

Sharing

What Really Mattered



By Marcy Zabriskie

As members of the Church, we talk about missionary work often. But it is exciting when we actually get to go beyond the talking and have a chance to *be* a missionary.

Such an opportunity came to me on a flight from Tokyo to Los Angeles. My friend and I were returning home to the United States from China, and we were seated next to a man named Paul. He was returning home to Los Angeles, California, USA.

With an 11-hour flight ahead of us, we introduced ourselves and started a casual conversation: who we were, where we had been traveling, where we lived, and so on. It was the “where we lived” part that seemed to pique Paul’s curiosity. When he discovered that both my friend and I lived in Utah, within minutes of Brigham Young University, he immediately asked if we were Mormon. Our response was an enthusiastic “Yes!” He was surprised to learn that both my friend and I had grown up far away from Utah—she in Oregon and I in Texas and Pennsylvania. Apparently he didn’t know that members of the Church existed beyond the borders of Utah. We assured him that it was quite common.

He then asked, “Are you Christians?” We quickly said that we were. We told Paul that the name of the Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, should be solid proof that we are, indeed, Christians. After a lengthy discussion about how many of our beliefs were similar to other Christian denominations, my friend and I leaned back in our seats, satisfied that we had enjoyed a successful missionary moment.

Knowing that lunch would be served soon, I got up to stretch my legs. It was then that I thought that what we had shared with Paul, though nice, was not all that we needed to share. We were so worried about making sure he knew the *similarities* between our Church and others that we spent the time convincing him that Latter-day Saints were not so different. I had completely neglected to tell him what makes our Church so extraordinarily different. As I returned to my seat, I resolved to finish our discussion as it should have been finished.

I sat down, leaned over my friend (who was in the middle seat), and said, “Paul, there are a couple of other things you should know. Jesus Christ is most certainly my Lord and Savior, and He is the very center of the church we belong to. However, I neglected to tell you some other important details.” I’m sure at that moment my friend was wondering what on earth I was doing. After all, hadn’t we just successfully cleared up any misconceptions he had about our beliefs? I myself wondered if I would sink or swim in my efforts to tell Paul more about the gospel.

We talked about Joseph Smith and the First Vision. We discussed the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the priesthood, and other important teachings of the gospel. Paul was aware of many rumors relating to our doctrine. Our conversation served as a means to clear up some of his misconceptions. As we talked, I silently uttered a prayer that we could say the right things. It was a great experience to discuss the fundamental aspects of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the parts that make

our beliefs so unique. It felt good to share not only my love for the Savior but also my testimony of the Restoration of His gospel. As frightening as it seemed at moments, sharing the gospel with Paul was tremendously rewarding.

A couple of hours later, our discussion started to lose some steam. The three of us were tired, and the lights on the plane had dimmed. Before I reclined my seat in hopes of catching some sleep, I asked, “Could I send you a Book of Mormon?” I silently prayed that Paul’s answer would be yes—and it was. I don’t think I had felt that excited about sharing the gospel with someone since my mission nearly 20 years earlier.

Since that day on the plane, I have sent the Book of Mormon to Paul. What I learned from that missionary experience is that it is the Restoration of the gospel and all that it encompasses that makes The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints so extraordinarily different. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

Gospel sharing can be a natural part of your life. See November 2013 Ensign: S. Gifford Nielsen, p. 33; Arnulfo Valenzuela, p. 35; M. Russell Ballard, p. 43.

I realized it wasn't enough to explain the similarities between our Church and others; I needed to share what makes the Church extraordinarily different.