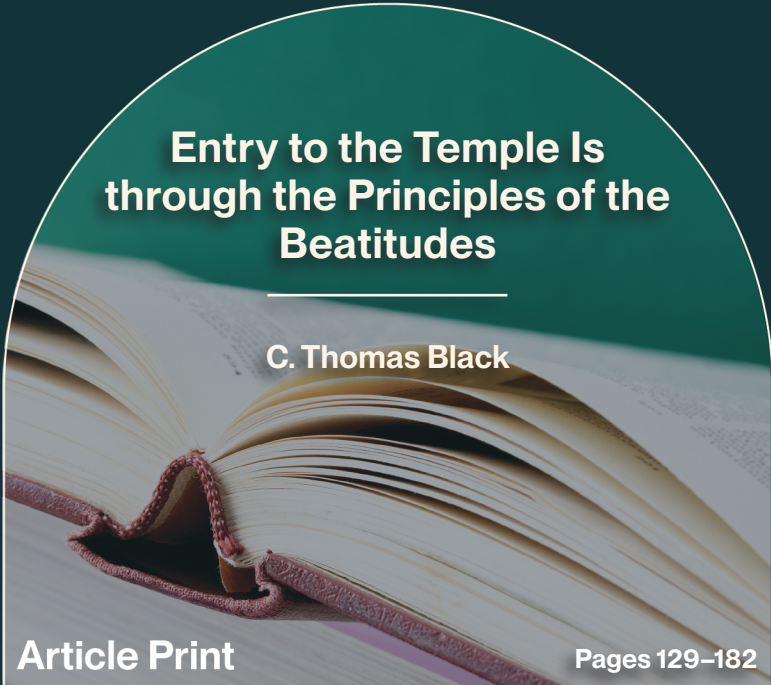


Interpreter

**A Journal of Latter-day Saint
Faith and Scholarship**



**Entry to the Temple Is
through the Principles of the
Beatitudes**

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Article Print

Pages 129–182

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ISSN 2372-1227 (print)
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

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Entry to the Temple Is through the Principles of the Beatitudes

C. Thomas Black

Abstract: *The significance of the Beatitudes, particularly their relationship to the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount, has long been debated. The Sermon has been shown to possess close similarities to certain instructions delivered in the temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Participation in temple ordinances is regulated by a series of sixteen questions regarding beliefs and behavior that are known as the Temple Recommend Interview Questions. Fourteen of these questions are asked of an individual desirous of initial entrance into the temple and participation in specific ordinances therein. The topics of these questions appear to correlate closely with the topics the Lord introduced in the Beatitudes as recorded in the New Testament and particularly in 3 Nephi 12. The two questions omitted in the initial interview, but asked of returning applicants, pertain to the keeping of temple covenants previously entered. Keeping covenants is also discussed in the Sermon but not in the form of a beatitude. Evidence shows that, through the Beatitudes, the Lord gave a preview of the qualifications needed by an individual for initial admission to the temple and participation in temple covenants; those same qualifications exist today. A clear association exists between the Beatitudes and the Sermon that follows.*

Elucidating the meaning of the Beatitudes and their relationship with the Sermon on the Mount has preoccupied theologians for centuries. Georg Strecker posits six possible meanings of the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes.¹ Craig Blomberg reviews “eight of the

1. Georg Strecker, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, trans.

most significant and influential” correlations, including one of his own.² Harvey McArthur recognizes twelve schools of thought.³ Clarence Bauman reviews the differing opinions of nineteen scholars,⁴ while Craig Keener states that “more than thirty-six discrete views exist.”⁵

A Latter-day Saint scholar, John Welch, found that the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple closely parallel the instruction found in the endowment ceremony that takes place in the temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁶ The repetition of the Sermon and Beatitudes, delivered to the righteous inhabitants of the New World as recorded in the Book of Mormon, confirms that the Beatitudes are unquestionably also linked textually to the Sermon that follows.

In this paper I focus on the requirements to *enter* the temple rather than the association of the Beatitudes/Sermons and the endowment ceremony. I first present evidence that the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple contain the qualities required of individuals desirous to enter the temple and participate in temple instruction. Those requirements are standardized in our day into a list of sixteen questions called the *Temple Recommend Interview Questions*.⁷ Fourteen of those questions are asked of a candidate desiring initial

O. C. Dean Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 15–23, archive.org/details/sermononmountexe0000stre/page/15/mode/1up.

2. Craig L. Blomberg, *The New American Commentary: Matthew* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 94n1, archive.org/details/matthew0000blom/page/94/mode/2up.
3. Harvey K. McArthur, *Understanding the Sermon on the Mount* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1960), 105–27, archive.org/details/understandingser0000mcar/page/104/mode/2up.
4. Clarence Bauman, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Modern Quest for Its Meaning* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), vdoc.pub/documents/the-sermon-on-the-mountain-the-modern-quest-for-its-meaning-f04shktd920.
5. Craig S. Keener, “The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7),” in *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 160, archive.org/details/commentaryongosp0000keen/page/160/mode/1up.
6. John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount: A Latter-day Saint Approach* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Apologetic Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1990), scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/89; and John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/42.
7. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, s.v. “Temple Recommend Interview Questions” (2026), 26.4.1, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/26-temple-recommends#title_number30.

admission to the temple for the purpose of receiving their endowment. The areas of spirituality covered by each of these fourteen questions are the same as the qualities of righteousness that the Lord discussed in the Beatitudes. The two additional questions inquire about the applicant's faithfulness in keeping the covenants they previously committed to honor. These questions are not applicable to first-time temple attendees and are not discussed in the Beatitudes, but they are reviewed elsewhere in the Sermon, as I will show below.

The opinions I express in this manuscript are not attempts to proclaim or even to influence Church doctrine. I hope, however, that they will encourage a new appreciation for the Beatitudes as well as an appreciation for the consistency, ever since antiquity, of the qualifications the Lord has set forth for one to enter his presence. The associations I propose are not ironclad. They have had to cross obstacles of semantics, translations, traditions, cultures, and even malicious manipulation.

While straight lines of similarity may be drawn between some of the Beatitudes and some of the recommend questions, I readily admit that more circuitous routes are required to appreciate the similarities in other cases. In this, there is no surprise. Some of the Ten Commandments require interpretation between cultures and over millennia. For example, the prohibition against having other gods before the Lord has been expanded in our day to include any of numerous distractions unknown in the ancient world. Those distractions compete with God for our attention and veneration much more today than ever before. Similarly, what it means to kill must now be qualified. What it meant to keep the Sabbath Day holy underwent transformation between the time the commandments were given and the time of Christ and have changed yet again between his day and ours. Even Welch's forty-seven points of association between the Sermon on the Mount and the temple ceremony do not precisely correlate, but they are close enough that the connection in context is clear.⁸ Similarly, I seek only to consolidate principles taught in the Beatitudes with principles discussed in the temple recommend questions. I believe that they are similar enough to invite further scrutiny, using a more

8. John W. Welch, "Christ in the Nephite Temple," in *Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 4: Transcripts of Lectures Presented to an Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University, 1988–1990* by Hugh Nibley (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 139, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/73.

wide-angled lens, and to appreciate the commonalities rather than the obvious differences.

Understanding the Beatitudes is greatly aided by referring to the lengthier account recorded in the Book of Mormon in 3 Nephi 12:1–12. Without that account, the observed correlations would be only suggestive and incomplete.

The sacred nature of the Beatitudes will first be established. How Latter-day Saints have viewed the Beatitudes will be followed by a review of the findings of various academics. I will also provide various definitions that I believe are necessary to fully appreciate the sacred importance of the precise wording in both the Beatitudes and the temple recommend questions. I will then offer a brief discussion of each temple recommend question. The correlation between the eleven beatitudes of 3 Nephi and the fourteen questions required for initial entry into the temple will then be described. The verses immediately following the Beatitudes and several verses within the Sermon will be shown to discuss the two additional questions asked of returning attendees.

These correlations suggest that the true meaning of the Beatitudes was to prepare the Twelve Apostles and the Twelve Disciples for their initial entry into sacred ordinances, likely administered during the Lord's forty-day ministry following his resurrection.⁹ Through the Beatitudes and the two Sermons, it appears that Christ conducted a temple preparation class, of sorts.

The Beatitudes

Most Latter-day Saint commentators and non-Latter-day Saint theologians do not recognize a clear connection between the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount. Consequently, the significance of these verses has often been trivialized and even reduced to a series of individual platitudes.

The Beatitudes are sacred statements

In its simplest form, a beatitude is a conditional promise, found in the scriptures, that begins with the word *blessed*. The Latin *beātus*,

9. S. Kent Brown and C. Wilfred Griggs, "The 40-Day Ministry," *Ensign*, August 1975, 6–11, [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1975/08/the-40-day-ministry](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1975/08/the-40-day-ministry). See also "Book of Mormon Evidence: Parallels with Christ's 40-Day Ministry," *Scripture Central*, 16 October 2024, [scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-parallels-with-christ-s-40-day-ministry](https://www.scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-parallels-with-christ-s-40-day-ministry).

meaning *happy, prosperous, blessed, or fortunate*, is the basis for the English *beatitude*.¹⁰ The capitalized form, *Beatitude*, refers to one of the series of promises given by Jesus to a group of his disciples immediately preceding his Great Sermon as found in the New Testament in Matthew 5:3–12. The term was first applied to these promises by Augustine of Hippo in AD 393, who devised the word *beatitude* by combining “*beati*” (blessed, a term first used by Jerome in the Vulgate bible) and “*-tude*” (a suffix meaning state, condition, or quality).¹¹

Beatitudes are also found in the Old Testament, including in Psalms (2:12; 32:2; 40:4; 41:1; 65:4; 84:4–5; 106:3; 112:1; 128:1), in Proverbs (8:32), in Isaiah (32:20; 56:2), and in Daniel (12:12). As stated previously, the account of the Savior’s visit to the Americas, recorded in 3 Nephi, contains a more complete version of the Matthean Beatitudes.

The Beatitudes are written in an anaphoric three-part form. The Lord first states the words “blessed are.” He then identifies those individuals he is referencing, either “they” (a third-person beatitude) or “ye” (a second-person beatitude). The third part is a promise beginning “for” (because) that is dependent on the second part.

Because Matthew records eight proclamations by the Savior beginning with the words “Blessed are,” most non-Latter-day Saint commentators maintain that there are eight beatitudes. Spurgeon counted only seven,¹² agreeing with Augustine.¹³ A ninth proclamation states, “Blessed are . . . ye” (Matthew 5:11), which some scholars

10. *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v., “*bēātus*,” ed. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=bēātus&la=la&can=bēātus0&d=Perseus:text:1999.04.0059:alphabetic%20letter=B:entry%20group=7:entry=beatus&i=1.

11. Augustine of Hippo, “De Sermone Domini in Monte,” in *Documenta Catholica Omnia*, book 1, chapter 3, documentacatholicaomnia.eu/02m/0354-0430,_Augustinus,_De_Sermone_Domini_In_Monte_Secundum_Matthaeum,_MLT.pdf. For an English translation see St. Augustin, “Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, According to Matthew,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, trans. William Findlay (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf106/npnf106/Page_6.html. As he coined the term *beatitude*, Augustine wrote, “*Incipit enim beatitudo ab humilitate*” or “For beatitude (blessedness) begins with humility.” Findlay altered the meaning somewhat by rendering the passage, “For the beatitudes begin with humility.”

12. C. H. Spurgeon, “The Beatitudes,” *The Spurgeon Center*, 29 July 1909, 4, spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-beatitudes/#flipbook/.

13. St. Augustine, “The Lord’s Sermon on the Mount,” in *Ancient Christian Writers*, ed. Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumbe, trans. John J. Jepson (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1948), 6, archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.157824/.

claim qualifies it as a ninth beatitude.¹⁴ With the lengthier and complete account of 3 Nephi 12, however, eleven beatitudes may be clearly identified.

The setting of the Beatitudes

Matthew 5 is a continuation of Matthew 4,¹⁵ making it clear that the Sermon was addressed specifically to a select group of disciples¹⁶ on a mountain (Matthew 5:1), which is a well-known metaphor or substitute for a temple (Psalm 24:3, Micah 4:1–2).¹⁷ In the Book of Mormon account, the Lord addressed his Sermon to the righteous Nephite survivors of the cataclysms that followed his crucifixion, who had gathered at the temple (3 Nephi 10:12). Referring to Jesus, the New Testament account states, “And he opened his mouth” (Matthew 5:2). This is “a Hebraism, indicating that the words spoken are not the utterance of chance, but of set will and purpose.”¹⁸

The word *blessed*

As mentioned above, each of the Beatitudes shares the initial word *blessed*. From the Aramaic spoken by Jesus,¹⁹ to the Hebrew and Greek of the early writers, to several versions of English, various words

14. Eugene Boring, “The Gospel of Matthew,” *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, v VIII (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1994), 178, [archive.org/details/newinterpreters/b0008unse/page/178/mode/1up](https://www.archive.org/details/newinterpreters/b0008unse/page/178/mode/1up). Also: Charles H. Talbert, “Grace in the Sermon on the Mount” (Waco, TX, Center for Christian Ethics, 2008), 14, ifl.web.baylor.edu/sites/g/files/ecbvkj771/files/2024-02/SermonArticleTalbert.pdf.

15. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Lesson 3: Matthew 5–7,” *New Testament Teacher Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/new-testament-teacher-manual/the-gospel-according-to-st-matthew/lesson-3-matthew-5-7](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/new-testament-teacher-manual/the-gospel-according-to-st-matthew/lesson-3-matthew-5-7).

16. The Joseph Smith Translation makes this clearer by additional wording indicating that Christ was specifically addressing the leaders of his Church (JST Matthew 5:3–4).

17. Richard J. Clifford, “The Temple and the Holy Mountain,” in *The Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University [BYU], 1984), 107–24, [rsc.byu.edu/temple-antiquity/temple-holy-mountain](https://www.rsc.byu.edu/temple-antiquity/temple-holy-mountain).

18. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew vol. 1* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press 1956), 81, [archive.org/details/gospelofmatthewv008785mbp/page/n110/mode/1up](https://www.archive.org/details/gospelofmatthewv008785mbp/page/n110/mode/1up). Other examples are found in Job 33:1–3, Matthew 13:35, and Acts 10:34.

19. Britannica Editors, s.v. “Aramaic language,” *Britannica*, [britannica.com/topic/Aramaic-language](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Aramaic-language).

have been translated as *blessed* in modern English. These multiple translations aside, *blessed* is the word Joseph Smith used when he translated 3 Nephi directly from whatever language was used to record Christ's address to the Nephites. The word *blessed* is the closest English equivalent to the Lord's intent when he gave the address.

The English adjective *blessed*, chosen by the translators of the King James Version of the Bible in the sixteenth century, is derived from the Middle English *blessen*, which comes from the Old English word *bletsian* or *bledsian*. This word, in turn, is based on the Proto-Germanic word *blodison*, a word with the solemn and significant meaning of "hal-low or mark with blood." It had previously referred to a sprinkling of blood on pagan altars.²⁰

If Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount in Aramaic, the common language of Galilee, for *blessed are ye*, he would most likely have used the word "*touvayhoon*, derived from the root *tov*, meaning 'good,' literally it is 'goodness (towards) you.'"²¹

Ancient biblical uses of blessed

The word *blessed* is found numerous times in both the Old and the New Testaments with varying denotations. In the Old Testament, two Hebrew words are translated as *blessed*. One is the adjective *barak* (Hebrew בָּרַךְ),²² a blessing of praise or thanksgiving directed toward God, but this is not the corollary of the New Testament *blessed*. The other Hebrew word commonly translated as *blessed* is *'eshet* (אֵשֶׁת).²³ *'Eshet* is derived from the verb *'ashar* meaning either "to go straight," literally, to be on the right path or making progress in the right direction, or "to be blessed" as in a state of blessedness.²⁴ *'Eshet* is the word used in the Old Testament beatitudes and is equivalent to the word that begins each New Testament beatitude.²⁵

20. Harper Douglas, s.v. "Etymology of bless," Online Etymology Dictionary, etymonline.com/word/bless.

21. Andrew G. Roth, "Matthew 5," *Aramaic English New Testament* (Sedro Woolley, WA: Netzari Press, 2016), 35n47, dn720004.ca.archive.org/0/items/bible-biblias-peshitta-collection/Aramaic%20English%20New%20Testament%20-%20Andrew%20Gabriel%20Roth.pdf.

22. James Strong, *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary* (Rio, WI: The AGES Digital Library, 1997), s.v. "*barak*," 1288, archive.org/details/19.strongss/26.StrongsHebrewDictionary/.

23. Strong, *Hebrew Dictionary*, 835.

24. Strong, *Hebrew Dictionary*, 833.

25. Skip Moen, "Not Quite," *Hebrew Word Study*, 15 January 2010, skipmoen.com/2010/01/not-quite/.

In the King James Version of the Bible, *'eshet* is sometimes translated as *happy*, a word derived from the Old Norse word *hap* meaning *luck* or *chance*, from which come the English words *perhaps* or *happenstance*.²⁶ Happiness is inherently transient and is therefore inappropriately applied in many instances, such as to those who mourn or are persecuted. Regarding this translation, Rabbi Steven Schwarzschild stated:

“Happy” isn’t good enough. . . . The problem is that, if you decide you don’t like “blessed,” there isn’t a single English word which can take its place. You might use a phrase like “on the right track” or “going in the right direction.” Sin means being *off* the track, missing the target. Being “blessed” means you aren’t lost—you’re on the path the Creator intends you to be on. Exchanging “blessed” for “happy” trivializes the biblical word. You might as well sum up the Bible with a slogan like, “Have a nice day.”²⁷

In the New Testament, two words have been translated from the Greek to *bless* or *blessed*. The verb *to bless* in Greek is *eulogeo* (εὐλογέω). Literally, this word means *good speaking* and is understood as *to speak well of* or *to praise*.²⁸ “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless (εὐλογεῖτε) them that curse you” (Matthew 5:44). *Eulogeo* is often associated with religious ritual or ceremony, as in the blessing of the bread and wine by Christ (the Eucharist). “And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed (εὐλογήσας), and brake it, and gave to them, and said, ‘Take, eat: this is my body’” (Mark 14:22). It is also the root word of a funeral *eulogy*.

The Greek word for the adjective *blessed* as used in the Beatitudes is *makarios* (μακάριος),²⁹ and a saying in the literary form of a beatitude is accordingly known as a *makarism*. Though *touvay/tovi/ṭūbay* was likely the actual word that Christ would have spoken as he delivered the Beatitudes in Judea, *makarios* is the Greek equivalent.³⁰

26. Harper Douglas, s.v. “Etymology of hap,” Online Etymology Dictionary, etymonline.com/word/hap.

27. Jim Forest, *The Ladder of the Beatitudes* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 17–18, archive.org/details/ladderofbeatitud0000fore/page/17/mode/1up.

28. James Strong, “εὐλογέω,” *Greek Dictionary of the New Testament* (Rio, WI: The AGES Digital Library, 1997), 2127, archive.org/details/19.strongss/27.StrongsGreekDictionary/page/199/mode/1up.

29. Strong, *Greek Dictionary*, s.v. “μακάριος,” 3107.

30. Peshitta New Testament, dukhrana.com/peshitta/index.php; and Peshitta

The adjective *makarios*, or a related form, is used fifty times in forty-nine verses in the New Testament. In forty-four instances, these words have been translated to the word *blessed*. The other six have been translated to *happy*. As mentioned above, this is a word, like *'esher*, that inadequately and misleadingly fails to convey the magnitude of joy to be expected by achieving the promises listed in the various Beatitudes. "Happy is the man who will see God" or "Happy is the man who will inherit the earth" is a gross understatement.

Biblical verses in which *makarios* is used often carry an eternal or celestial quality. "But blessed (μακάριοι) are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear" (Matthew 13:16), and "Blessed (Μακάριος) art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17).

Ancient nonbiblical uses of blessed

The word *makarios* is derived from the word *makar*, a condition that Homer ascribed predominantly to the gods, meaning "the transcendent happiness of a life beyond care, labor, and death," and thus included immortality.³¹ *Makarios* was first used by Pindar and applied generally to the gods,³² who were content and free from all mortal concerns, including death, and possessed everything they needed for their own blissful existence. The blessed (*olbioi*) heroic dead who inhabited the mythical isles of the blessed (*Nêsoi Makáriôi*) enjoyed the same freedom.³³ The island of Cyprus was once called *hê Makaria* because it was thought that everything needed for its occupants' blissful self-sufficiency could be found there.³⁴

Makarios may have an even earlier Egyptian source, since the Egyptian word *m^cr* is similar to and synonymous with *makar*,³⁵ which

New Testament, "Analysis of Peshitta verse Matthew 5:3," dukhrana.com /peshitta/analyze_verse.php?verse=Matthew+5:3.

31. Homer, *Homer's Odessey*, ed. W. W. Merry and James Riddell (Oxford: Clarendon Press), v5:7, archive.org/details/homersodysseyed01home/page/210/mode/1up.

32. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "μακάριός," ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 362, archive.org/details/theologicaldicti0004unse/page/362/mode/1up.

33. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, trans. Gregory Nagy (n.p., 700 BC), 167–73, chs. harvard.edu/primary-source/hesiod-works-and-days-sb/.

34. Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew vol. 1*, 84.

35. Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 93, archive.org/details/sermononmountcom0000betz/page/93/mode/1up.

refers to the dead and to temples. Definitions of the word *m^{cr}* refer to “the blessed dead,” to “a successful fate,” and “similar to the gods.” Other definitions of *m^{cr}* refer specifically to the temple and possibly even to temple-related clothing.³⁶

According to Hans Dieter Betz, “The old sources seem to agree on the basic meaning of the term: it designates a state of being that pertains to the gods and can be awarded to human beings postmortem.”³⁷ Because of the concerns inherent in mortality, Aristotle stated his belief that true happiness could be attained only after death.³⁸

Most translations of more ancient writings carry the connotation of *makarios* as a bestowal of supreme favor from God far surpassing the superficiality of *happy* or *fortunate* (which appear in other versions). Later, the word became a euphemism for the elite or upper class, which somehow merited an abundance of material rewards such as family, wealth, honor, fame, and health.³⁹

Archimandrite Ephrem points out that “the interesting thing about ‘ashrê is that it is never, so far as I know, applied to God.” He adds, “On the other hand, the Greek *makar* starts life as precisely something which the gods are, though the related adjective *makarios* is more commonly applied to humans.”⁴⁰

A fascinating usage of the word *blessed* is found in the Orphic gold leaves, which are small rolls of gold foil recently found in the tombs of deceased initiates of the Greek mystery cult of Demeter. They are usually found near their ears or hands and seem intended to verify their initiation.⁴¹ Upon these leaves are found inscriptions that provide the initiate with instructions on how to navigate the afterlife and with passwords they must know to respond appropriately to questions that will be asked of them by judges they will encounter on their way to the Elysian Fields. As such, these leaves seem to serve as a form of

36. Adolf Erman, Hermann Grapow, eds., *Wörterbuch Der Ägyptischen Sprache* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1971), 2:48 m^{cr} I, IIb and c, III, IV, archive.org/details/WorterbuchDerAAgyptischenSpracheV.II/page/n25/.

37. Betz, *Commentary*, 92.

38. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Christopher Rowe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), I.1101a13—I.1101a21, archive.org/details/aristotle-nicomachean-ethics-sarah-broadie-cristopher-rowe/page/n56/mode/1up.

39. Sarah Scott, “Core Vocab: makar,” *Kosmos Society*, 19 Feb 2021, kosmosociety.org/core-vocab-makar/.

40. Forest, *Ladder*, 20.

41. Günther Zuntz, *Persephone: three essays on religion and thought in Magna Graecia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), Bk 3, I, 277–393, archive.org/details/persephonethreee0000zunt/page/277/mode/1up.

totenpässe or passport for the dead. They have been found in graves in South Italy, Crete, Thessaly, and Palestine.⁴² Some inscriptions on these leaves contain quotations or brief sentences that include the adjective *blessed*: “Happy (*olbie*) and blessed (*makaristé*) are you, you will be god instead of human.”⁴³ To the early Greeks, *blessed* had a significant association with the blessings of the next life.

Although the more ancient meaning of *makarios* referred to more than earthly happiness, the term was later applied to the quality of life enjoyed by wealthy mortals. In the Beatitudes, Jesus turned this later meaning upside-down and pronounced the poor, the hungry, the meek, and the persecuted as the true elite, while the proud and unrepentant rich and powerful were to be found at the bottom of the order of heaven. This teaching is seen also in the parable of the Bosom of Abraham (Luke 16:19–31).

Latter-day Saint Views of the Beatitudes

There is little unanimity among Latter-day Saint authors regarding the meaning of the Beatitudes, but their viewpoints over many decades may be grouped into several categories. Many of these touch upon concepts related to the temple, such as “a code of ethics,” “a constitution for a perfect life,” “the pathway to approach God,” “requirements for salvation,” “the nature of citizenship in the kingdom,” “and characteristics of the exalted.” In their discussions, however, no commentator makes mention that the Beatitudes might represent qualifications to enter a temple.

