

DOCTOR OR ELDER?

When I finished high school, I knew I had to wait at least two years before serving a mission. I decided to start my college education, calculating that I could be done with medical school in about six years if I invested myself fully. I planned to serve a full-time mission afterward.

After completing medical school at age 24, I started a clinical apprenticeship, which furthered my career opportunities. During this time a dilemma unfolded: should I really serve a mission, or should I keep working? My parents, my older brother (who had recently returned from his mission), my bishop, and a counselor in the local mission presidency all exhorted me to serve.

I believed they were right, but it was difficult to delay my promising medical career. I prayed and fasted for inspiration. I also consulted my patriarchal blessing, which recommended that I serve a full-time mission and promised blessings as a result.

One day, as I was taking public transport home from my apprenticeship, I ran into the stake patriarch. We got off at the same stop and, curiously, started walking in the same direction. He recognized me as a member of the Church.

As we walked together, he asked me what I was planning to do with my life. I explained that I was a doctor and was troubled about deciding between my career and a mission. He told me in

a firm voice to serve the Lord by going on a mission, adding that I would be blessed as a result. To me, his response seemed to come from the Lord.

Immediately the following scripture entered my mind: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (3 Nephi 13:33).

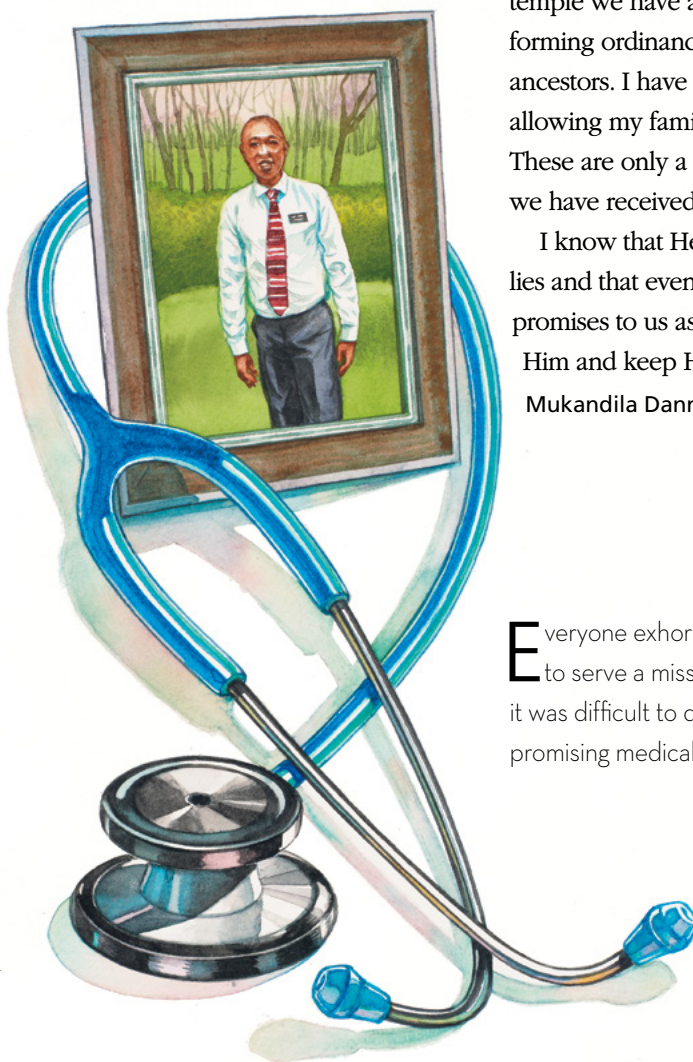
I was certain the Lord had answered me. Without further hesitation, I decided to delay my professional career and serve a full-time mission.

My fellow doctors thought I would forget medical practices after being away for two years. They harassed me, but I held firm to my decision.

Leaving behind my “Dr.” title, I served two years in the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission.

Five years later, I made a list of the major blessings that followed my service. Foremost, I found a wife—a faithful Church member and my crowning joy. We have two children so far. Our family is sealed for eternity. In the temple we have acted as proxies in performing ordinances for our deceased ancestors. I have secure employment, allowing my family to be self-reliant. These are only a few of the blessings we have received from the Lord.

I know that Heavenly Father never lies and that eventually He fulfills all His promises to us as we put our trust in Him and keep His commandments. ■
Mukandila Danny Kalala, Liberia



Everyone exhorted me to serve a mission, but it was difficult to delay my promising medical career.

