

## YOU SPEAK RUSSIAN?

**A**lthough we were very busy, my husband, Daniil, and I decided we should visit the Preston England Temple one more time before the end of 2009. It takes two buses and almost six hours to get to the temple from the small Scottish town where we live.

The morning we planned to leave dawned cloudy and rainy, but we were happy to be going to the temple. While we waited an extra hour to

catch the second bus at the transfer point, it began pouring rain and getting cold.

However, the hope that we would soon be in the temple warmed our hearts. When we arrived in Preston, we felt a strong impression to go immediately to the temple. We were hungry and dripping wet, but we listened to the Holy Ghost.

When we entered the temple, a friendly temple worker asked for our temple recommends. He took off his glasses and looked again at the names on our recommends.

“Are you from Russia?” he asked in astonishment.

“Yes,” we answered, a bit surprised at his reaction.

“So you speak Russian?” he asked.

“Of course,” we said.

He then picked up the telephone and called someone.

*When we arrived in Preston, England, we felt a strong impression to go immediately to the temple.*



Soon the temple president approached us. Through his glasses, we could see he had tears in his eyes. “You are angels from God!” he said with a smile, asking that we follow him. We followed him and soon saw a confused young missionary with temple workers standing around him.

It turned out that this missionary was from Armenia and spoke Russian. He had been called to serve in the England London Mission but had not yet learned English. There was not a single Russian-speaking person in the missionary training center adjacent to the temple. On that day he was supposed to receive his endowment, but temple workers had been unable to communicate with him—that is, until a thoroughly soaked Russian couple walked in.

Daniil immediately asked to accompany the young missionary. The missionary was overjoyed and later said he had felt a special spirit when we arrived.

I am grateful that despite our busy schedules and the rainy weather, my husband and I still decided to visit the temple that day so we could help a Russian-speaking son of God in Great Britain. I am grateful for temple blessings, which brighten our lives with a special light and purpose. I know that if we will heed the promptings of the Holy Ghost, He will lead us back to our heavenly home—just as He led my husband and me to the house of the Lord that day. ■

Anna Nikiticheva, Scotland

## I NOTICED THEM NOT

While recently reading the Book of Mormon, I came upon the following admonition: “Why do ye . . . suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?” (Mormon 8:39).

Instead of feeling the peace and comfort I usually find in the scriptures, I was overcome by a lingering feeling of sadness. I had long recognized that I am not a particularly observant person. I had allowed myself to get so involved in my life, my callings, and my family that I just didn’t notice the challenges other people were having.

I knew I wasn’t doing all I could “to bear one another’s burdens, that they [might] be light; . . . to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9). I wanted to change; I wanted to be better. I simply didn’t know how. I prayed that the Lord would help me.

My answer came in an unexpected and unwanted way when I contracted a chronic illness. It slowly took away all my cumbersome busyness. As the disease progressed, I had to give up my outside activities, my callings, and my Church attendance. I’m housebound, I’m lonely, and I feel unnoticed.

I pray that someday the Lord will heal me. When He does, I promise



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myself that I will never be so blind again. When I arrive at church, I will look to see who is sitting alone and who is not attending that day. I will take time each week to overcome my shyness and visit somebody who is sick or afflicted or just in need of a friend. I will love my brothers and sisters every day—not just on Sunday or during Church activities.

I will remember and, I hope, be worthy to hear the Lord’s approbation: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). ■

Shelli Proffitt Howells, California, USA

## I DIDN'T WANT TO SERVE

**W**hen I was 11, at a regional conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) shook my hand and said, “You’re going to go on a mission and be a fine missionary someday.”

Most young men would have cherished those words forever. Not me. For the next 10 years I had no desire to serve a mission. I was more concerned with success in sports and my social life. I thought that giving up two years would throw all that away. During interviews with my branch

and stake presidents, I would come up with excuses as to why I didn’t want to serve.

