

By Don L. Searle

More Than Just a Sunday Church

She wanted a church founded on faith in Jesus Christ, one that required sacrifice and daily commitment. So far, no church stood up to her scriptural tests.

Hazel Egan was not looking for just any church where she could be comfortable. “I wanted to be baptized into the true church,” she says. “I didn’t want just a Sunday church.”

But where could she find this religious organization? A student of the scriptures, Hazel had looked into different Christian faiths and found none that matched her criteria. She wondered if it might be impossible to find the true church she sought.

Then one day in 1992, missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints knocked on her door in Sydney, Australia.

Hazel and her husband, Richard, had Christian backgrounds. They had known each other since childhood in their native India. But when Richard, who was working in Australia, returned to India to marry Hazel and take her to Sydney, he probably did not realize how intense her desire was to find the true church—if it existed.

From her study of the Bible, Hazel knew that baptism would be a requirement for membership in the true Church of Jesus Christ. Other things would also be required. This church would ask members to pay tithing. Fasting would be part of its worship. It would

be not just a one-day-a-week religion but a way of life.

When the missionaries came to her door, she recalls, “we had a really interesting discussion”—without her realizing that this discussion could lead to baptism. She had two of these discussions with the missionaries before Richard was able to meet them. From that time on, the Egans took the missionary discussions together. Hazel was soon baptized, but Richard still had questions about tithing and the need for baptism.

Stake missionaries helped him resolve his concerns about baptism so that he too was baptized. But he still wondered about tithing. He received his own witness of that principle later when a young elder taught him about it. This witness was reaffirmed as Richard and Hazel paid tithing. They saw immediate blessings, and Richard understood for himself that the Lord keeps His promises to tithing payers (see Malachi 3:10).

As Hazel continued studying the gospel, she found answers to many questions that had previously puzzled her. For example, she had found it confusing that the Lord would harden Pharaoh’s heart, as written in the account in Exodus 7:3. But the Joseph Smith Translation makes plain what Moses was told: “And *Pharaoh* will harden *his* heart” (footnote a).

The gospel “gives us a great sense of direction,” Richard says. His wife had said that she wanted to find a church that would provide

moral direction for the children they hoped to have. That is what they found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, she says. “We just love it. This is home.”

The Egans now have three children. The oldest daughter, Julia, says she sometimes has opportunities to share her testimony with friends at school, and she enjoys serving in the Church.

Richard smiles as he recalls, “After the first year of being in the Church, I realized how busy we were going to be.” He learned much more about being busy when after five years as a member he was called to be a bishop, an office in which he served for the next six and a half years. Neither he nor his wife have ever tired of serving.

Because of the gospel, Richard says, “My family is closer. We’ve got a main purpose in this life”—to follow Heavenly Father’s plan and prepare for life together in the eternities. “All that we do as a family is focused on that,” he says. The Egans read the scriptures together each night to learn more about the gospel. “We love our scripture reading,” Hazel says. “I think in any LDS home there is a sense of harmony as you focus on the gospel. We love being together, even just to go for walks.”

Following the teachings of Jesus Christ has changed their perspective on many things, the Egans say. A few years ago their son was hit by a car. His physical injuries and subsequent recovery were minor, but perhaps the more important healing occurred in the Egans’ hearts. Hazel recalls that the accident turned out to be a beautiful spiritual experience because of the gospel. Richard says they were able to freely forgive the driver. He says, “If I hadn’t been a member of the Church, I don’t believe I could have handled it so well.”

When Richard was serving as bishop, Hazel’s mother came from India for a visit and joined the Church while she was staying with them. Now, when the Egans look to their future, they look to India, hoping to serve a mission together there someday. Richard believes many Indians will readily accept the gospel. “It will give them a strong sense of hope,” he says.

Richard and Hazel are eager to share that hope—the same hope they found in the true Church of Jesus Christ. ■



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID STOKER; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY DON L. SEARIE