

D&C Lesson # 40
Finding Joy in Temple and Family History Work
(D&C 85:9; D&C 128:7,19-24; Moses 6:5-8 46; Abraham 1:31)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background and evidences supporting the Restoration)

I. To many, doing Family History may seem like drudge work. We may do it out of duty, but find little joy in it.

II. **But in truth, this is a joyous work!** Joy is what filled Joseph's heart as he realized its significance. In fact, he felt that if the world truly understood, all the world would sing with joy.

19 Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth; glad tidings for the dead; a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy...

20 And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! ...The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness ... declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fullness of times!....

22 Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. Let the earth break forth into singing. Let the dead speak forth anthems of eternal praise to the King Immanuel, who hath ordained, before the world was, that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison; **for the prisoners shall go free.**

23 Let the mountains shout for joy, and all ye valleys cry aloud; and all ye seas and dry lands tell the wonders of your Eternal King! And ye rivers, and brooks, and rills, flow down with gladness. Let the woods and all the trees of the field praise the Lord; and ye solid rocks weep for joy! And let the sun, moon, and the morning stars sing together, and let all the sons of God shout for joy!

...

24 Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand; ... and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance" (D&C 128:19-24). (Emphasis added)

III. There are ways we too can feel this same joy Joseph expresses in performing work for the dead.

A. We can feel joy if we truly understand and reflect on the difference it is making for others.

1. Note the prophet says, “The prisoners shall go free.”

2. My youngest brother had an experience which helped him feel the joy of this reality.

He was doing the temple work for His father-in-law. His father-in-law had joined the Church, but after baptism, he had not progressed very far in receiving its blessings. He had become less active. He had never gone to the temple and received its blessings.

But after his death, his family decided to do his temple work.

After my brother had done the initial work for him, he had this overwhelming feeling that his father-in-law had just been “set free.” And that he was feeling great joy in that freedom.

Lee recognized that part of the problem was his father-in-law had been raised in a church which had developed great control over his mind at an early age. And even though he had accepted the fullness of the Gospel at one time, the bands of that former entanglement had been too strong to fully overcome.

But now, having been taught the Gospel in a more perfect realm, those bands had been broken, and so as his temple work was done, he had indeed felt “freed.”

Note the promise the Lord makes is that “the captives shall go free.” There are many forms of captivity. In the next life, those who have not had their saving ordinances performed or been faithful to them, will be in bondage in a “Spirit Prison.” Having their ordinances performed, and accepting them, will indeed set them free. And in many cases, such as my brother's father-in-law, the bondage of false ideas instilled at an early age can finally be overcome as well, allowing a marvelous total freedom.

It is great joy when one actually does become free from bondage. And when we are in tune with the Lord, and we are performing the work for those once captive, we can sense that “freeing” event, and share in their joy as well.

B. There are other ways we can connect to those we are serving. Then the work is not dead, but real!

1. If the people we are serving are family members, we can gather their histories to whatever extent possible. Then they become more real as people to us.

C. In doing the work for anyone, we should actually put ourselves in their place. Recognizing we are their proxy, we can try to feel as if it were oneself receiving the ordinances.

D. The names we receive when we do not have one of our own are often names which have been released to the temple by members, who have too many to do on their own. So they have real connections to a member, who are our “sisters” and our “brothers.” We are doing a great service in helping them connect to their families. If we think upon this, we can feel greater joy.

E. If we are not doing work for family names, we can still ponder about each individual as we serve them and develop a bond.

IV. We can take seriously the brethren's emphasis to gather our own names.

A. There are an amazing quantity of new resources being put online every day. Thus we have greater and greater chances of finding our ancestors.

B. There are more and more new technologies designed to make it easier to find names. Most of these services Latter-day Saints members do not have to pay for.

C. Above all, we can take seriously the promises that the Spirit will be guiding us in searching for our deceased ancestors. The examples of this happening are everywhere.

V. How can we find joy in Temple and Family History Work when all of ours has been done?

A. I was blessed to have many diligent family members from the beginning who have done a vast amount of our work. And I now compete with many “cousins” to cherry pick for those still left undone. What few names I do find, I find joy in doing. But I have also found joy in gathering family histories and sharing them with other family members.

B. I have also found joy in helping a new convert do her work. As I have joined with her in doing the work for her parents, her grandparents, her aunts, etc., I have been caught up in seeing her joy --- as she rejoices in now knowing that her family is receiving temple blessings and being sealed together.

If our work truly is done, (and in most cases it is not), we can still find personal joy in helping others do theirs. There are many who need help.

VI. Brethren are particularly needed to help in this great work.

A. It is common to find it very difficult to get the male names done on a family line. The brethren work jobs, have significant priesthood callings, and need to find time with their families. And so their time is more limited to do temple and family history work.

But if they can recognize how desperate the need is for their help, they surely will find joy in making the extra sacrifices to do it.