

HEALING MY HOMESICKNESS

I began college at age 18. After a short time, however, I transferred to another university and changed my major. My new university was only a couple of hours from my home, but I found myself terribly homesick and discouraged, wanting to give up and return to my family. Yet I knew if I did, I would be abandoning my chance to earn a degree.

One weekend not long after the school year began, all of my roommates went home for a visit. I knew that if I went home too, I would not return. I couldn't even call and speak to my family for fear I would break down and not be able to focus on my studies. I had been praying for the strength to overcome my homesickness, but now I was praying to know whether I should even remain at school and complete a degree.

Early that Sunday morning as I walked slowly across the quiet campus on my way to church, I wondered how I could stay at school when I missed my home and family so deeply and couldn't overcome my loneliness. But what would I do if I left school?

When I arrived at church, the previous ward had just left the chapel.



At that moment I knew what I needed to do. The Lord had answered my prayers in such a simple way, but I could not deny that it was an answer just the same.

I entered, hoping for a moment to pray for direction. As I found a place to sit and slowly moved onto the wooden pew, I noticed a printed program from the previous sacrament meeting. There on the front of the folded paper were the following words: "Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not."¹

At that moment I knew what I needed to do. The Lord had answered my prayers in such a simple way, but I could not deny that it was an answer just the same.

It wasn't long after that Sunday that my loneliness and discouragement left. As a result, I enjoyed my

remaining years in school. I gained a degree, lifelong friends, and a stronger testimony by following the promptings of the Spirit.

Now, more than 25 years later, I still recall that answer to my prayer, and I use those same words from that sacrament meeting program to commit myself to difficult tasks. I have shared my experience with close friends and family in hopes that they too might gain strength in difficult times.

I know the Lord cares about our feelings and everyday choices, and I know He answers our sincere prayers. ■

Sue Hirase, Utah, USA

NOTE

1. Thomas Henry Huxley, in John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations* (1968), 725.

COULD I CLOSE MY BUSINESS ON SUNDAY?

Three weeks after I opened my heart, received the gospel, and made the important decision to be baptized in 2001, I attended a Sunday School class in which we discussed the importance of observing the Sabbath day.

As a successful business owner with a large number of employees, I had been working on Sundays for more than 20 years. But as the importance of this day became clear to me, I decided to tell my three store managers that we were not going to open anymore on Sunday.

A few weeks after I announced my decision, my three managers told me that several insistent customers, mainly schoolteachers, asked whether we might open our stores the following Sunday. I work in the candy business in Papantla, and people needed to buy candy and piñatas to prepare for El Día del Niño (Children's Day), which would be observed the following Monday. On Children's Day, held on April 30 in Mexico, schools have parties and

games, and children receive candy.

"Tomorrow, on Saturday, I'll let you know," I told my managers.

When I got home, I told my wife what had happened. I expected her to say, "Stay open. After all, it's just one Sunday." But that was not her answer.

With a firm voice, she told me that I was the head of the family and that it was my decision. But then she asked me, "If someone told you that this Sunday you could receive either a huge fortune or you could

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receive your Father in Heaven, which would you choose?"

Her question helped me realize the importance of receiving the Lord every Sunday, and I knew I had to stand by my decision. Honoring the Lord is the most important thing we can do on Sunday, and since then I have not missed an opportunity to do so.

If we put the things of the Lord before the things of man, we will be given a testimony of the Sabbath day. For our observance of the Sabbath day, my family and I have been greatly blessed, as has my business. May we all receive the blessings of honoring the Lord's day. ■

Gerardo Adrián García Romero,
Veracruz, Mexico





HOW COULD WE PAY OUR RENT?

A year and a half after my wife, Rebeca, and I married, the company I worked for closed. Suddenly I found myself unemployed.

Rather than look to be hired by someone else, I felt prompted to start my own company. I knew that this challenge could be a complicated one, so I turned to Heavenly Father to confirm what I had felt. Prayer played a vital role in that initial decision and has continued to be crucial since.