I CAME TO KNOW THE SAVIOR

In my first year of high school, I made a commitment to read the New Testament from beginning to end. After school and on weekends, I retreated to the upper story of our house and read the Savior's words and of His miracles and life.

Though my young mind often did not understand the language of the Bible, I came to know Jesus Christ. I learned that He is the Son of God and that He was sent to atone for our sins. I learned that He walked with, spoke to, and blessed ordinary, weak people—people like me.

I was sometimes confused while reading complex passages in Paul's epistles and John's writings in the book of Revelation, but I could always feel the truth of their teachings. I found that reading the scriptures helped me through hard days at school and gave me guidance in making important decisions.

Years later, as I prepared for a mission, I found myself questioning my motives for serving. I felt that there was nothing particularly special about my testimony or about me. I wondered if I was preparing for a mission out of obligation to my parents and my leaders, who had worked hard to teach me the gospel. I even thought the Lord might be better off without my service.

One day while I was reading the Book of Mormon, Abinadi's words touched my heart:

“He shall be led, crucified, and slain. . . .
“And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death. . . .

“And now I say unto you, *who shall declare his generation?*” (Mosiah 15:7–8, 10; emphasis added).

I read that last line over and over, wondering if it had been there before. By reading the New Testament, I knew of the Savior's life and of the generation of those who had walked with Him. But those of the Savior's generation cannot visit people today

to teach of His love, His Atonement, and His Church. So how could I justify *not* sharing my testimony of Him?

The Lord wanted me to share the good news of the gospel I had received. I knew the gospel to be true, and I wanted to share the truths I had learned while reading the scriptures.

Soon after this experience I left on my mission. Today I can attribute the desire I had to serve to what I had learned about the Savior as a young student reading the scriptures. ■

Brian Knox, Arizona, USA

As I prepared for a mission, I found myself questioning my motives for serving.





Nieves had readily received the restored gospel, but when we invited her to be baptized, she hesitated.

I'M GRATEFUL FOR YOUR FEET

There was nothing particularly interesting about my feet, so I was a little confused when Nieves, a recent convert in Bolivia, said she was thankful for them.

"I'm so grateful for your feet," she would tell us in the weeks following her baptism.

Nieves had readily received the restored gospel, but when we invited her to be baptized, she hesitated.

She explained that she suffered from a painful skin condition. When her skin touched cold water, it felt as if a thousand needles were piercing her pores. This condition prevented her from doing even ordinary tasks, such as washing vegetables or scrubbing clothing by hand.

We explained that the baptismal font could be heated, and we assured Nieves that she would be baptized in warm water. Her face brightened, and she chose to be baptized on Christmas Day. My companion and I told the branch

president about her skin condition, and he said the font would be heated in time for the afternoon baptism.

When we arrived at the chapel for the baptism, however, the font had just been filled with extremely cold water! The frantic branch president explained that because of a miscommunication, the water would not be ready until much later.

My companion and I knew that Nieves wanted to be baptized that day, and we believed that the Lord desired the same thing. We found an empty room and prayed that He would help Nieves to be baptized.

We felt comforted after the prayer and decided to proceed with the service. Those who spoke before the baptism taught beautifully, but I was suddenly nervous when I heard, "Elder Nelson will now baptize Sister Nieves."

I tried to hide my discomfort as I stepped gingerly into the frigid water. Nieves took my hand and lowered her

foot toward the water. I braced myself for the worst, but Nieves did not shriek or even wince. She stepped calmly down the stairs and smiled up at me.

After the baptismal prayer, she lay back into the cold water. When I lifted her, she emerged grinning. I was filled with gratitude. To me, her baptism was a miracle.

The last time I saw Nieves, she said something that cleared up my confusion about her interest in my feet. She said, "I'm so grateful for your feet, which walked to my door and brought me the truth."

I think of Nieves and her simple faith and gratitude whenever I hear these words of Isaiah: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Isaiah 52:7; see also Mosiah 12:21). ■

Nicholas Nelson, Texas, USA

FOOTPRINTS OF FAITHFULNESS

For some time I had wanted to take pictures of Temple Square in Salt Lake City—including the reflection pool, the fountains, and the sidewalks—covered with freshly fallen snow void of any footprints. To get a picture of fresh snow without footprints, I knew I had to arrive at Temple Square early in the morning following a nighttime snowstorm.