The Beatitudes as a pattern of a holy life

Monte S. Nyman writes, “The challenge of the Beatitudes is a celestial challenge, and applying them in our lives leads to eternal life.”⁴⁴ Harold B. Lee repeatedly referred to the Beatitudes as “the constitution for

42. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), VI 2.2., 293, archive.org/details/greekreligion0000burk/page/293/mode/1up. Although the Orphic leaves date from the time of the Mysteries of Demeter, the first was not found until about 1834, and the first translations were not published until the late nineteenth century.

43. Zuntz, *Persephone*, Bk. 3, III, A1, line 8, 300–1.

44. Monte S. Nyman, “I Have a Question: How Are We to Look at the Beatitudes and Make Them Useful in Our Lives?,” *Ensign*, December 1974, 28, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1974/12/i-have-a-question/how-are-we-to-look-at-the-beatitudes-and-make-them-useful-in-our-lives.

a perfect life”⁴⁵ Marvin K. Gardner, writing in *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, states, “Jesus revealed the meaning of righteousness — a pattern that he exemplified by his own life.”⁴⁶ Robert E. Wells called the Beatitudes “requirements for salvation.”⁴⁷ James E. Talmage writes, “The Beatitudes are directed to the duties of mortal life as a preparation for a greater existence yet future.”⁴⁸ Alvin R. Dyer states similarly, “Herein is described the moral character required in those who are to constitute his kingdom.”⁴⁹ Harold B. Lee also states that “the Beatitudes . . . have been referred to by Bible commentators as the preparation necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.”⁵⁰ D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner write, “The Beatitudes are both characteristics of and conditions enjoyed by the exalted — those who are or will be recipients of eternal life.”⁵¹

The Beatitudes describe the rewards of an exalted life

The Church teaches that, in the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount, “Jesus is actually describing the qualities of an exalted person.”⁵² Despite the claim by Rabbi Schwarzschild that “there isn’t a single English word which can take its place,”⁵³ in Latter-day Saint vernacular, *blessed* may be appropriately substituted with either *exalted* (in an eschatological sense) or with *worthy of exaltation* (with a view toward this life). Each of thirty-eight uses of the word (including the Beatitudes of Matthew 5) refers to qualities having to do with exaltation. Fourteen of those verses deal specifically with the qualities of

45. Harold B. Lee, *Youth and the Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 57, archive.org/details/youthchurch0000leeh/page/57/mode/1up.

46. Marvin K. Gardner, “Righteousness,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1236–37, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/EoM/id/4142.

47. Robert E. Wells, *The Mount and the Master* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), xi.

48. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 231–32, archive.org/details/jesuschriststudy00talmrich/page/231/mode/1up.

49. Alvin R. Dyer, *Conference Report*, October 1970, 150, archive.org/details/conferencereport1970sa/page/150/mode/1up.

50. Lee, *Youth*, 57.

51. D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, eds., *Verse By Verse, the Four Gospels* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 173.

52. Church Educational System, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), 60, archive.org/details/TheLifeAndTeachingsOfJesusAndHisApostlesLDSManual/page/n64/mode/1up.

53. Forest, *Ladder*, 17.

those deserving exaltation, while four deal strictly with the rewards of those who are exalted. Twenty verses (including the Beatitudes of Matthew 5), consider both aspects in an "if . . . then" manner.

As mentioned above, John Welch identified forty-seven points of correlation between the temple and both the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple, thereby establishing these Sermons as temple-related texts.⁵⁴ He states that the Beatitudes promise "the ultimate blessings of eternal life, similar to promises made in the temple."⁵⁵ He is, to my knowledge, the only Latter-day Saint author who has associated the Beatitudes with the temple, but even he referred only to the promises and not to the conditions upon which the blessings are predicated. In his discussion of the Beatitudes, Welch included comments by the non-Latter-day Saint scholar, Betz, who concluded that the Beatitudes represent "the entrance requirements for the kingdom of heaven."⁵⁶ Welch suggests that it is "his [Betz's] way of saying 'temple recommend questions' perhaps."⁵⁷ Welch also includes the words of Georg Strecker, who stated that the Beatitudes are "the conditions that must be fulfilled in order to gain entrance into the Holy of Holies."

Academic Interpretations of the Beatitudes

Non-Latter-day-Saint biblical scholars such as Betz and Strecker have recognized, described, and explicitly stated significant associations between the Beatitudes and the qualifications to participate in activities they believe to have been available to the individuals Jesus was addressing. Such statements, particularly when they are correlated with comments by Latter-day Saint authors who imply, without explicitly stating, similar associations, are the impetus for a more detailed analysis.

Betz has written thorough analyses of the Sermon on the Mount.⁵⁸ After reviewing the Egyptian, Greek, and Semitic literary forms of

54. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*, 47–114.

55. John W. Welch, "The Temple in the Book of Mormon: The Temples at the Cities of Nephi, Zarahemla, and Bountiful," *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994), 373, archive.org/details/templesofancient0000unse/page/373/mode/1up.

56. Betz, *Commentary*, 60n407.

57. John W. Welch, "The Beatitudes. Christ's Teachings," in *Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 4*, 146.

58. Hans Dieter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis:

beatitudes, Betz supports the following conclusions regarding the Beatitudes that precede the Sermon:

1. The original function of the Beatitudes is ritualistic. “They serve as reminders of things the recipients have heard before” and “presuppose some form of cultic experience, which, however, remains outside the texts.” “The Beatitudes in the [Sermon on the Mount] . . . have primarily didactic functions,” as evidenced by the use of the third-person plural.⁵⁹

A ritual, presented repetitively with didactic features, is reminiscent of the temple experience.

2. They are in the form of a declarative statement. Christ is rehearsing the former shared experience, but the nature of the cultic act he is referencing lies outside the text and is unstated.

The only known cultic act that the recipients may share — baptism — has no apparent connection to either the Beatitudes or the Sermon. The declarative nature of the Beatitudes is in the form of doctrinal statements to be learned and even memorized, linking doctrine and ritual.⁶⁰

3. The Beatitudes are to be understood to pertain equally to this world and to the world to come.⁶¹

As principles of eschatological and divine justice the Beatitudes are ipso facto future-oriented; as principles pronounced in the present they have an impact on the present as well. . . . Strictly speaking, they should be pronounced by the divine judge in the afterlife. . . . Spoken in the present they reveal a message that belongs to the future of persons for whose eternal salvation this message is decisive.⁶²

This point corresponds clearly with the Latter-day Saint viewpoint that temple worthiness in this life prepares for worthiness in the Kingdom

Fortress Press 1984), archive.org/details/essaysonsermonon0000betz/mode/1up; and Betz, *Commentary*, 60.

59. Betz, *Commentary*, 93.

60. Betz, *Commentary*, 95.

61. Betz, *Commentary*, 96.

62. Betz, *Commentary*, 96.

of God in the world to come. The divine judge will certainly pronounce worthiness in the afterlife, but in mortality, access to sacred places and activities must be under the control of authorized, but mortal, representatives of God. "Stake presidency and bishopric members represent the Lord in conducting interviews for worthiness to enter the holy temple."⁶³

4. Regarding the ethical and moral nature of the Beatitudes, they are descriptive rather than prescriptive. As Betz states:

These specific attitudes, actions, and thoughts must also not be confused with "works of the law" in the Pauline sense. They do not "earn" salvation, but they are the "fruits" of insights into God's ways, and as such they "deserve" salvation. Paul would call them "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22), rather than "works of the law." Taken together the Beatitudes circumscribe the way of life of the faithful disciple of Jesus. As such they constitute the *exordium*, or introduction, of the Sermon on the Mount.⁶⁴

These are attributes that must be actively sought after, not just hoped for. Those who possess these qualities are now ready for the further instruction that will follow in the Sermon.

Contrary to Betz's claim of a "cultic experience," Strecker states, "Jesus, of course, teaches not cultic but eschatological virtues. They refer to entrance not into the earthly temple but into the kingdom of God. It is thus a matter of entrance into the βασιλεία των ουρανών [Greek: 'kingdom of heaven']."⁶⁵ The observations of religious and secular authorities reviewed thus far show the sacred nature of the Beatitudes and how incorporating their precepts into one's life may bring that person into the presence of God.

Latter-day Saint writers and commentators hint at, but do not explicitly state, an association between the Beatitudes and qualifications

63. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Conducting Temple Recommend Interviews," 6 October 2019, 1. The instructions were accompanied by a letter, signed by the First Presidency and entitled "Preparing to Enter the Temple," that provided information about the updated interview questions. See newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/multimedia/file/first-presidency-temple-recommend-letter.pdf.

64. Betz, *Commentary*, 97.

65. Strecker, *Sermon on the Mount*, 33.

for entering into the holy temple. Such an association is more clearly expressed by some scholars, but those scholars do not correlate those qualifications with spiritual aspects, especially those identified by the Church.

The Temple Recommend Questions

The temple recommend interview questions assess the worthiness of an individual to enter the temple. Furthermore, a demonstrated ability to meet the relatively less stringent standards of the recommend questions is necessary before the applicant accepts the more stringent covenants of the temple.

A brief history of the recommend questions

According to Talmage, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, the primordial temple, because they violated one of the principles of temple worthiness — the Word of Wisdom.⁶⁶ If so, this would be the first example of losing access to the presence of the Lord for violating a principle of temple worthiness.

The first recorded list of requirements to enter the temple is found in Psalm 24:3–4: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place [the temple]? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.”⁶⁷ In this brief statement are covered three qualifications found both in the Beatitudes and in the current temple recommend questions: chastity, meekness, and honesty, respectively.

A definitive history of the standards for entering Latter-day Saint temples has been written by Edward L. Kimball.⁶⁸ At the time the first temple of this dispensation was dedicated in 1836, in Kirtland, Ohio, and for the next several decades, worthiness for participation in temple ordinances was determined by local Church leaders who recommended individuals, based on their personal observation, to

66. James E. Talmage, *Eighty Fourth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1913), 118–19, archive.org/details/conferencereport1913sa/page/118/mode/2up. See also Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 29–30.

67. “Line upon Line: Psalm 24:3–4,” *New Era*, November 2007, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/2007/11/line-upon-line-psalm-24-3-4.

68. Edward L. Kimball, “The History of LDS Temple Admission Standards,” *Journal of Mormon History* 24, no.1 (1998):135–76, digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1030&context=mormonhistory.

the President of the Church for his approval.⁶⁹ Since then, the criteria for determining worthiness to enter a temple have undergone gradual evolution. In 1856,⁷⁰ in 1881,⁷¹ and in 1886,⁷² the First Presidency issued suggestions and instructions to bishops regarding specific criteria to be used when recommending an individual to the President of the Church for his consideration in allowing that member to enter the temple. Because of the increasing number of requests, sole responsibility for determining temple worthiness was delegated by the Church president in 1891 to the bishops and stake presidents.⁷³

According to Kimball, in about 1922, the Church published the first recommend book, which contained twelve instructional items and seven criteria to be ascertained. In doing so, the Church began standardizing temple worthiness in this dispensation. The 1934 *General Handbook of Instructions* stated only that applicants

should observe the law of tithing. The applicant should also observe all other principles of the Gospel, should keep the Word of Wisdom, not use profanity, should not join or be a member of any secret oath-bound organization and should sustain without reservation the general and local authorities of the church.⁷⁴

Additional changes to these criteria were made in the handbooks

69. Kimball, "Temple Admission Standards," 139.

70. "Heber C. Kimball to Bishop Evans," 19 May 1856, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/24467901-579b-473c-acf6-65b4429e980b/0/0.

71. Chester Ward, Sanpete Stake, Donation Record 1875–99, quoted in Kimball, "Temple Admission Standards," 140.

72. James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1833–1964* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 3:63, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/record/94607ffd-057e-418d-b0f3-e8548af19c28/43570dc9-b3dc-416f-911c-9a4d3f40f046.

73. Kimball, "Temple Admission Standards," 139–41.

74. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook of Instructions: For Stake Presidencies Bishops and Counselors Stake and Ward Clerks* (1934), 10, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/af674b30-18a7-4a74-b549-5a5095c77e67/0/11.

of 1940,⁷⁵ 1944,⁷⁶ 1960,⁷⁷ 1963,⁷⁸ and 1968.⁷⁹ Beginning in 1976, these criteria appeared as a list of questions.⁸⁰ These were further modified in 1978⁸¹ and 1991.⁸² After more than a century of confidentiality, the then-current questions were read by President Russell M. Nelson in the October 2019 General Conference and were made available online.⁸³ Since then, amendments were published once in 2023⁸⁴ and

75. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook of Instructions: For Stake Presidencies Bishops and Counselors Stake and Ward Clerks and Other Church Officers* (1940), 129, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e7df3c77-4ec7-46db-ae8b-ab9f4766479f/0/0.

76. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook of Instructions: For Stake Presidents and Counselors Bishops and Counselors Stake and Ward Clerks and Other Church Officers* (1944), 77, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e79e77ad-cc93-474b-8fbe-3dd789ce2042/0/0.

77. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1960), 65, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/87737946-45d8-483f-9304-e91abed74e75/0/0.

78. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1963), 74, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e4c35937-0013-4529-a9aa-d1811c331f47/0/78.

79. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1968), 91, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/aada07e2-0c2a-45e8-8e61-3b96afb4fb16/0/96.

80. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1976), 53, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/5e14b258-ccc4-489e-bc0d-cdf4e7e3cf09/0/64. Supplement 1 followed later that year with additional amendments, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/cfa73bb2-d882-4844-a5be-db71a694ee03/0/2.

81. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook Supplement*, no. 3 (1 March 1978), 4, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/0684f732-d823-4337-bf31-8709f984673d/0/3.

82. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *1991 Supplement to the 1989 General Handbook of Instructions* (1991), 8, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/63e3bd86-2d3d-4d08-8add-f66a35fb9253/0/11.

83. Russell M. Nelson, "Closing Remarks," *Ensign*, November 2019, 121, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2019/11/57nelson.

84. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (August 2023), 224, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d84420da-303d-40bb-8093-6e2b03e008e4/0/0.

twice in 2024.⁸⁵ The current questions are found in section 26.4.1 of the most recent version of *Handbook of Instructions*.⁸⁶

Matters of belief and matters of conduct

Edward Kimball points out that, until the *1985 Handbook of Instruction*, matters of belief were far less important in assessing worthiness for admission to the temple than was righteous behavior.⁸⁷ The unqualified acceptance of only several points of doctrine has been mandatory. Kimball suggests further that, based on an analysis of changes in the questions over the past century, “the balance of temple worthiness questions has shifted from conduct toward faith.”⁸⁸

Although sin of any type is unbecoming an individual who wishes to be considered a follower of the Savior, most transgressions, while not condoned, do not jeopardize one’s membership in the Church. On the other hand, certain transgressions can place into jeopardy one’s worthiness to be admitted into the holy temple, or even one’s membership in the Church.

Honest and appropriate answers to the temple recommend questions allow one to enter the house of the Lord and figuratively into his presence. These are the same questions asked of brethren to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood,⁸⁹ and similar questions may be asked of youth in annual and semi-annual interviews at the discretion of the interviewing member of the bishopric. Since the interviewer represents the Lord during temple recommend interviews,⁹⁰ we may assume that these are the same questions the Lord would ask, were he the interviewer.

85. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (May 2024), 226, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/388056ac-f324-4e43-bc69-04329c00454c/0/0; and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (August 2024), 223, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/a7b2308a-9858-4a17-808b-e0525536f749/0/0.

86. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook* (2026), 26.4.1.

87. Kimball, “Temple Admission Standards,” 142.

88. Kimball, “Temple Admission Standards,” 172.

89. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook* (2026), 31.2.6.

90. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Conducting Temple Recommend Interviews,” 1.

The Beatitudes and Corresponding Temple Recommend Questions for the Initiate

Each of the principles suggested by the eleven beatitudes identifiable in 3 Nephi correlates with one or more of the fourteen temple recommend questions for initial entrance into the temple. Three of these beatitudes correspond with two recommend questions. The degree of correlation between beatitude and recommend question varies from principle to principle.

Three of the first four recommend questions correspond with beatitudes in the 3 Nephi account of the Sermon and in the Joseph Smith Translation, but these three beatitudes are absent from the Matthaean account. Each of the missing beatitudes deals with a principle that was lost during the apostasy following the death of Jesus Christ. They include the nature of Deity, the Restoration of the gospel, and the necessity of having authorized, mortal agents of God as “watchm[e]n on the tower” (Ezekiel 33:2).⁹¹ The fourth question, which concerns a belief in the Atonement of Jesus Christ, both unifies and divides Christians, as many aspects of the nature of that Atonement have been altered or lost as well.

The order in which the following principles are presented follows that of the eleven beatitudes of 3 Nephi (labeled as B#), but the order does not correlate with the order of the temple recommend questions (labeled as TR#). Each beatitude and the corresponding temple recommend question or questions will first be stated. A brief history of the question will follow. The discussion then ends with a description of how the beatitude correlates with the recommend question.

Principle #1: A testimony of current Church leaders

This beatitude and its associated temple recommend question both address the question: “Who is authorized to administer the saving ordinances of the Lord’s earthly Church?” This first beatitude is not found in the New Testament account, but it is found in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 12:1) and in the Joseph Smith Translation.

Beatitude associated with principle #1

(B1) Blessed are ye if ye shall **give heed unto the words**

91. See Ronald A. Rasband, “Our Watchman on the Tower,” *YA Weekly*, October 2022, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ya-weekly/2022/10/our-watchman-on-the-tower.

of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants.

Temple recommend question associated with principle #1

(TR4) Do you sustain the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the prophet, seer, and revelator and as the only person on the earth authorized to exercise all priesthood keys? Do you **sustain members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles** as prophets, seers, and revelators? Do you sustain the other General Authorities and local leaders of the Church?

History

A letter to local Church leaders in Iron and Washington counties (Utah) from the First Presidency, dated March 1856, requested that those to be recommended for temple ordinances "do not speak evil of the authorities of the Church."⁹² The first mention of sustaining Church leaders as a requirement for receiving a temple recommend was in the 1934 *Handbook of Instructions*, which stated that applicants "should sustain without reservation the general and local authorities of the Church."⁹³

In 1976, the portion concerning "general . . . authorities" was more specifically defined to require the applicant to aver that the President of the Church is "a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator" and is the only "person on the earth . . . authorized to exercise all priesthood keys."⁹⁴ Certain splinter groups maintain that temples dedicated early in this dispensation (generally prior to the Manifesto of 1890) were done so by divine authority, but they believe that since that time they, rather than The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, have retained priesthood keys for carrying out temple-associated ordinances. The wording of this question disqualifies members of such groups from gaining access to Latter-day Saint temples. Over the last thirty years, the recommend question has been further expanded to include an

92. "Parowan Historical Record, 13, 16 Mar 1856," quoted in Buerger, *Mysteries of Godliness*, 99–100, [dokumen.pub/qdownload/the-mysteries-of-godliness-a-history-of-mormon-temple-worship.html](https://www.dokumen.pub/qdownload/the-mysteries-of-godliness-a-history-of-mormon-temple-worship.html).

93. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook of Instructions* (1934), 10.

94. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook Supplement*, no. 1 (1 July 1976), 2, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/cfa73bb2-d882-4844-a5be-db71a694ee03/0/1.

affirmation of the applicant's belief that the other members of the Quorum of the First Presidency and the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and no others, are also "prophets, seers and revelators."⁹⁵

Discussion

During his earthly sojourn, Christ established a Church and called and commissioned the Twelve Apostles, who formed a Quorum (Luke 6:13). With the death of Christ, these Apostles became the leadership of the Church and held the keys of authority to administer ordinances. In their first recorded act following the death of Judas Iscariot, the remaining Apostles assembled to reconstitute the Quorum (Acts 1:21–26). That they alone held the keys of the priesthood is evident by this action. Likewise, the Lord called Twelve Disciples from among the Nephites, to administer his ordinances as stated in 3 Nephi 12:1.

The failure of some members to sustain leaders has long plagued the Church. Any individual who does not believe that the President of the Church is a prophet of God and that in him is vested the earthly keys to the holy priesthood cannot believe that the President has the priesthood authority required to authorize the performance of valid temple ordinances. Such individuals have always been proscribed from entering the temple.

Principle #2: A testimony of Deity

The first principle of the temple recommend questions, the first of the thirteen Articles of Faith, the first of the Ten Commandments, and one of the first of Christ's declarations in the preface to the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple concerns the reality of Deity. The associated beatitude is not found in any version of the New Testament, but it is found in the Book of Mormon and similarly in the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 5.

Beatitude associated with principle #2

(B2) After that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed are ye **if ye shall believe in me** and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am (3 Nephi 12:1).

95. Nelson, "Closing Remarks," 121.

Temple recommend question associated with principle #2

(TR1) Do you have **faith in and a testimony of God**, the Eternal Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost?

History

According to Kimball, it was not until 1985 that a specific question was included among the recommend questions regarding faith in the members of the Deity. Such a statement was felt to be necessary because of a concern that an applicant, whose outwardly appropriate behavior would otherwise allow him to enter the temple, might do so inappropriately because of peer or family pressure despite lacking a true testimony of Deity. The wording of this question was expanded in 1996 to include both "faith in *and a testimony of*" the members of Deity.⁹⁶

Discussion

Knowledge that God exists and of his true nature is crucial for attaining exaltation. According to the Lord: "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

The recommend statement "faith in and a testimony of" God corresponds well with the wording of the beatitude "if ye believe in me . . . and know that **I am.**" *I Am* is one of the sacred names of Jehovah (Exodus 3:14).

Christ gives special emphasis to his statement regarding himself as the Son of God, as it is the second of the Beatitudes that he delivers to the Nephites. The Joseph Smith Translation indicates that Jesus gave a similar statement to his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew-Joseph Smith Translation 5:3), which was apparently deleted from the text.

Principle #3: A testimony of the restoration of the gospel

The essence of this beatitude is to confirm the blessed state of those who have not seen God, but who nonetheless believe in the testimony of those who have. This beatitude is again not found in the New Testament account, but it is present in the Book of Mormon and in the Joseph Smith Translation.

96. Kimball, "Temple Admission Standards," 143.

Beatitude associated with principle #3

(B3) And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that **ye shall testify that ye have seen me**, and that **ye know that I am**. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins (3 Nephi 12:2).

Temple recommend question associated with principle #3

(TR3) Do you have a testimony of the **Restoration** of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

History

The first inclusion of a temple recommend question that included “a firm testimony of the restored gospel” was in 1985. In 1996, the word *firm* was omitted. Edward Kimball points out that acknowledgement of belief in the restoration of the gospel in this dispensation also implies that “the Church was restored as a peculiar instrument in God’s hands to bring salvation to mankind and that Joseph Smith was the instrument of that restoration.”⁹⁷

Discussion

As stated in the scripture, the testimonies of the Nephite Disciples came directly from the Lord, but those who believed on their testimonies would also be blessed.

Beginning with the dispensation of Adam, every dispensation of which we are aware has opened with a face-to-face dialogue between God and the prophet who had been foreordained to stand at the head of that dispensation. Jesus communed frequently with the Father, testified of him, and opened the dispensation of the meridian of time. Nearly 1,800 years passed between the death of the Lord and the visitation by the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith at the First Vision, which ushered in the contemporary dispensation of the fullness of time.

Although others may eventually be worthy to behold God, himself, in this life, it is the testimony of the prophet who opens a dispensation upon which all members of that dispensation must initially rely,

97. Kimball, “Temple Admission Standards,” 144.

as upon Adam in the first dispensation.⁹⁸ Joseph Smith, having also become personally acquainted with God, testified of this knowledge to all people of this dispensation.

Without the testimony of Joseph Smith, knowledge of the true nature of God would have been limited to the ancient and imperfect writings of witnesses from previous dispensations. Even writings from the Savior’s dispensation are incomplete, and those extant are prone to human errors of translation and transcription, and even manipulation.

Principle #4: Introspection and personal worthiness

Prior to entering their bishop’s office, applicants should, ideally, have reviewed each question they will be asked and determined themselves worthy to come unto the Lord. The Church has recently stated that “the interview questions are made public so members of all ages can better understand the requirements for temple worship and prepare to enter the temple.”⁹⁹ N. Eldon Tanner said, “When you sign your recommend, you make a commitment to the Lord that you are worthy of the privileges granted to those who hold such a recommend.”¹⁰⁰ An accurate answer cannot be fully provided in the few seconds between being asked this question and responding. It requires introspection prior to arriving at the interview. Depending on whether the candidate humbly did so, as Kimball accurately points out, this question “can be either the easiest or hardest question in the interview.”¹⁰¹

Beatitude associated with principle #4

The beatitude that corresponds to this question is found in both the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 12:3) and the New Testament (Matthew 5:3). The phrase “who come unto me” is absent from the Sermon on the Mount but present in both the Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament and the Sermon at the Temple in 3 Nephi. This phrase is

98. N. B. Lundwall, comp., *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: N. B. Lundwall, n.d.), 2:56, archive.org/details/compilationconta00lund/page/n3/mode/2up.

99. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Church Updates Temple Recommend Interview Questions,” 6 October 2019, newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/october-2019-general-conference-temple-recommend.

100. N. Eldon Tanner, “The Blessing of Church Interviews,” *Ensign*, November 1978, 42, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1978/11/the-blessing-of-church-interviews.

101. Kimball, “Temple Admission Standards,” 170.

the key to the association between the temple recommend question and the beatitude.

