

I Thought It Was All Nonsense

I thought if I could just prove the elders wrong, I could get Sundays back for me and my family.

By Umberto Gilardi

When I met the Latter-day Saint woman who would become my wife, I wasn't very interested in church—any church. But I *was* interested in Angie, so I sometimes attended services with her. This continued after our marriage, although I usually attended only sacrament meeting. I rarely stayed for priesthood meeting because I couldn't be with my wife and I didn't have any idea of what was going on. Even when I did understand, I thought it was all nonsense. During that part of the meeting block, I sat in the car.

One Sunday the missionaries approached me after sacrament meeting. I knew about the missionaries because my wife's parents often had them over for dinner. Wanting to be supportive of Angie, I invited them to our home for dinner. Over the next month, the elders and I became friends. One day they invited me to participate in the missionary discussions. I agreed, but only because I planned to quickly prove them wrong.

When we met, I bickered with them and picked at things they said. Finally, Elder Wilkins closed the Book of Mormon he was holding and said, "We can't teach you if you're just going to argue with us."

I was thrilled. I had won! They were giving up, I thought. I expected that within two weeks, tops, Angie would stop going to church and our family's Sundays would no longer be taken up with religion.

The next day, I drove Angie to work and then returned home. As I sat down, I spotted a copy of the Book of Mormon on the coffee table. I threw it under the table, but

it bothered me to leave it there. I picked it back up, and as I sat there looking at it, I thought, "If it's true, then it will change my life. If it's not true, I will have lost only a small amount of time trying to find out."

I had never been a reader. My family moved from Italy to Scotland when I was young, and I often mixed up Italian and English, which made learning to read difficult. By the time I got to secondary school, it seemed a lost cause.

So it was with some apprehension that I picked up the book and read several passages the elders had marked, including the promise in Moroni (see Moroni 10:3–5). To my astonishment, I read with perfect clarity and understanding. I read Moroni's promise and then reread it. I decided I must "ask God" (Moroni 10:4).

I went upstairs and prayed. "God, if you tell me this book is true, then I'll join this church and I'll be the man you want me to be." I didn't see any lights, but something went through me. The Holy Ghost confirmed that the Book of Mormon was true and that I should join the Church. And then this clear thought entered my mind and heart: "I want you to have the priesthood." I didn't know what the priesthood was (other than that meeting I habitually skipped), but I was determined to find out and seek it.

I called the missionaries and told them I wanted to be baptized. They were understandably shocked. I told them of my experience and asked them about the priesthood. As I met with them over the next few weeks, my questions were answered and my testimony grew.



One time the missionaries brought over a video of a conference address by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008). In the video, President Hinckley addressed every single point on which I had argued with the missionaries before. I felt as though the prophet were speaking directly to me. This experience further confirmed my decision to be baptized.

When I was baptized and then received the Holy Ghost the next day at church, I recognized my dependence on Heavenly Father and on faith in Jesus Christ. I was filled with a warm, wonderful feeling, as though I was being given a reassuring hug.

I later received the priesthood. I learned that it came through Jesus Christ and that by living a virtuous life, I would be able to exercise the power of the priesthood whenever He needed me to.

I have had powerful experiences in exercising the priesthood authority that have blessed my life and the lives of my family and friends. I can attest that in very real ways, holding the priesthood has made me a better man.

My wife, our daughter, and I were sealed May 27, 2000, in the Preston England Temple, and a son was later born to us in the covenant. By allowing Christ to be the focal point of my life, I am able to be a better husband and father than I would have been had I not joined His Church. I am so grateful that the Lord led me to His restored gospel through the Book of Mormon and a desire to learn about the priesthood. ■