

My **Gift** to the Savior

By Cherstan Pixton

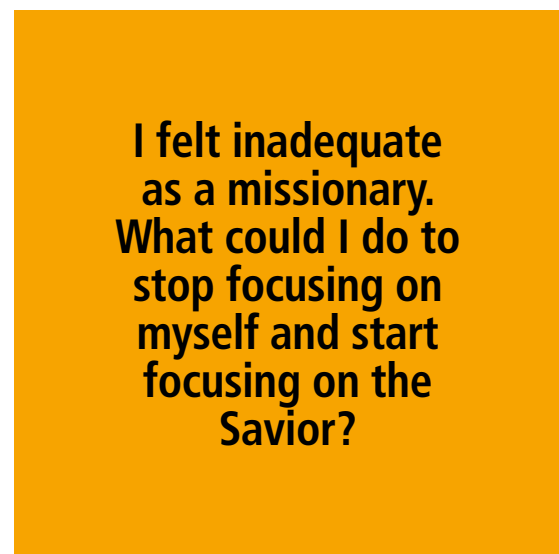
Russia is very cold in the winter and often overcast, making the days gloomy and somewhat miserable. It was late November, and on top of the depressing weather, I was feeling lonely, inadequate, and incapable of being a good missionary. I had just been assigned to train a new companion, and while Sister Hart was wonderful, the pressure was now on me to learn the language better, be an example, and find someone—anyone—to teach.

We had just gotten word that our new mission president was going to hold a zone conference in Yekaterinburg, five hours from our area of Perm. Early on a chilly December morning, Sister Hart and I went to the train station.

As we waited I pondered on the feelings I'd been having. I thought of the upcoming holidays and my longing to be with my family. The

excitement to be on a mission had faded, and now I felt like I hadn't accomplished much as a missionary in my nine months out. Finally the call for our train's arrival chimed, so we boarded and took our seats. I found myself thinking of the Savior. I closed my eyes and prayed that I would be able to know how to rid myself of these feelings and better focus on Him.

At the zone conference the next day, President Rust's talk was beautiful and heartfelt. When Sister Rust got up to speak, she shared a simple story about how the Savior is the shepherd who would go and find the one sheep that had wandered off and bring that sheep back to the fold. She talked about the sacrifices the Savior has made for us, and finally she bore a powerful testimony of the opportunity that we as missionaries have to serve Him by bringing His lost sheep to



I felt inadequate as a missionary. What could I do to stop focusing on myself and start focusing on the Savior?

the fold. Sister Rust challenged us to think of what gift we could give to the Savior for Christmas.

When she made that challenge, I felt the strongest impression that the gift that I was supposed to give to the Savior was to simply talk to more people. Up until that point I had been terrified to start up conversations with complete strangers



—especially in Russian! I didn't want them to think I was dumb for not understanding them, so it was just easier not to say anything at all. I knew, however, at that moment, exactly what I needed to do. I needed to stop thinking of myself and start thinking of my brothers and sisters. I set a goal to speak to someone about the gospel on every transportation vehicle I took for the rest of the month and to devote that as my Christmas gift to the Savior.

When Sister
Hart and I
boarded
another

train back to Perm the next morning, I started on my goal by talking to the people I sat next to. They weren't very interested in what I had to share, but at least I tried!

Every day was a struggle as I fought to give my gift to the Savior, but slowly I found myself feeling happier and more confident—I felt I was better fulfilling my calling as a missionary. Christmas came and went, but I decided that I would continue

talking to people. I started talking to them not only when we took

public transportation but also on the streets, in the store, at the library, and everywhere else we went.

We didn't find anyone to teach through my talking to people more; however, I feel that I planted gospel seeds. We made new friends with bus drivers, people at our local grocery store, and others. The best part was that when we saw someone again, we would often see them smile, and they would be the one to say hello to us first. I have faith that those seeds we planted will someday blossom when new opportunities arise for those people to learn about the gospel.

Heavenly Father works in small and simple ways, and sometimes it just starts with a simple “hello.”

Thinking back now to that time on the train to Yekaterinburg, I realize that Heavenly Father answered my prayer. He helped me see that missionary work isn't about me—it's about others; and when we put others above ourselves and our own worries and sorrows, we find the happiness we are all seeking. It's amazing to me how giving the Savior is, for even when we strive to give Him everything we can, He blesses us and gives us back a hundredfold. ■

The author lives in Idaho, USA.



ILLUSTRATION BY DINARA MIRTAIPOVA