

ONE STALWART PIONEER,

MANY GENERATIONS BLESSED

Since the early days of the Church, members have been persecuted and ridiculed for their beliefs. One young woman who faced such persecution was Sara Elvira Eriksen. She was born in Drammen, Norway, in 1895. After gaining a testimony, she was dedicated to the gospel—a dedication that had more far-reaching effects than she could have imagined in her lifetime. Because of her courage and faith, her posterity now has the blessings of the gospel in their lives.

Like Sara, we may face obstacles in our lives that require us to take a stand for our testimony of Jesus Christ and His restored Church. Our choice to stand firmly by our beliefs can influence the lives of others, just as Sara's did. This is her story.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF JANET BYLUND

When I was 15, my father and I took a walk one Sunday evening. Suddenly, my father stopped and suggested that we go to the Mormon Church. I was surprised, but out of curiosity I went with him. The choir was singing a beautiful hymn. I had never heard anything so touching.

After the song, a missionary stood up and gave a talk about the Godhead. He later talked to my father and me for a few minutes.

I didn't go back to church until one year later when I went to learn English from the missionaries. When each English class ended, we drifted into religious discussions. The missionaries taught me about the gospel and how to pray to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. They told me about the Restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and many other gospel principles.

All this was so new to me, yet it had a familiar sound. I studied the scriptures intently and prayed sincerely for enlightenment, which was given to me.

My father noticed a change in me. But when he realized that I was getting serious about the Church, he became angry and forbade me to go to church. I went anyway. Frequently he sent my brother to bring me home in the middle of Church meetings.

When I turned 17, my father asked me what I wanted for my birthday. I told him I wanted his approval to be baptized. He pounded his fist on the table and shouted, "Never!"

By this time my parents had joined a different church. My father sent the church's minister and others to talk to me, but I was firm in my testimony of the gospel. Father told me I was a disgrace to the family, and I was forced to leave home. I stayed at the home of a Relief Society sister for about a week. During that time my father's heart was softened, and he allowed me to come home.

Within several months my father realized that nothing could take away the testimony I had of the gospel, so he gave his consent for me to be baptized. My joy and happiness were so great that they made a deep impression on my father. He even wanted to go with me to Oslo to attend my baptism.

All through this time, my mother didn't say very much, but I could tell that she believed the gospel was true. We spent many hours talking about the gospel together.

However, the struggle was not over at home. My father wouldn't listen to me. I put pamphlets on his nightstand, as he always read long into the night. I invited the missionaries to our home often, and they talked to my father, but nothing seemed to help.

One day my father asked me, "Do you ever pray?" I told him that I prayed every day that his eyes would be opened to the truthfulness of the gospel. He responded that it was all from the devil but then said, "Let's pray together."

I said, "All right, you pray to your God, and I will pray to my God, and we will see which answers first." So we did.

Soon after that I started noticing that he was reading the pamphlets and the Book of Mormon. He went to church several times with me but would never talk about it or show me any change in his beliefs. Still, there was rarely a day when we didn't discuss different principles of the gospel.

One day, after three years of this, he told me he was going to Oslo and wanted me to go with him. When we arrived at the station, one of the local elders was there. I asked him where he was going.

The elder said, "Don't you know? I'm going to baptize your father."

I cried and laughed! One month later my mother and youngest brother were also baptized. My sister and her husband joined the Church a short time later, as did three of my brothers. ■

Sara Elvira Eriksen's faithful posterity in the Church now numbers in the hundreds. This account from her personal history was submitted by her children, Rose Anderson, Betty Farley, Aksel Tanner, and Janet Bylund.