In August 2003 I started my own company doing painting, gardening, landscaping, and maintenance work. Things aren't always easy when you have your own company, especially when starting out. At the beginning

of one month, Rebeca and I needed to pay rent for our home. We didn't have a penny. So one morning we prayed that we might somehow obtain the money we needed. Later that day I was hired for a job that paid enough to cover our rent.

A month after I started my company, the stake president asked me to meet with him. Soon I was called to be the bishop of our ward. I realized that Heavenly Father had opened a way for me to accept and fulfill this calling. With my other job, I would not have had the necessary time for members of the ward and for my own family. But because I have my own

company, I have a flexible schedule. I have been home for important events in my family's life, such as when my children were born and started walking and talking. In addition, my wife and I have been able to serve in the San José Costa Rica Temple. These opportunities, which came because we had responded to promptings and sought direction in prayer, have tied us together.

I recently resumed my university

studies. When the impression came to return to school, I worried about how I could provide for my family. Two days a week I would be in the classroom, not at work. How was my family going to make it?

Again, my wife and I made this challenge a matter of prayer, and the Lord responded. I began receiving permanent contracts, which have made

it easier for me to make up workdays I miss while at school.

In all of these experiences, we have seen the Lord keep His promise: "Ask, and ye shall receive" (3 Nephi 27:29). Prayer has been important to our family's development and improvement. We have seen and felt that when we turn to the Lord, He blesses us. We know that He knows us by name, and we can ask Him for whatever we need. ■

Douglas Arévalo, Costa Rica

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I DIDN'T HAVE A TEMPLE RECOMMEND

When I was 17 years old, I had a strong desire to see a Latter-day Saint temple. I lived in Denmark with my family, where at that time there was no temple. For Saints living in Denmark, the closest temples were in Switzerland and England. I didn't know anyone in those nations, so traveling to either country by myself was out of the question.

But because I had family in Utah, I decided to save money so I could visit and do baptisms for the dead in the Salt Lake Temple. I wrote my aunt and cousins in Utah to see if it was all right if I came for a visit. They were excited to hear of my plans.

A year later I had finally saved enough money for my long-awaited trip. A few days after I arrived in Utah, my aunt drove me to the Salt Lake Temple. I was thrilled to see it in person and excited to do baptisms for the dead. When I got to the entrance, however, a temple worker asked to see my temple recommend. No one had ever told me about a temple recommend! The worker kindly explained what a temple recommend is and told me that I could get one from my bishop.

My heart sank. I would have to be content with visiting relatives and seeing the temple from the outside.

During fast and testimony meeting the following Sunday, I felt the need to share my testimony, telling the

congregation how blessed they were to live so close to a temple. I also said I would have loved to have gone inside but couldn't because I didn't have a recommend, though I had always been taught to live worthily. I closed my testimony by encouraging the members to attend the temple as often as they could.

After church, my relatives' bishop approached me and said he would try to help me get a temple recommend, and we set up an interview. During the interview, he asked me if my bishop spoke English. I said no. He replied, "And I don't speak Danish." My heart sank again.

But the bishop said, "You have come this far; let's not give up just yet. I know the Lord will help us. We just have to have faith."

He then asked for my bishop's phone number in Denmark, which

I happened to have with me. I was surprised to hear my bishop's son answer the phone. He told me he had just returned from his mission to England. When I told the American bishop, he said, "Perfect. He can translate for us."

Soon all four of us were on the phone—my bishop giving me a recommend interview, his son translating for the American bishop. Before long I had my recommend and was finally able to enter the temple! I cannot put into words the joy I felt knowing that the Lord had opened the way for me.

I was later married in the temple and have been blessed with four beautiful children. I am so thankful Heavenly Father has given us temples, and I'm grateful to know that I am sealed to my family and that, if we live righteously, we can be together forever. ■

Anne-Mette Howland,
Utah, USA

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