At 21, still with no desire to serve a mission, I visited my family in the United States, in Iowa. They had moved there the year before. While in Iowa I had the chance to go to the Winter Quarters Nebraska Temple with the local singles branch. I wasn’t endowed, so I figured I’d perform baptisms for the dead.

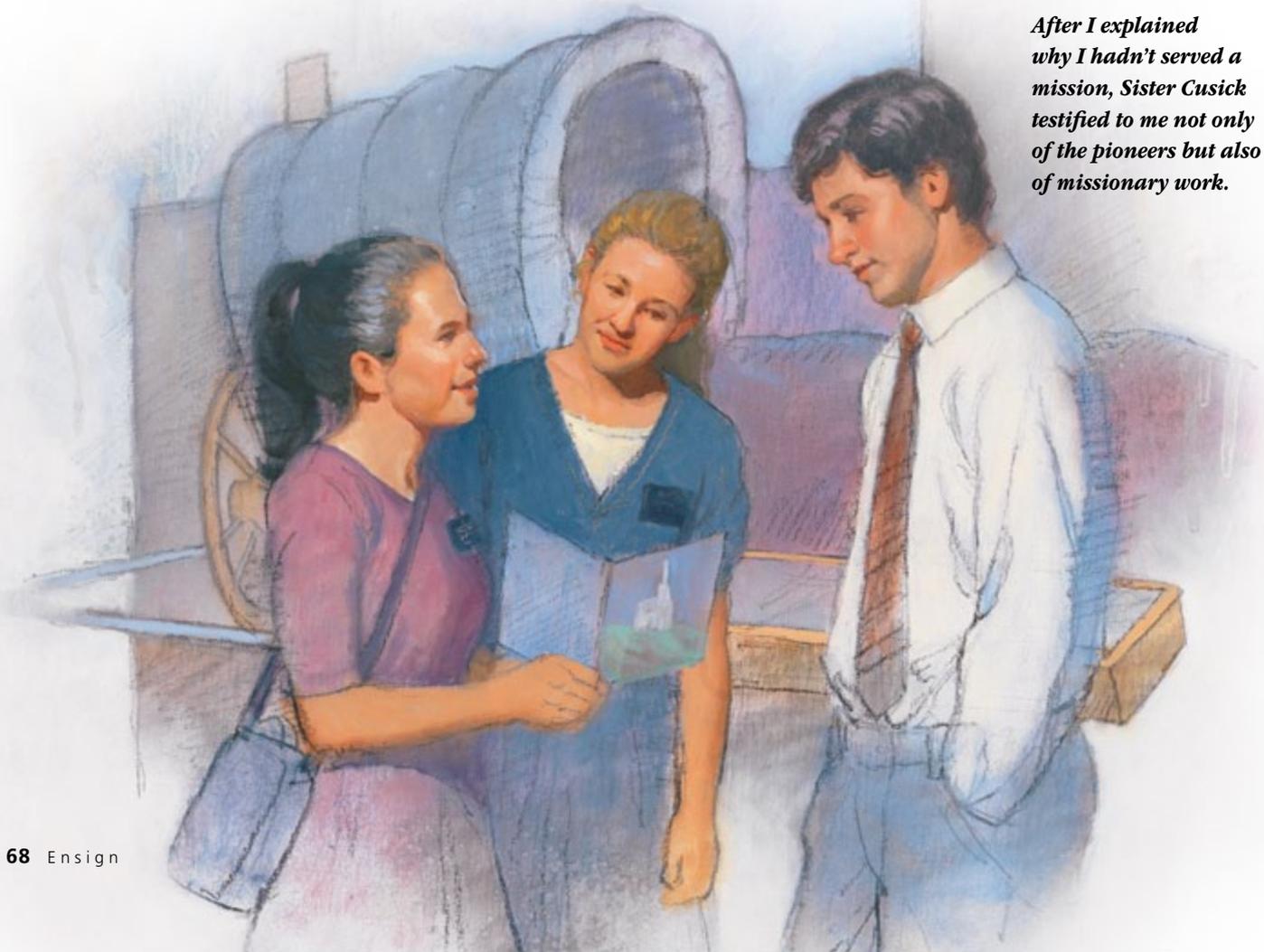
Upon arriving at the temple, I discovered there was no baptismal

session scheduled for the afternoon. I thought, “Great, what am I going to do for the next two and a half hours?”