(B4) Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit **who come unto me**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Temple recommend question associated with principle #4

(TR16) Do you consider yourself to be worthy to enter into the Lord's House and participate in temple ordinances?

History

The question "Do you consider yourself worthy in every way to go to the temple?" was introduced in 1978.¹⁰² Perhaps because this question often results in a prolonged period of silent introspection on the part of applicants who had not personally resolved the issue prior to seeing the bishop, the phrase "in every way" was eliminated in 1996.

Discussion

Spence and Excell conclude that "[this] Beatitude is the sum and substance of the whole sermon."¹⁰³ This final temple recommend question is perhaps the most important since it summarizes the entire recommend interview. If the comprehensive nature of the recommend question were fully appreciated, it might be the only question required.

Much has been written of the phrase "the poor in spirit," since its meaning in this limited context is vague. O. Leslie Stone states, "What is meant by 'poor in spirit'? Is it not humility, which renders us teachable and eager to learn?"¹⁰⁴ A variety of definitions have been proffered by non-Latter-day Saint authors:

The poor in spirit . . . bring their minds to their . . . low condition. They are humble and lowly in their own eyes. They see their want, bewail their guilt, and thirst after a Redeemer.¹⁰⁵

102. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook Supplement*, no. 3, 5.

103. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Excell, *The Pulpit Commentary* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1950), 7:147, archive.org/details/pulpitcommentary0015spen/page/n184/mode/1up.

104. O. Leslie Stone, "The Beatitudes," *Conference Report*, October 1974, 40, archive.org/details/conferencereport1974sa/page/40/mode/1up.

105. Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), Matthew 5:3–12, 864, archive.org/details/matthewhenryscon00henr/page/864/mode/1up.

Not the poor in purse; but such as are poor in a spiritual sense . . . who are sensible of it, who see their poverty and want, freely acknowledge it, bewail it, and mourn over it; are humbled for it, and are broken under a sense of it.¹⁰⁶

The explanatory words, “in spirit,” fix the sense to “those who in their deepest consciousness realize their entire need.”¹⁰⁷

“The poor” is a translation of the Greek word *ptóchos* (πτωχός) meaning one who cowers, who feels helpless and vulnerable, a beggar who does not know how to meet his needs.¹⁰⁸

The words “who come unto me” demonstrate that these are they who have been alienated but are now prepared to return. By applying the Hebraic device of parallel construction, Noel Reynolds equates the phrase “who come unto me” with “who keep my commandments.”¹⁰⁹ Royden C. Derrick states, “To come unto Christ, one’s first step is to come forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit that results in overcoming unrighteous pride and becoming submissive to His will.”¹¹⁰ Thus “poor in spirit” means “lacking in one’s own will.” The rejoinder “who come unto me” is critical, however, because to be lacking in will isn’t enough, since even unambitious people lack will.

A full interpretation of this beatitude in Latter-day Saint terminology might be, “Having examined yourself, do you find yourself worthy to approach the Lord and enter into the covenants of exaltation with him?”

Principle #5: A testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ

Mourning and the Atonement of Jesus Christ are inextricably connected, since the Atonement overcomes the effects of the Fall of Adam, which introduced mourning. Adam and Eve had reason to

106. John Gill, “Commentary on Matthew 5:3,” *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*, web.archive.org/web/20001010153543/http://www.freegrace.net/gill/.

107. David Brown, “Matthew 5:3,” *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* (1871), 2086, archive.org/details/english-christian-ebook-commentary-critical-and-explanatory-on-the-whole-bible-1/page/2086/mode/1up.

108. Strong, *Greek Dictionary*, s.v. “πτωχός” 4434, archive.org/details/19.strongss/27.StrongsGreekDictionary/page/414/mode/1up.

109. Noel B. Reynolds, “‘Come unto Me’ as a Technical Gospel Term,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*, 31 (2019): 14, journal.interpreterfoundation.org/come-unto-me-as-a-technical-gospel-term/.

110. Royden C. Derrick, “The Way to Perfection,” *Conference Report*, April 1989, 76, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1989/04/the-way-to-perfection.

mourn as they faced separation from God's presence and the assurance of physical pain, including birthing children and lifelong physical labor. The Lord specifically pronounces "sorrow" upon Eve in Moses 4:22 and upon Adam in Moses 4:23 before they leave the Garden. This emphasis on mourning our lost state, corrected only by the Atonement, ties the beatitude to the temple recommend question. The beatitude is found in the New Testament (Matthew 5:4) and in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 12:4); see also the Joseph Smith Translation.

Beatitude associated with principle #5

(B5) And again, blessed are all they that **mourn**, for they shall be comforted.

Temple recommend question associated with principle #5

(TR2) Do you have a **testimony of the Atonement of Christ** and of His role as your Savior and Redeemer?"

History

A question introduced in 1996 asked the applicant to assert their "testimony of the atonement of Christ and of his role as Savior and Redeemer." Perhaps this was prompted in part by demonstrably false sectarian allegations that members of the Church are not true Christians.

Discussion

This beatitude may be understood as, "And again, blessed are all they that **mourn (because of the Fall of Adam)**, for they shall be comforted **(through the Atonement of Jesus Christ)**." All mourning is the result of either the physical or the spiritual effects of the Fall. Physical effects that cause mourning include illness, injury, age-related infirmity, and inevitable physical death, all of which are relieved by the Resurrection.

Whereas all other beatitudes concern relatively small groups of people, this beatitude has reference to every mortal who has lived or ever will live because the Fall and mourning are universal. The physical and spiritual death introduced through the Fall are reversed by the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the healing fruits of which include universal resurrection as well as conditional justification and sanctification for the worthy.

Mourning as a result of spiritual death is always the result of sin and separation from the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Sinners generally feel

the detrimental effects of their own sins, but although we are accountable only for the sins we commit, we often are compelled to mourn because of sins committed by others. Christ also provides, through the Atonement, a mechanism for mortals to be relieved of “pains . . . infirmities . . .” and sorrow resulting from spiritual death by compliance with the conditions stated by the Savior (Alma 7:11–13). Doing so qualifies the individual for blessedness or exaltation. Belief in the Atonement of Jesus Christ provides comfort in mortality and in the eternities.

Principle #6: Dutiful obedience to the responsibilities of Church membership

The meaning of this beatitude is perhaps less obvious. It is based upon the definition of the word *meek*. The recommend question asks about obedience to many of the most important duties of membership, which require subservience of an individual’s desires to those of the Lord. The inquiry is not about short-term commitments but about actions that, with time, become so habitual that they are essentially instinctual. The beatitude is found in the New Testament (Matthew 5:7) and in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 12:5); see also the Joseph Smith Translation.

Beatitude associated with principle #6

(B6) And blessed are **the meek**, for they shall inherit the earth.

The Greek word in Matthew 5:5, that translates to *the meek* is *πραεῖς* (transliteration: *praeis*), the nominative form of the adjective *πραῦς* (transliteration: *praus*) or *meek*. *Praus* does not mean *meek* in the modern sense of “enduring injury with patience and without resentment,” or “deficient in spirit and courage,” or “not violent or strong.”¹¹¹ *Tame* is perhaps a more accurate translation, but it still lacks clarity. Commenting on Matthew 5:5, Barclay wrote,

The word *praus* . . . is the regular word for an animal which has been domesticated, which has been trained to obey the word of command, which has learned to answer to the reins. It is the word for an animal which has learned to accept control.¹¹²

111. Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, s.v. “meek,” merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meek.

112. William Barclay, “Commentary on Matthew 5,” *William Barclay’s Daily Study*

The control of a domesticated animal is its willingness to accept the control of another. The strength of the tamed animal is not diminished, but it is channeled to do the will of the master.

In our culture, the term *broken heart* is generally interpreted as “extreme sorrow,” but if one is *broken* as an animal has been broken (has been trained to accept a saddle and bridle), and *heart* means *enthusiasm* or *passion*, as in the phrase “his heart wasn’t in it,” then one with a “broken heart” is one who has become submissive. Bruce Porter taught, “Those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit are willing to do anything and everything that God asks of them without resistance or resentment. We cease doing things our way and learn to do them God’s way instead.”¹¹³ Thus, the statements in the recommend question to “strive to do [one’s] duty in the Church; to attend [important] meetings; and to obey the rules, laws, and commandments of the gospel” are appropriately analogous with being meek.

Meekness, then, is not *passive* refusal to take action, as the modern definition would suggest. Rather, it refers to an *active* endeavor under the direction of God. *The meek* are those who have subjected themselves to the will of the Father and actively serve him.

Two similar current temple recommend questions appear to correspond well with the correct meaning of *meek*.

First temple recommend question associated with principle #6

(TR6) Do you **follow the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ** in your private and public behavior with members of your family and others?

History

No similar question was included prior to 1978. After that, and from the late 1990s to 2019, the wording of this question was, “Is there anything in your conduct relating to members of your family that is not in harmony with the teachings of the Church?” In October 2019, the negative tone was eliminated and the focus shifted to the current, more general question that still emphasizes family relationships. The focus now is more toward obedience.

Bible (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1956–1959), 96–98, emphasis added, studylight.org/commentaries/eng/dsb/matthew-5.html.

113. Bruce D. Porter, “A Broken Heart and a Contrite Spirit,” *Ensign*, November 2007, 32, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2007/11/a-broken-heart-and-a-contrite-spirit.

Discussion

The implication of this question is that the meek applicant has directed his or her life to being a disciple of the Savior at all times, in all places, and with all people. It is a question that requires introspection regarding one’s character, since private behavior generally lacks pretense. This question is about integrity and congruence—that the gospel governs who a person *is*, not just what that person *does*. It is about living the spirit of the law even when no one is watching. The meek follow the teachings of the Church because they wish to do so and have trained themselves to do so.

Second temple recommend question associated with principle #6

The second question deals less obviously with meekness but is still strongly correlated:

(TR8) Do you strive to keep the Sabbath day holy, both at home and at church; attend your meetings; prepare for and worthily partake of the sacrament; and **live your life in harmony with the laws and commandments of the gospel?**

History

Edward Kimball writes,

Over the years, very general criteria have appeared either in the bishop’s handbook or in the question to applicants: Is the candidate in full faith and fellowship, moral, living by the gospel, living in accordance with the accepted rules and doctrines of the Church, or striving to perform his or her duty? The sweep of these questions, however phrased, is often underappreciated.¹¹⁴

Strict attendance at unspecified meetings was mentioned in 1856 as being necessary to be recommended to attend the temple. Attendance specifically at sacrament, priesthood, and “other meetings” was included as a recommend question in 1963.¹¹⁵ The query about “other meetings” was omitted in 1996. Currently the applicant is asked about several specific ways that demonstrate that he or she is

114. Kimball, “Temple Admission Standards,” 165.

115. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1963), 74.

striving “to live [his or her] life in harmony with the laws and commandments of the gospel.”

Discussion

This question explores another facet of meekness. Whereas the previous question deals with character, this question is more about visible discipleship and whether one is fulfilling one’s obligations as a Church member. Although an answer to this question may indeed be indicative of the depth of one’s conversion, it is much easier to affect fidelity overtly than covertly. Nevertheless, keeping the Sabbath day holy and worthily partaking of the sacrament require a degree of commitment that cannot be feigned. Such commitment comes from meekness, or relinquishing the control of one’s own desires to the will of the Lord.

Principle #7: Willingness to sacrifice certain physical pleasures for righteousness

Commentators generally interpret the words “hunger and thirst” figuratively to mean “a consuming or powerful desire,”¹¹⁶ as if to say, “Blessed are those who truly long for righteousness.” While this is undoubtedly correct, interpreting “hungering and thirsting” in a more active literal sense harmonizes well with temple recommend questions that deal with the sacrifice of physical pleasures and a willingness to limit desires and passions to within the bounds set by the Lord. This beatitude is found in Matthew 5:6 (Joseph Smith Translation 5:8) and 3 Nephi 12:6.

Beatitude associated with principle #7

(B7) And blessed are all they **who do hunger and thirst** after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Two current temple recommend questions can be understood as corresponding with “hungering and thirsting for righteousness.” A proper interpretation of the phrase, “hunger and thirst after righteousness” will help with understanding the meaning of this beatitude. *After* may be best interpreted as *in the pursuit of*. True “hungering and thirsting” are done voluntarily, subjugating physical desires to those desires of the spirit. A proper restatement of this beatitude might be, “And

116. Judy Allen, “To Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness,” *Open the Bible*, 10 May 2017, openthebible.org/article/to-hunger-and-thirst-for-righteousness/.

blessed are all they *who control their physical appetites and desires in the pursuit of righteousness*, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.”

First temple recommend question associated with principle #7

(TR10) Are you a **full-tithe payer**?

Although “hunger and thirst” are most conspicuously associated with a lack of food or drink, that phrase might also appropriately refer to money or other resources one chooses instead to donate as tithes or offerings.