One evening after a forecast of snow overnight, I prepared myself. Because Temple Square groundskeepers start plowing the sidewalks at 5:00 a.m., I set my alarm for 3:00 a.m. and got my gear together.

Driving on unplowed roads the next morning, I arrived at Temple Square at 4:15 a.m. while it was still snowing. Then I proceeded to drive around the square, looking for someplace to park that would give me easy access to take pictures.

On my first pass around Temple Square, I noticed that the walkway to the entrance of the Salt Lake Temple was covered in fresh snow—without any footprints! I knew I was going to get my perfect photo. Excited, I drove around the block again to find a parking spot.

As I proceeded east on North Temple Street, I thought I would find a spot close to the walkway. Before I realized it, however, I had run out of parking spots and was again near the sidewalk to the temple entrance.

As I sat at a red light, I looked to my right at the fresh, undisturbed snow. When I looked to my left toward the Conference Center, I noticed an elderly woman dressed in her Sunday best, her head tilted into the falling snow as she headed toward the temple.

“Oh, no,” I thought. “I’m not going to get my shot!”

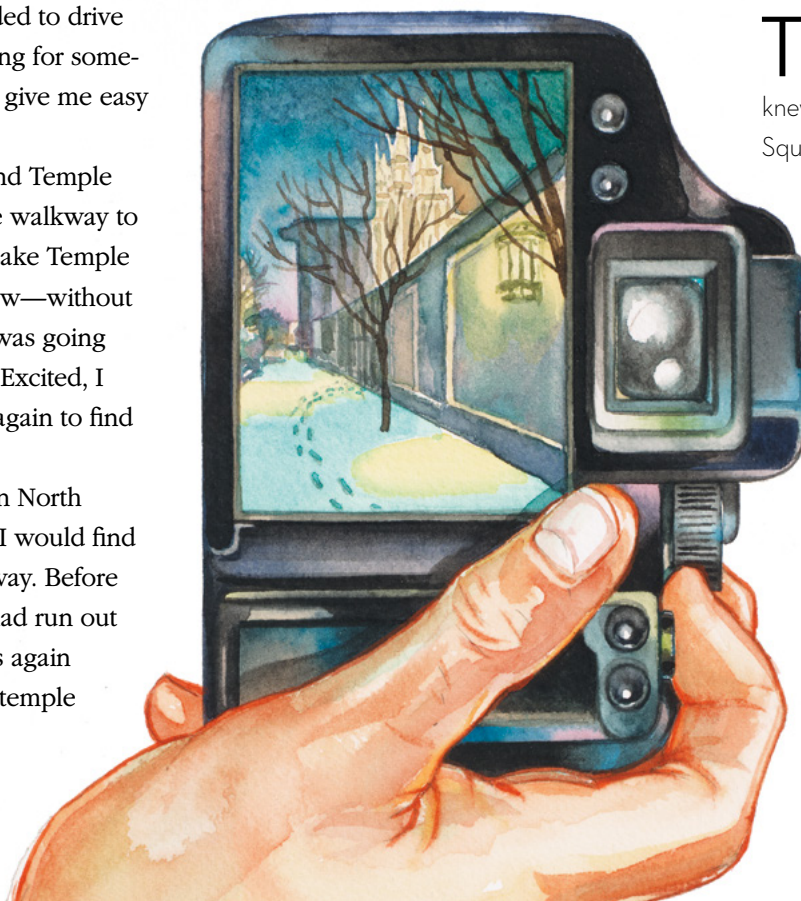
As the woman crossed in front of me, I turned and looked toward the soon-to-be-ruined walkway and saw that another sister had already gone down the walkway and was turning into the temple entrance. Then I looked back to the first sister now walking down the walkway. With

snow clumped around her shoes and ankles, and following the footsteps of the first, she walked slowly but surely down the walkway, through the gates, and into the entrance to the temple.

As I contemplated what I was seeing, I looked at the clock in my car: 4:20 a.m. Sitting in my warm car and looking at the footsteps in the freshly fallen snow, I was humbled by the faithfulness of these two sisters on their way to perform their appointed duties.

I drove around the block again, parked, grabbed my camera, and took a picture of footprints in the snow—a far greater picture than the one I had envisioned. ■

Randolph Shankula, Utah, USA



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