basis for answering most of those questions if you will listen to the counsel given to you in the temple. Always remember that one of the covenants we make is to wear the garment properly. Though it would be inappropriate to discuss some items about the garment in this letter, here are some thoughts I hope will be useful.

My counsel is that you wear the temple garment at all times, with a few exceptions which your bishop is prepared to discuss with you. Never tuck, pin, sew, cut, or fold the temple garment in order to make it fit under the clothing you may desire to wear. Wear the garment as it was designed to be worn, and then find outer clothing which appropriately covers it. If you find yourself in circumstances where clothing styles are not consistent with wearing the garment, then change clothing styles. That may mean you don't wear shorts, tank tops, or other articles of clothing that are just not consistent with properly wearing the garment. The length of dresses, shorts, and other articles of clothing should be consistent with that guideline.

Frequently, people will want to know if it's all right to take off the garment to mow the lawn, wash the car, or participate in other household or business activities. The answer in one word is *no*. What if you're participating in athletics? It is possible to wear the temple garment properly while participating in a large number of athletic activities. In those situations where that is not possible, then, as we've been instructed, it would be permissible to remove the garment during the period of time you are engaging in that particular activity. I would not, however, remove my garment a long time prior to participating, and I would replace it as soon as I could appropriately do so after I had completed participation. Activities such as swimming, competitive basketball, and competitive tennis may fall in this category.

I will add, strictly as a personal opinion because of what the garment means to me, that if I had a hobby that did not allow me to wear my garment properly, I would rather change hobbies than go without the garment.

Does a Temple Sealing Guarantee You Will Live Happily Ever After?

Kerstyn and Tom, I would like to talk to you about one last critical subject. Before doing so, let me once again tell you how proud I am of the two of you for being worthy of the high and holy honor of participating in the sealing ordinance. It will grace your lives as long as you live, and you will forever be grateful for the privilege of participating in this singular ordinance.

However, you need to understand that even being married in the Lord's way does not necessarily mean there won't be disagreements, arguments, moments of despair, and times of trial. Being sealed in the temple is a great start, but it only works as long as you're both totally obedient to the covenants you make. There isn't anything about being sealed at the altar of the temple that will stop you from having disagreements on various aspects of your relationship, particularly in the early years.

You'll face dozens of questions, as all of us who have been married before you have faced. Do you sleep with the window open or closed? Which kind of toothpaste will you use? How much is too much to pay for an item of clothing? What's acceptable entertainment? And the list goes on and on. Just know that the hundreds of thousands of us who have preceded you in marriage have gone through lists like yours. We've succeeded in resolving most of them and, in some cases, have agreed to disagree on others. But through it all, three things have been very clear to all of us who stand ahead of you in the line of marriage: we made a commitment to God, we made a commitment to each other, and we will keep those commitments.

I don't mean to imply that being sealed in the temple doesn't give you an edge. *It definitely does!* In the first place, you will have come into the marriage free of serious sin, clean and pure in the eyes of the Lord. You have come to Him in obedience to His commandments, and as a result you become heirs to the blessings which that obedience brings. As you live the covenants, commitments, and promises you make, you will find that other matters simply tend to disappear. One thing I can tell you with absolute certainty: whenever there is a difficulty between a husband and wife in their marriage relationship that is serious enough to threaten that relationship, one or the other (or both) is not living the gospel of Jesus Christ. That means that one or both of the marriage partners are not keeping the covenants, commitments, and promises they made at the

altar of the temple. If you love God enough and follow His teachings, everything else will work out just fine and you will be blessed to find solutions.

Your marriage, even though started in the sealing room of the temple, will still require dedicated effort. It will require understanding, love, forgiveness, patience, and every other virtue of which you can possibly think. There may be days when you cry, and there may be disagreements. But remember this—you are working and building a relationship that will live through eternity. That can and will occur so long as you both love your Heavenly Father and live His teachings. One day you'll wake up and realize that you're married to the most marvelous person in the world, and you'll thank God for the fact that you can be together forever.

Your friend,

Elder Cree-L Kofford

Bridal Dress Guidelines for Temple Sealing

The sealing for time and eternity of a man and a woman in the holy temple is a joyous occasion. In order to maintain the peace and sanctity of the event, Church leaders, which include stake presidents, bishops, and presidents of the Relief Society or Young Women, have a responsibility to counsel with those who are to be sealed regarding guidelines for temple bridal dresses. Understanding the guidelines before sewing or buying a temple bridal dress prevents the distress of bringing an inappropriate dress to the temple for the sealing ceremony.

Brides should also be aware that beautiful and tasteful bridal dresses are available in many of the temples for use during temple ordinances and sealings. Here are guidelines for brides who choose to bring their own dresses to the temple (adapted from "Brides' Dresses for Temple Marriages," *Bulletin*, 1992, no. 1, p. 2):

- Brides' dresses are to be white. Dresses are to be below the knee in length but do not have to be full length; pants or pantsuits are not permitted.
- Dresses should be modest in design and fabric and free of elaborate ornamentation.
- Sheer fabrics should be lined.
- A high or modestly scooped neckline and long sleeves are required.
- If the dress has a train, the train is to be removed while in the temple.