History

As the Nauvoo Temple neared completion, Joseph Smith told the people, “Those whose names are found in the Church books [for contributing property for the temple] shall have the first claim to receive their endowments in the temple.”¹¹⁷ Realizing that tithing is a difficult principle for many people to observe, the necessity to be a full tithe payer has sometimes been relaxed. In 1928, temple recommend applicants were simply “encouraged” to “observe the principle of tithing.”¹¹⁸ By 1934 the wording had stiffened, now requiring the applicant to “observe the law of tithing”¹¹⁹—despite being in the depths of the Great Depression. Six years later, the applicant was required either to be “an honest tithe payer” or to “undertake to become” such.¹²⁰ Since 1963, the requirement has remained to be a full tithe payer.¹²¹ Although the requirement to be a full tithe payer is now more inflexible, the declaration of one’s status is left completely to the discretion of the applicant.

117. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1902) 6:243, archive.org/details/HistoryOfTheChurchOfJesusChristOfLatter-daySaints1902-Volume6/page/n300/mode/1up.

118. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook of Instructions: For Bishops and Counselors Stake and Ward Clerks of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1928), 11, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/db41ef9c-68e0-46aa-8481-7d6e53994ef0/0/12.

119. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook of Instructions* (1934), 10.

120. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook of Instructions* (1940), 129.

121. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1963), 74.

Discussion

One may donate money and other financial resources as tithes or offerings. Additional sacrifices to that end include a monthly twenty-four-hour fast to assist the poor and needy. In addition, men and women voluntarily forgo the usual pleasures that others of their age enjoy when serving as full-time, service, or senior missionaries for the Church. Other faithful fulfillment of Church callings, or performing acts of service to fellowmen, usually results in spending less time on entertainment or other time-consuming activities.

Sacrificing earthly pleasures — in the form of monthly fasts, obeying a proscription on certain foods and more, and the sacrifice of tithing, offerings, and time and energy in callings — in the pursuit of eternal joy is a fitting correspondence to hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Second temple recommend question associated with principle #7

(TR10) Do you understand and obey the **Word of Wisdom**?

The true disciple will be willing to abstain (hunger and thirst) from proscribed items in the pursuit of eternal joy.

History

Section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants, received in 1833, and parts of other sections, outline the basic principles of the Word of Wisdom, although details have been supplied through later clarification by Church authorities and by consistent inspired teachings over time. Initially, and for the next nearly ninety years, the principle was considered by some members to be merely a strong suggestion and not a commandment. There is good evidence that Church leaders were committed in principle to the Word of Wisdom long before strict adherence was first required in 1919 to obtain a temple recommend.¹²²

The degree of stringency in observing the Word of Wisdom required of a temple recommend applicant varied over the next several decades. In 1940 and 1944, applicants were required simply to

122. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Instructions to mission presidents, 8 October 1919," in *Messages of the First Presidency*, Vol. 5, ed. James R. Clark (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 163, [fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Word_of_Wisdom/History_and_implementation#Question:_Did_Heber_J._Grant_include_a_strict_observance_of_the_Word_of_Wisdom_in_the_temple_recommend_interview_because_of_the_repeal_of_prohibition?](https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Word_of_Wisdom/History_and_implementation#Question:_Did_Heber_J._Grant_include_a_strict_observance_of_the_Word_of_Wisdom_in_the_temple_recommend_interview_because_of_the_repeal_of_prohibition?)

display “willingness to undertake” observation of the principle.¹²³ Numerous prohibitions have been discussed in Church publications, sermons, and manuals relative to the principle, including the use of alcoholic beverages, tobacco in all its forms, coffee, tea, and drugs, both illegal and also legal when taken contrary to their prescribed uses. In 1960, the recommend question became more specific, requiring that the applicant “observe the Word of Wisdom, abstaining from tea, coffee, tobacco, and liquor.”¹²⁴ Since 1976, the recommend question has been simply, “Do you keep the Word of Wisdom?”¹²⁵ although in 2019, the wording was amended slightly, but significantly, to “Do you understand and keep . . . ?”¹²⁶

Discussion

The Lord has filled the earth with an immense selection of delicious and wholesome foods and other substances for the benefit and enjoyment of mankind. Beginning in the Garden of Eden, the Lord has proscribed from time to time the ingestion of certain of these items. To those willing to heed such warnings and forego the use of these prohibited items, the Lord has reserved the blessing of worthiness to enter his temple and participate in the ordinances therein.

Many ingestible substances, including those proscribed in Doctrine and Covenants 89:5–9, have a sensual appeal, and some even have associated degrees of addiction (the overcoming of which entails severe hunger) but provide little or nothing toward the sustaining of life.

An applicant must commit to live the law of sacrifice when entering into temple covenants. It is one thing to yearn for something, but it is quite another to be willing to sacrifice physically in its pursuit. Robert E. Wells states, “To hunger and thirst for something involves strife, struggles, work, and sacrifice.”¹²⁷ Dallin H. Oaks notes, “Jesus frequently used the familiar examples of food and drink to teach His lessons.”¹²⁸

123. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook of Instructions* (1940), 129.

124. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1960), 66.

125. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1976), 53.

126. Nelson, “Closing Remarks.”

127. Robert E. Wells, “The Beatitudes: Pattern for Coming unto Christ,” *Ensign*, December 1987, 17, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1987/12/the-beatitudes-pattern-for-coming-unto-christ.

128. Dallin H. Oaks, “Nourishing the Spirit,” *Ensign*, December 1987, 13, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1987/12/nourishing-the-spirit.

Bruce R. McConkie emphasized that Christ exemplified his own words while being tempted in the wilderness when he went without food and drink for forty days and was “an hungered” (Matthew 4:2). McConkie writes, “No morsel of food entered his mouth, no drop of water wet his parched lips or dripped down his throat.”¹²⁹ Hungering after food, thirsting after drink, and even denying oneself of certain physical comforts are therefore appropriate metaphors.

Principle #8: Mercy and obtaining forgiveness from sin

All sin separates the sinner from God and is resolved only through repentance, which is possible only because of the Savior’s mercy. The merciful will find favor in the Lord’s sight and will obtain forgiveness.

No unclean thing shall be permitted to come into [the Lord’s] house to pollute it; And when [the Lord’s] people transgress, any of them, they may speedily repent and return unto [the Lord], and find favor in [the Lord’s] sight, and be restored to the blessings which [the Lord] hast ordained to be poured out upon those who shall reverence [the Lord] in [the Lord’s] house. (Doctrine and Covenants 109:20–21)

Beatitude associated with principle #8

This principle is expressed in Matthew 5:7 as well as in 3 Nephi 12:7.

(B8) And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain **mercy**.

Temple recommend question associated with principle #8

(TR15) Are there serious sins in your life that need to be resolved with priesthood authorities as part of your **repentance**?

History

To cover possible lingering problems, applicants were asked for a time whether they had ever been denied a recommend. In 1976, the question was rephrased to inquire about unresolved “major

[jesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1998/12/nourishing-the-spirit](https://www.jesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1998/12/nourishing-the-spirit).

129. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 411, archive.org/details/mortalmessiahfro01mcco/page/411/mode/1up.

transgressions.”¹³⁰ This was changed in 1978 to “anything else amiss” that had not been adequately resolved by priesthood authority.¹³¹ The question was again rephrased in 1985 by changing the vague “anything amiss” to the more direct “sin or misdeed.”¹³²

Discussion

This temple recommend question and its associated beatitude discuss two aspects of obtaining mercy, or forgiveness from sin.

This beatitude states that one must show mercy to others to obtain mercy from the Lord. This applies to all sins, but the majority of sins, although unbecoming of a member of the Lord’s Church, are not serious enough to jeopardize one’s worthiness to enter the temple.

The temple recommend question focuses on grievous sins—emphasizing the need for priesthood authority when temple worthiness is at stake. Forgiveness is ultimately granted only through the Lord’s mercy. The priesthood leader, who represents the Lord, is to judge as the Lord would.¹³³

Principle #9: The law of chastity

Throughout the scriptures and associated Latter-day Saint instructions, the phrase “pure in heart” has had numerous connotations. The one most consistently used by Church leaders, however, is associated with moral cleanliness. The beatitude is found in the New Testament (Matthew 5:8) and in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 12:8; see also the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 5:10).

Beatitude associated with principle #9

(B9) Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they shall see God.

Temple recommend question associated with principle #9

The associated current temple recommend question is presented in three parts:

130. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1976), 21:53.

131. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook Supplement*, no. 3, 5.

132. Kimball, “Temple Admission Standards,” 169.

133. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Conducting Temple Recommend Interviews,” 1.

(TR5) The Lord has said that all things are to be “done in **cleanliness**” before Him.

Do you strive for **moral cleanliness** in your thoughts and behavior?

Do you live the **law of chastity**?

History

Being free of immoral behavior has been, since the early days of the Church, included as an important tenet of orthodox Latter-day Saint behavior. A statement of doctrinal belief issued in 1856, known as the *Reformation catechism*, was not in itself associated with temple worthiness. However, it did act as a barometer for the concerns of Church leaders. It asked, “Have you committed adultery, by having any connection with a woman that was not your wife or a man that was not your husband?”¹³⁴ An 1856 “letter of instructions to the Bishops of Utah concerning endowments” stated that the applicant should not “interfere with . . . their neighbor’s wives or husbands.”¹³⁵ This statement was included in the 1940 *Handbook of Instructions*.¹³⁶ The 1960 *Handbook* referred to the necessity of refraining from “all kinds of immoral practices.”¹³⁷ Perhaps precipitated by the sexual revolution of the 1960s, the questions in the *Handbook* of 1976 included an inquiry regarding whether the applicant was “morally clean.”¹³⁸ That phrase was amended later in the same year to the more specific query regarding any “transgression relating to the law of chastity.”¹³⁹ A 1978 revision added a scripture to the question: “But if there shall come into it [the temple] any unclean thing, my glory shall not be there; and my presence shall not come into it” (Doctrine and Covenants 94:8–9).

134. Paul H. Peterson, “The Mormon Reformation of 1856–1857: The Rhetoric and the Reality,” *Journal of Mormon History* 15 (1989), 70, digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1015&context=mormonhistory.

135. *Journal History of the Church 1830–2008*, 19 May 1856, LDS Church Archives, 59, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/cfb09404-ec21-47e9-a661-0233ac831191/0/58.

136. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook of Instructions* (1940), 129–34.

137. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1960), 65–66.

138. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1976), 53.

139. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1976), 2.

The same edition of the *Handbook* proscribed “impure, unholy, or unnatural sex acts.”¹⁴⁰ That wording often led those interviewed to ask for definitions and resulted in interviewers offering opinions and probing too deeply into intimate marital relations. That may have been the cause for the removal of explicit questioning until 1985 when the question was amended to the simple and straightforward “Do you live the law of chastity?”¹⁴¹ The evolution of the critical question of moral worthiness reflects the sensitive nature of the principle. As such, euphemistic terms have generally been employed.

Discussion

The phrase *pure in heart* has often been similarly used euphemistically by Church leaders regarding sexual matters. A few representative references follow:

God’s law of chastity is as binding on men as on women. Each has the same need and responsibility to be *pure in heart*.¹⁴²

[We] warn . . . against all conduct that tends to immorality and unchastity . . . none but the *pure in heart* can see God.¹⁴³

Jesus also declared: “Blessed are the *pure in heart*: for they shall see God.” . . . Has God withdrawn the laws relative to chastity?¹⁴⁴

Remember never [speak anything] that is indecent, suggestive, degrading, or of an immoral nature. . . . “Blessed are the *pure in heart*: for they shall see God.”¹⁴⁵

Personal chastity is a pre-requisite to the enjoyment of the presence of God; among the beatitudes not one is of greater import than “Blessed are the *pure in heart*.”¹⁴⁶

140. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook Supplement*, no. 3, 4.

141. Kimball, “Temple Admission Standards,” 149–50.

142. Hugh B. Brown, *The Abundant Life* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 48, pdfcoffee.com/abundant-life-hugh-b-brownhtml-pdf-free.html.

143. Clark, *Messages*, 3:62.

144. Milton R. Hunter, “Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery,” *Ensign*, June 1971, 42, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1971/06/thou-shalt-not-commit-adultery.

145. Milton R. Hunter, *General Conference*, April 1963, 15, archive.org/details/conferencereport1963a/page/15/mode/1up.

146. “Personal Chastity—A Latter-day Saint Ideal,” *Improvement Era* 12, October 1930, 821, archive.org/details/improvementera3312unse/page/821/mode/1up.

