

Never Alone

BY ANNE GRENZEBACH

Imagine that you have decided to join a church different from the one you were raised in. Now imagine telling your family. How would they react? Would they be supportive or disappointed in you? If you were to lose their friendship, would converting to another faith be worth it?

These are some of the concerns I faced a few years ago when I was investigating the Church. A friend advised me to follow my heart and believe that the Lord would help me overcome my fears of rejection by family and friends. With that simple faith, I moved forward and was baptized in April 2002.

Being the only Church member in your family is not an easy path. There is no family support to help you keep your covenants, read your scriptures daily, and do the little things to continue building your testimony. Staying motivated falls squarely on your shoulders. As the only Church member in my family, I've found my pillars of strength to be immersing myself in the Church, sharing the gospel with others, focusing on temple work, and never losing hope that my family will someday join the Church.

Support amid Opposition

Until I joined the Church, I had never seriously disappointed my family. When I joined, I knew they felt betrayed, and I felt horrible for hurting them so much. I continued in the Church because I knew in my heart that it was what the Lord wanted for me—and for them.

I was not living close to home at the time. Whenever I visited, I was met with accusations and insults. The situation worsened when I decided to serve a mission.

My grandmother had tears in her eyes when she said, "Annie girl, if you serve this mission, you will break my heart." I told her that a mission was something I had been prompted to do, and if I didn't serve, I would be disobeying Heavenly Father.

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While I prepared for my mission I found comfort and strength within my ward family. They did an amazing job of helping me adjust to the lifestyle changes that come with being a Church member, and they gave me support in coping with the opposition of my family. I found it easier to persevere despite the frustrations by immersing myself in the Church through callings, activities, and going on exchanges with the missionaries. Also, I lived close to Palmyra, New York, so I often found myself sitting in the Sacred Grove, pondering my situation and seeking peace.

Serving Families

Although I had support from my ward, I still felt frustrated and misunderstood by my family. Everything they knew about the Church they had learned from outside sources, and they would not accept anything I told them. I tried to discuss the gospel with them and correct their misconceptions, but I never seemed to succeed in reaching common ground. The gap separating me from my loved ones was widening, and I did not know how to narrow it. By the time I left on my mission to Virginia, I had almost lost hope that my family would ever show interest in the Church.

Through my letters home, I continued my efforts to



My ward family supported me in coping with the opposition from my family, and I found additional peace by pondering my situation while in the Sacred Grove.

share the gospel. I remember inviting my father to meet with the missionaries. He said frankly that he was not interested. Reading his response was one of the hardest experiences of my mission, but it gave me a greater drive to work hard and share the gospel with anyone willing to listen. I came to realize that everyone is someone's family member and that by helping one person I might be answering someone else's prayers. I strive to continue in my efforts in sharing the gospel, even though I am no longer a full-time missionary.

Blessings through the Temple

When Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles got up to speak at the April 2005 general conference, I felt a strong impression that I needed to pay close attention to what he was about to say. He started his talk with these words: "My message is to those who are converts to the Church. . . . You are not the exception in the Church. To you I wish to say how much the Lord loves you and trusts you. And even more, I wish to tell you how much He depends on you."¹



Even though I am no longer a full-time missionary, I strive to continue sharing the gospel. Family history work and service in the temple also bring peace and happiness.

He spoke of how converts should never stop trying to share the gospel with their families. He then explained that another important aspect of missionary work within the family is temple work.

Elder Eyring's words inspired me to make goals about temple attendance and family history work. I have found much fulfillment in taking family names to the temple and have received some amazing, unexpected blessings in the process. It has greatly increased my connection with those on the other side of the veil. I have seen miracles as I've tried to find their names, and I have felt their presence while performing their ordinances.

Another blessing came when I saw my grandmother for the first time after my mission. She gave me a list of names to take to the temple. She also talked about how she wanted to read the "Mormon book" because she remembered her father reading it. She now calls me every week to talk about what she has learned from the Book of Mormon.

Prior to leaving on my mission, I had felt an impression that my grandmother's husband—who died in 1996, before I joined the Church—was striving to help soften her heart. While I was in the Missionary Training Center, the elders in my district did his temple work. Sitting in the celestial room, I was overwhelmed with the idea of my entire family being there together. I like to think that my grandfather is doing all he can to help our family accept the gospel.

Continuing in Hope

My mom came to pick me up from my mission, and it happened to be October general conference weekend. She watched three of the conference sessions with me and enjoyed them so much that she asked for them on DVD for Christmas. To me, this was a miracle to let me know that I need not lose hope.

At the present time, no one in my family has shown much interest in joining the Church, but I feel it will happen one day—whether in this life or the next. Our relationship has improved so greatly that I know it was not through my own efforts but through the workings of the Spirit. Heavenly Father blesses us with miracles and the righteous desires of our hearts when we are striving to do His will. I have felt His strength and support to move forward, and I know that I will never be alone in His true Church. ■

NOTE

1. "Hearts Bound Together," *Liabona and Ensign*, May 2005, 77.

WHEN YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE

- Find comfort and strength in your ward or branch family.
- Seek peace and direction through prayer.
- Share the gospel with others. Remember that everyone has a family, and you may be the answer to someone else's prayer.
- Participate in family history and temple work.
- Never give up hope that your family may some day accept the gospel.