

By Laurel Teuscher

Three months into my service as a missionary in Spain, I was assigned a new companion. I immediately felt a kinship with her, sensing that the Lord had put us together to accomplish great things. With Christmas only a few weeks away, people seemed more patient with my broken Spanish. Everyone wished us “Merry Christmas.” The holiday spirit added to my sense of optimism of what this transfer would bring.

During our second week together, my companion became ill. We tried to work, but her condition slowly worsened. We finally called our mission president, who gave us permission to stay in and rest. He counseled me to use the extra time to improve my Spanish.

A Christmas Miracle?

I suggested that my companion ask for a priesthood blessing and told her of a time when I had been healed from an illness. She agreed, and during our zone meeting the next day, she asked the elders for a blessing. We felt the Spirit strongly during the blessing. My companion was promised that she would be

M^{My Most} Miserable Favorite CHRISTMAS

Although our prayers weren't answered as we anticipated, my missionary companion and I learned a valuable lesson that Christmas.

“healed for Christmas,” now only a few days away. As we traveled home, we joyfully planned what we would do once she was better.

Sure enough, on Christmas Day my companion awoke without any

symptoms of illness. Our spirits were high as we went to the local meeting-house to spend the day celebrating our Savior's birth. We felt we had witnessed a miracle. That night, however, when we got off at the metro, I noticed my companion's pace grow progressively slower as we walked home. I felt sure that she was just tired after being out all day.

The next morning, Sunday, I awoke to find that my companion was as sick as she'd ever been. All of her symptoms had returned. We went to church but came home immediately afterward. She retreated to the bedroom, and I sat in the living room, wanting to comfort her but

overwhelmed by our situation. I tried to study but couldn't. Why had the blessing of healing been granted for only one day? Why weren't we able to go out and teach, especially when we knew that we could accomplish so much? And then the questions turned inward—could it be that I didn't have enough faith?

A Higher Purpose

At the end of the day, we talked about her healing and the return of her illness. She finally said, "Maybe there's a different purpose in my getting sick. I was healed for Christmas

as promised. Just because I got sick again doesn't mean that the Lord didn't grant the blessing."

I admitted that she was right. Perhaps there were other things we both needed to learn. I continued to spend my time studying Spanish and the scriptures, talking with her, and serving her. Our friendship grew and we laughed often. When she did feel well enough to leave the apartment, we walked slowly and had more time to share our testimonies with people on the street. Soon, she went home to recover and I was assigned a new companion.

Unforeseen Blessings

As I look back now, I remember that Christmas as my favorite. That Christmas season I grew closer to my Savior and found joy not only in His birth but also in His Atonement. My Savior's Christmas gift to me was a better understanding of His love and sacrifice for me.

Later, I came across a statement by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that seemed to capture exactly my sentiments about that Christmas on my mission: "You can't separate Bethlehem from Gethsemane or the hasty flight into Egypt from the slow journey to the summit of Calvary. It's of one piece. It is a single plan. It considers 'the fall and rising again of many in Israel' [Luke 2:34], but always in that order. Christmas is joyful not because it is a season or decade or lifetime without pain and privation, but precisely because life does hold those moments for us."¹ ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTE

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Shepherds, Why This Jubilee?* (2000), 68.