The central theme of the Savior’s teachings on chastity and moral cleanliness . . . [is] the *pure in heart* . . . keep themselves free from immoral fantasies and deeds.¹⁴⁷

President Joseph F. Smith said that sexual impurity . . . would threaten the Church. . . . “Blessed are the *pure in heart*: for they shall see God.”¹⁴⁸

The three-part temple recommend question regarding chastity has understandably been cloaked in euphemism and generalization, as have many other sensitive topics in the scriptures. The phrase “pure in heart” carries a similar feeling of clarity yet uses discretion while emphasizing a delicate subject.

Principle #10: Being peacemakers—Honesty in dealings

The correlation between honesty and being a peacemaker may not be immediately obvious, but many commentators have made the association clearer, as discussed below.

Beatitude associated with principle #10

The beatitude is found in the New Testament (Matthew 5:9) and in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 12:9; see also the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 5:10).

(B10) Blessed are all the **peacemakers**, for they shall be called the children of God.

Two temple recommend questions are related to maintaining peace.

First temple recommend question associated with principle #10

(TR9) Do you strive to be **honest** in all you do?

History

As early as 1856, honesty was specifically stated by the First Presidency to be a requirement for receiving a temple recommend.¹⁴⁹ Peterson notes, “Of the 1856–57 ‘Mormon Reformation’ catechism’s twenty-seven questions, fourteen dealt with various forms

147. Sheldon F. Child, “Words of Jesus: Chastity,” *Ensign*, January 2003, 44, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2003/01/words-of-jesus-chastity.

148. Gordon B. Hinckley, “In Search of Peace and Freedom,” *Ensign*, August 1989, 2, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1989/08/in-search-of-peace-and-freedom.

149. “Heber C. Kimball to Bishop Evans,” 19 May 1856.

of dishonesty.”¹⁵⁰ This was reiterated in the 1940 *Handbook*, which contained a statement by Brigham Young that temple-goers should be honest.¹⁵¹ A formal recommend question appeared first in the 1976 *Handbook* with the general query “Are you honest in your dealings with your fellowmen?”¹⁵² which was strengthened shortly thereafter by amending “honest” to “totally honest.”¹⁵³ The entire question was removed in the 1985 edition but reappeared in its current form in 1989.¹⁵⁴

Discussion

There are two types of peacemakers. *Peace-preservers* maintain peace and prevent discord. *Peace-restorers* work to repair damaged relationships. Russell M. Nelson spoke often about being a peacemaker, occasionally in the context of being a peace-preserver, but more often as being a peace-restorer. He advised:

*Now is the time to lay aside bitterness. Now is the time to cease insisting that it is your way or no way. Now is the time to stop doing things that make others walk on eggshells for fear of upsetting you. Now is the time to bury your weapons of war.*¹⁵⁵

President Oaks similarly states, “Our missionaries seek to be peacemakers. They preach repentance from personal corruption, greed, and oppression.”¹⁵⁶

This beatitude focuses on preserving peace rather than restoring it. To that end, honesty in one’s dealings with others is inextricably connected with maintaining peaceful coexistence. Paul associates peace with honesty in 1 Timothy 2:2: “For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” Richard L. Evans of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

150. Peterson, “Mormon Reformation of 1856–1857,” 70.

151. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook of Instructions* (1940), 130.

152. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1976), 53.

153. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook Supplement*, no. 1, 2.

154. Kimball, “Temple Admission Standards,” 169.

155. Russell M. Nelson, “Peacemakers Needed,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 19–20, [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2023/05/47nelson](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2023/05/47nelson).

156. Dallin H. Oaks, “Alive in Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2026, 86, [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2026/05/49oaks](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2026/05/49oaks).

observes, “To find peace — the peace within, the peace that passeth understanding — men must live in honesty.”¹⁵⁷

Much can be learned regarding the interpersonal relationships that lead to peace from the account of one particularly lengthy period of peace found in 4 Nephi 1:2–4, 15–18: “There were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another . . . and there still continued to be peace in the land.”

Few interpersonal dealings can cause hostility and destroy peace more rapidly than dishonesty. The first two headings of the lesson on honesty from the *Aaronic Priesthood Manual* state, “Honesty Brings Peace” and “Honesty Is the Basis for All Good Relationships.” It teaches:

Honesty is the basis of all good relationships. Many of the Ten Commandments teach us how to live peacefully with others. Successful relationships depend on people being able to trust each other. Treaties are made between nations on the basis of trust. When there is a lack of trust between nations, diplomatic relations break down and trade and other peaceful activities cease. War may result.¹⁵⁸

Another aspect that is considered less often is peace within oneself. Regarding honesty, the Church teaches, “When we are honest in every way, we are able to enjoy peace of mind” and “The lasting peace that comes from being honest is more valuable than the momentary relief of following the crowd.”¹⁵⁹

Second temple recommend question associated with principle #10

(TR12) Do you have any financial or other obligations to a former spouse or to children? If yes, are you current in meeting those obligations?

History

The focus of the second question related to this principle, honoring financial obligations, began in the 1944 *Handbook of Instructions*. It was a question regarding peacemaking in the situation of divorce. The

157. Richard L. Evans, *Conference Report*, October 1959, 128, archive.org/details/conferencereport1959sa/page/128/mode/1up.

158. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Lesson 47: Honesty,” *Aaronic Priesthood Manual 3*, 189–91, rikers.org/lds/manuals/ap3/56.html.

159. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Honesty,” Topics and Questions (2025), churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/honesty.

purpose was simply to remind the bishop to ascertain that a divorce or sealing had been finalized prior to issuing a recommend for a previously married member to be sealed to another spouse.¹⁶⁰ *The General Handbook* stated in 1960 that all recommends for individuals who had been divorced required First Presidency review.¹⁶¹ That condition was gradually relaxed by the First Presidency over the ensuing decades so that, by 1985, the focus of the question had shifted away from the divorce itself to any financial obligations resulting from a divorce.¹⁶²

If an applicant had been divorced, a follow-up question was asked: “Are you presently fulfilling your obligations for support and maintenance of your family?”¹⁶³ Starting in 1991, requirements for a temple recommend included compliance with all legal obligations that the individual might have incurred as a result of the divorce.¹⁶⁴ In 1996, the wording changed to require the applicant to be “current in meeting financial and other obligations.”¹⁶⁵ The question has remained in its current form since 2019.¹⁶⁶

Discussion

Divorce is no longer directly addressed in temple recommend interviews. There are, however, few common situations that have more potential for acrimony between two or more people than divorce, and one of the most common reasons for such acrimony involves finances. Failure to meet agreed-upon financial responsibilities can extinguish hope for a peaceful coexistence, and often children are caught up in the rancor. Elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord commands those who would come unto him, in the same manner that he would command one who is seeking admission to the temple:

Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee — Go thy way unto thy brother, and first be

160. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook of Instructions* (1944), 17:82.

161. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (1960), 67–68.

162. Kimball, “Temple Admission Standards,” 154.

163. Kimball, “Temple Admission Standards,” 154.

164. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *1991 Supplement to the 1989 General Handbook of Instructions* (1991), 8.

165. Kimball, “Temple Admission Standards,” 154.

166. Nelson, “Closing Remarks.”

reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you. (3 Nephi 12:23–34)

All animosity must be resolved and a peaceful existence assured before one seeks a recommend for admission to the temple. In its present form, this temple recommend question has much more to do with integrity and honor in keeping commitments and with maintaining interpersonal peace than it has with divorce itself.

Principle #11: Avoiding apostasy

Both this temple recommend question and the corresponding beatitude refer to apostasy, but they approach the subject from different perspectives.

Beatitude associated with principle #11

The beatitude is found in Matthew 5:10–12 and in 3 Nephi 12:10–12.

(B11) And blessed are all they who are persecuted for my name's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake; For ye shall have great joy and be exceedingly glad, for great shall be your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.

Temple recommend question associated with principle #11

(TR7) Do you support or promote any teachings, practices, or doctrine contrary to those of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

History

According to Edward Kimball, since 1940, the primary focus of this particular question has been upon fundamentalist groups who continue to practice polygamy. Members of such groups have been known to attempt to gain entrance into the temples of the Church.¹⁶⁷

Prior to 1985, temple recommend applicants had also been asked whether they had “affiliation with or sympathy for” these fundamentalist groups. Perhaps because many kind-hearted individuals answered affirmatively—that they did indeed have “sympathy for” such people—the query was reworded slightly that year to clarify that the

167. Kimball, “Temple Admission Standards,” 145.

sympathy in question was with *precepts* rather than with *individuals*. The question was again reworded in 1996 to state, "support, affiliate with, or agree with" the precepts of any group whose teachings or practices oppose those of the Church.¹⁶⁸

Discussion

Church members can, and often do, have personal opinions and beliefs about various teachings. This is understandable and perfectly acceptable, and these ideas do not constitute apostasy as long as they are not taught in opposition to—or even as—official Church doctrine.

Although the intent of the original temple recommend question may have been to counter fundamentalist polygamist groups practicing polygamy after the Manifesto, over the past few decades, as unrighteousness has become increasingly more rampant, the focus of this recommend question may have shifted toward non-religious groups that advance causes against which the Church has voiced strict opposition. Vociferous movements have formed both inside and outside of the Church for the purpose of promoting abortion, gender dysphoria, gay marriage, the ordination of women to the priesthood, and other causes.

Participation in, or even sympathy with, an organization that promotes a viewpoint discordant with Church doctrine, as stated in the interview question, is unacceptable for anyone who desires to qualify for a temple recommend. Actively campaigning on behalf of such a viewpoint may even call into question one's Church membership. Elder Neil A. Maxwell warned two generations ago against apostasy:

The Lord has clearly indicated that His purifying and sifting judgment would begin *first* at the house of God and then proceed outward to the world (See 1 Peter 4:17; Doctrine and Covenants 112:25).¹⁶⁹

Since this initial discord will begin within the Church, both the focus of the recommend question against personal apostasy and the warning against apostates are timely.

While the beatitude is directed toward victims of persecutors, the associated temple recommend question is intended to explore

168. Kimball, "Temple Admission Standards," 145–46.

169. Neil A. Maxwell, "Be of Good Cheer," *Ensign*, November 1982, 68, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1982/11/be-of-good-cheer.

a Saint's personal tendency toward apostasy. This is a subtle, but important, distinction in the elaboration of this critical principle. This distinction could be because members who are being asked the temple recommend questions may be more likely to be persuaded by apostate views than would be Apostles and other Church leaders, to whom the Beatitudes were initially delivered.

Keeping Covenants: An Additional Principle for the Previously Endowed Applicant

Two questions are omitted from the interview for unendowed applicants but are asked of the previously endowed. They discuss the importance of keeping previously made covenants. It is understandable that keeping those covenants was not a part of the initial interview introduced by the Beatitudes because the Apostles and Disciples had not yet entered into these covenants. The topic of keeping covenants is, however, discussed several places elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount.

Principle #12: Keeping covenants

True Saints are covenant-makers, but perhaps more importantly, they are covenant-keepers. Three temple recommend questions deal with keeping covenants. Scripturally, the “salt” and “light” verses that follow the Beatitudes, and a portion of the Sermon itself, also discuss keeping covenants. Possibly because they were not part of the training material for initiates into the covenant, none of the verses related to keeping covenants are presented in the form of a beatitude.

Each of the two recommend questions, and corresponding verses from the Sermon, follow.

First temple recommend question associated with principle #12

(TR13) Do you **keep the covenants** that you made in the temple?

History

In 1963, for the first time, applicants for renewal of recommends were asked whether they were keeping the covenants they had previously made within the temple.¹⁷⁰ That question has remained on the list of requirements since.

170. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of*

Discussion

It may be unnecessary to state that if one applies for readmission to the temple, non-compliance with previously accepted covenants would be reasonable grounds for denial.

Second temple recommend question associated with principle #12

(TR14) Do you honor your sacred privilege to **wear the garment** as instructed in the initiatory ordinances?

Associated scriptures

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, even so will he clothe you, if ye are not of little faith. (3 Nephi 13:30)

The Lord promises here to provide clothing for the faithful, as he clothed Adam and Eve with symbolic “coats of skins” (Genesis 3:21). In the New Testament account, the Lord sounds accusatory, addressing the hearers as “O ye of little faith.” In the 3 Nephi account, however, his conditional tone is consistent with the loving tone of the Beatitudes. Moreover, the splendor of the raiment is otherworldly. Solomon’s clothing — certainly a metaphor for the finest the world could offer — did not compare to the lilies of the field, which were clothed by the Creator himself. The raiment the Lord offers supersedes even that.