I decided to go to the Mormon Trail Visitors’ Center across the street. After watching a 15-minute movie about the pioneers, I was greeted by two sister missionaries who were going to take me on my own personal tour. After learning a little bit about me, Sister Cusick asked why I hadn’t served a mission. The usual excuses came flying out. Sister Cusick then testified to me not only of the pioneers but also of missionary work.

After the tour I sat in the temple waiting room, thinking. Suddenly,

*After I explained why I hadn’t served a mission, Sister Cusick testified to me not only of the pioneers but also of missionary work.*



my excuses for not serving a mission became a stupor of thought. The Spirit testified strongly that I should serve a mission. From the time I started talking to the sister missionaries, everything had changed inside me. The Spirit testified to my heart what I needed to do.

Months later I found out that the still, small voice had told Sister Cusick that I needed to have my own tour. She didn't know why, but the Lord had plans for me.

I served in the California Ventura Mission—the greatest mission in the world—and built some wonderful friendships that I hope will last through the eternities. I didn't believe President Hunter for 10 years, but he knew exactly what he was talking about.

My life changed completely, all because a sister missionary acted on the promptings of the Holy Ghost. ■  
Neville Smeda, California, USA

## THE LORD IS MY SONG

Since I lived in a small Arizona town with a predominantly Latter-day Saint population, missionaries and Church members often approached me about the Church. They frequently invited my children and me to attend church, read the scriptures, or both. I had no interest in accepting their invitations but politely thanked them for their interest in my family.

As I got to know the woman I would later marry, she told me she

was a Latter-day Saint. I admired her spirituality and agreed to attend church with her after we married. True to my word, I started attending regularly and even enjoyed the atmosphere and camaraderie. But even though I studied the scriptures, attended church, and prayed alone and with my family, I still doubted God's existence. No matter how hard I tried, I felt as though I couldn't shake my agnostic roots. Because I felt no closer to God than when I had started, I declined all invitations to be baptized.

After I had attended church for six years, my father, who had been in the U.S. Army, passed away suddenly. My family and I wanted to have taps played at the grave site, and since I am a professional musician, I was asked to perform the song. I had performed at hundreds of grave site ceremonies, but because this was my father's service, I knew it would be different for me. I also knew from my mother's funeral that my heightened sense of emotion would affect my ability to play. I was determined not to let my emotions interfere with the music as they had during her service.

Minutes before the ceremony started, I nervously tried to warm up. Just a few practice notes had escaped my lips when I realized I was repeating my previous failure. Tears formed and I started to cry. My sobs impeded my breathing. How would I be able to perform?

I wasn't concerned with accolades for myself, but I did want to honor my father. As I started to play, I found I couldn't take a complete breath. It was uncharacteristic of me to ask for help, but at this point, I didn't know what else to do. The first note that came out was weak. Inwardly I pleaded with my Heavenly Father: "Please." As I played the second note, my lungs filled with air, and the sound rang out of my horn with a startling, beautiful tone. Throughout the rest of the piece, I played well beyond my ability. When I finished the last note, I was suddenly out of breath and choking for air through my tears.

As a musician, I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses. Simply put, I couldn't have played that well even under the best of circumstances. It was obvious to me that Heavenly Father had answered my plea and blessed me with the strength and ability to honor my earthly father. I was given a special witness that Heavenly Father answers us in a manner that we can understand. His answer in my time of need helped me realize that He had always been eager to communicate with me.

After several months I cleared my agnostic hurdle and joined the Church. Although it was a leap of faith to be baptized, I knew that Heavenly Father would bless me. My experience while playing taps taught me that He will answer my prayers according to my needs and understanding. ■

Tom Sullivan, Arizona, USA