History

Questions regarding wearing of the temple garment began in 1940 when new applicants were asked whether they would be willing to wear the temple garment.¹⁷¹ By 1957, applicants were asked whether they wore “regulation” and later “approved” or “authorized” garments. Beginning in 1976, the applicant was asked whether they wore the garment “both night and day.”¹⁷² The instruction was first given in 1989 that the garment should not be altered.¹⁷³ The 1996 instructions emphasized wearing the garment “in accordance with the covenant you

Instructions (1963), 74. See also Jake Frandsen, “What Are the 5 Covenants Made in the Temple Endowment?,” *LDS Living*, 8 February 2023, ldsiving.com/what-are-the-5-covenants-made-in-the-temple-endowment/s/11289.

171. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook of Instructions* (1940), 129.

172. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook Supplement*, no. 1 (1 July 1976), 2.

173. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of*

made in the temple.”¹⁷⁴ In 2024, the inquiry about whether the applicant wore the garment as instructed became a separate question.¹⁷⁵

Discussion

When a member applies for initial admission to the temple, this question is understandably omitted because the person has not yet entered into the covenant, received the garment, and committed to wearing it. The temple garment is a constant reminder of the temple experience. Wearing the holy garment is symbolic of a willingness to keep the covenants made in the temple and of having the faith that doing so will be protective both spiritually and even, at times, physically.

Discussing 3 Nephi 13:30, John Welch¹⁷⁶ points out:

[The Lord] then talks about [temple] garments. In Greek the word *enduo*,¹⁷⁷ from which our word *endow* is directly derived, has two meanings. *Enduo* means “to clothe, to put on clothing.” It also means “to take on characteristics, virtues, and intentions.” When a person is endowed, the person is clothed. Jesus told his disciples not to leave Jerusalem (Luke 24:49) until they were “endued with power from on high.” The clothing represents the robes of God’s righteousness. The atonement occurs when one is encircled by the robes of God’s righteousness, but this only occurs as these attributes are taken on — the attributes set forth in the beginning in the Beatitudes. Joseph Smith spoke frequently about the need to be endowed in the House of the Lord. It’s interesting that Jesus expresses this idea by saying to his disciples, I will give you clothing. And the word there is *endumata*.¹⁷⁸

Instructions (1989), 6–3, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/4dc65d2f-56e2-4272-aa3e-e64cc39e5897/0/66.

174. Kimball, “Temple Admission Standards,” 165.

175. Scott Taylor, “First Presidency Updates Temple Recommend Interview Questions, Shares Statement on the Wearing of the Temple Garment,” *Church News*, 14 April 2024, [thechurchnews.com/leaders/2024/04/14/first-presidency-letter-garment-of-the-holy-priesthood-temple-recommend-statement/](https://www.thechurchnews.com/leaders/2024/04/14/first-presidency-letter-garment-of-the-holy-priesthood-temple-recommend-statement/).

176. Welch, *Transcripts*, 143.

177. Strong, *Greek Dictionary*, s.v. “ενδύω,” 1746.

178. Strong, *Greek Dictionary*, s.v. “ενδυματα,” 1742.

First scripture associated with principle #12

The scriptures associated with keeping covenants immediately follow the Beatitudes, but they are not *beatitudes* themselves. They are the so-called "salt verses." Salt is used metaphorically here as a call to action. Once a blessing has been received through covenant keeping, that blessing must be used in the service of others. These verses are found in 3 Nephi 12:13 (Matthew 5:13) and Joseph Smith Translation Matthew 5:15.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, **I give unto you to be** the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men. (3 Nephi 12:13)

Discussion

Since salt was used anciently as a preservative, it is commonly stated that Christ compared the Apostles, the New World Disciples, and, by extension, all Saints to *salt* because he was commissioning them to oppose society's moral and spiritual decay. Dictionaries of idioms also define "salt of the earth" as those who enhance society by being "persons of great kindness, reliability or honesty"¹⁷⁹ and "representative of the best or noblest elements of society."¹⁸⁰ Other commentators have suggested the metaphorical usage of salt because it has antiseptic properties, is a catalyst for fire, and creates thirst.¹⁸¹

Salt, however, carries a connotation of much greater temple significance since it is mentioned several times in the Old Testament (*italics added*) with respect to temple sacrifices and a covenant:

And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou **season with salt**; neither shalt thou suffer the *salt of the covenant* of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering; with all thine offerings thou shalt *offer salt*. (Leviticus 2:13)

All the heave offerings of the holy things . . . is **a covenant of**

179. "Salt of the Earth," *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, ed. Judith Siefring (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), ngoangu.vimaru.edu.vn/wp-content/uploads/documents/Oxford-Dictionary-of-Idioms-1.pdf.

180. "Salt of the Earth," *Dictionary.com*, dictionary.com/browse/salt-of-the-earth.

181. Kenneth S. Hemphill, "You Are the Salt of the Earth," *SBC Life*, 1 October 2004, baptistpress.com/resource-library/sbc-life-articles/you-are-the-salt-of-the-earth/.

salt for ever before the Lord unto thee and to thy seed with thee. (Numbers 18:19).

The Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever . . . by **a covenant of salt**. (2 Chronicles 13:5)

In Matthew 5:13, the Lord pronounces, “**Ye are** the salt of the earth,” but the account in 3 Nephi differs materially by using instead the words “**I give unto you.**” Cloward states, “[The Joseph Smith Translation of] Matthew and 3 Nephi express the Savior’s words in the form of a commission.” “I give unto you,” then, is a true call to action, promising the Apostles and Disciples what they will become by entering the covenant.¹⁸² Significant additional insight from latter-day revelation is added in the Doctrine and Covenants, which explains that “the salt of the earth” refers to those who have entered into an everlasting covenant with God: “**When men are called unto mine everlasting gospel, and covenant with an everlasting covenant,** they are accounted as the salt of the earth and the savor of men” (Doctrine and Covenants 101:39–40).

The phrase

“When men are called unto mine everlasting gospel, and covenant with an everlasting covenant, they are accounted as . . .”

may be grammatically equated with the phrase

“I give unto you to be . . .”

Sylogistically then, if the New Testament Apostles and the Nephite Disciples were both “the salt of the earth,” and if men who enter into an everlasting covenant are also “the salt of the earth,” then the Apostles and Disciples were entering into an everlasting covenant. Richardson suggests that “rather than telling the disciples what they already are . . . Jesus Christ is actually challenging his disciples to become something new. They are *called* to be the salt of the earth.”¹⁸³ It is the Lord’s intention, then, that they enter into the covenant, but “I give unto you”

182. Robert A. Cloward, “The Sermon on the Mount in the JST and the Book of Mormon,” in *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Truths*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Robert L. Millet (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1985), 163–200, rsc.byu.edu/joseph-smith-translation/sermon-mount-jst-book-mormon.

183. Matthew O. Richardson, “Salt and Light: Being in the World but Not of the World,” in *The Sermon on the Mount in Latter-day Scripture*, ed. Gaye Strathearn, Thomas A. Wayment, and Daniel L. Belnap (Provo, UT: Religious

implies that they have not yet done so. The Beatitudes, and possibly the entire Sermon that follows, may therefore contain preliminary or preparatory instructions for a future event, which John Welch has suggested is the temple endowment.¹⁸⁴ Since the Apostles did not receive their own endowments until three years later during Christ’s forty-day ministry following his death (Luke 24:49), chapters 5–7 of Matthew and 12–14 of 3 Nephi may represent preparatory instructions for a future temple-like experience.¹⁸⁵

Since salt is so closely associated with the covenant, it is perhaps more than coincidental that the largest saltwater lakes in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, the Dead Sea and the Great Salt Lake, respectively, lie adjacent to the headquarters of God’s two covenant peoples.

Second scripture associated with principle #12

These verses are found in 3 Nephi 12:14–16 (Matthew 5:14–16) and Joseph Smith Translation Matthew 5:16–18.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the **light of this people**. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house; Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Discussion

As with the “salt verse,” the so-called “light verses” are not in the form of a beatitude, but their clear reference to obligations one has assumed in the temple binds them to the preceding verses as being temple related and reinforces the temple context of those verses.

When a candle is lit, it changes from a dark object into one that is autonomously luminous, just as ordinary individuals, empowered by their temple covenants, act autonomously to bring light to the world. Enough faithful members of the Church have become examples of

Studies Center, BYU; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 80–81, rsc.byu.edu/sermon-mount-latter-day-scripture/salt-light.

184. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*, 23–34.

185. Brown and Griggs, “The 40-Day Ministry,” 6–11; and “Book of Mormon Evidence: Parallels with Christ’s 40-Day Ministry.”

success by earthly standards that the world is taking notice.¹⁸⁶ The temporal success of Latter-day Saints is, however, secondary to their visible adherence to spiritual, moral, and ethical standards. Gordon B. Hinckley emphasizes this point when he writes, “[I was] asked, ‘what is the symbol of your religion?’ I replied that the lives of our people must become the most meaningful expression of our faith and, in fact, therefore, the symbol of our worship.”¹⁸⁷ In a later book, he identified ten principles in chapter titles that address points of light each covenant Latter-day Saint person should radiate to the world: Love, Honesty, Morality, Civility, Learning, Forgiveness and Mercy, Thrift and Industry, Gratitude, Marriage, and the Family.¹⁸⁸

The salt of the covenant preserves and prevents decay, but the light of the covenant illuminates. *Salt* justifies, or maintains purity, while *light* sanctifies, enhances, illuminates, and glorifies.

Summary and Conclusions

The Sermons on the Mount and at the Temple, including the Beatitudes and several verses that follow them, have been associated with the temple by Latter-day Saint and other scholars. By its etymology and ancient usage, *makarios* or *blessed*, the word that begins each beatitude, describes the happiness enjoyed by the gods but attainable by mortals. Because they describe the characteristics of those who inherit eternal life, the conditional promises associated with the Beatitudes describe an existence that Latter-day Saints might call *exaltation*. The association of the Beatitudes with the divine elevates these sayings from simple prosaicisms to statements with sacred and eternal implications. The conditions for attaining this supreme happiness and holiness are dependent upon the questions asked of Church members who desire to participate in temple ordinances.

As I have noted already, the degree of correlation between beatitude and recommend question varies from principle to principle. I believe, however, that allowing for differences in semantics, translations, and

186. Amy Chua and Jed Rubenfeld, *The Triple Package: How Three Unlikely Traits Explain the Rise and Fall of Cultural Groups in America* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), 26, archive.org/details/the-triple-package-how-three-unlikely-traits-explain-the-rise-and-fall-of-cultur/page/n25/mode/1up.

187. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Symbol of Our Faith,” *Ensign*, April 2005, 2, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2005/04/the-symbol-of-our-faith.

188. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something* (New York: Random House, 2000), archive.org/details/standingforsomet000hinc_j4r1/mode/2up.

cultural traditions over two millennia, each beatitude of 3 Nephi 12:1–13, may be reasonably paired with one or more corresponding temple recommend questions asked of the initial applicant who is desirous of receiving the ordinances of the temple.

Several non-beatitude verses that follow the Beatitudes focus on the importance of keeping the covenants that one has accepted. Covenant-keeping is the topic discussed by these two temple recommend interview questions, which are reserved for those desiring to reenter the temple.

If these proposed associations are correct, the true meaning of the Beatitudes has been elucidated. Further, the Beatitudes have been shown to correlate more seamlessly with the otherwise rather unrelated verses that follow them than has previously been recognized. The verses that introduce the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple, therefore, pronounce the qualifications for participation in the sacred endowment instruction that follows.

Table 1. The Correlation between Topics, Beatitudes, and Temple Recommend Questions.

Principle # and Topic	3 Nephi Beatitude	Matt 5 Beatitude	Recommend Question
Worthiness to Enter the Covenant (Initiates)			
1. Sustain Church leaders	1	---	4
2. A testimony of deity	2	---	1
3. A belief in the Restoration	3	---	3
4. Personal worthiness	4	1	16
5. Mourning / Atonement	5	2	2
6. Meekness / gospel behavior	6	3	6
6. Meekness / do one's duty	6	3	8
7. Sacrifice / tithing	7	4	10
7. Sacrifice / Word of Wisdom	7	4	11
8. Mercy, repentance, forgiveness	8	5	15
9. Chastity, pure in heart	9	6	5
10. Peacemakers / honesty	10	7	9
10. Peacemakers / keep commitments	10	7	12
11. Persecution and apostasy	11	8	7

Principle # and Topic	3 Nephi Beatitude	Matt 5 Beatitude	Recommend Question
Worthiness to Return to the Temple	3 Nephi verses	Matthew 5 verses	Recommend Question
Keep temple covenants	12:13 (salt)	5:13 (salt)	13
Wear the temple garment	13:28–30	6:28–30	14
Bring light to the world	12:14–16 (light)	5:14–16 (light)	---



[Author's note: *I am indebted to my wife, Ruth, for her patience during my studies. The editorial assistance and encouragement from Godfrey Ellis have also been indispensable and greatly appreciated.]*

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Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship is a peer-reviewed academic journal published by The Interpreter Foundation. Our mission is simple: Supporting The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through scholarship.