

A FEW **Kind** WORDS CHANGED EVERYTHING

As we sat in the chapel, I noticed that a sister looked back at us several times. Soon she came back and told us we were too noisy.

By Jonene Ficklin

In the early years of our marriage, my husband and I lived on the east coast of the United States with our three children. Going to church was a challenge, but we always went (including for general conference broadcasts), even though it was an hour drive.

One October morning, we walked into the chapel to watch general conference. It was very peaceful as we slipped onto the back row. The broadcast began, and the Spirit was wonderful.

As usual, my children—ages four, two, and three months—made little noises. We did our best to keep them reverent, but

I noticed that a sister looked back at us several times. After a few minutes, she came back and told us we were too noisy. Embarrassed, my husband and I whispered our apologies. We collected our children and closed the doors behind us.

Out in the foyer we held our children on our laps and shushed them as we listened to conference over a speaker. A few minutes later, the same woman came out, looking upset, and said she could still hear us and that she and others couldn't focus on general conference. I was mortified. We gathered up the children and drove home. I wondered if we were really that loud or if the sister was just having a bad day.



Struggling to Forget

Over the next week, I couldn't get what happened at church off my mind. Had we really been that distracting to others, despite our efforts to be reverent? One thought led to another. I began dwelling on how much effort it took to bring children to church. What if the other members really didn't want us there? Wouldn't it be easier on everyone if I just stayed home?

By the next Sunday, I was really struggling. If I hadn't had a calling, I probably wouldn't have gone to church. Throughout the first two hours I was aware of every little disturbance my children made. When sacrament meeting came at the end of our block of meetings, I was close to the breaking point. We sat in the very back. Partway through the service, I noticed an older sister looking back at us every few minutes.

"Oh no," I thought. "Here we go again."

A Small Thing

When the service ended, we scurried to get the children and go.

Before we made it to the door, the sister grabbed my arm. I could already feel tears coming.

"You sweet little mother," she said. "What a great thing you and your husband are doing by bringing your children to church! Because of your hard work, they will grow up knowing where they belong."

I cried all the way home, but with joy, not pain. With a few kind words, this sister changed everything. That was many years ago, but her kind words helped me weather many Sundays when going to church was a challenge.

I also still think about the sister who rebuked us. I chose not to take her words personally or hold them against her.

What I learned from these experiences is that there is power in a few kind words. It may have been a small thing for that sweet older sister to speak to me, but it had a huge impact. Because of what she said, I knew the Lord was aware of my struggle and loved me. Because of her example, we seldom miss a week of church. Our children have grown up knowing where they belong and that the Lord loves them. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



CHOOSE NOT TO BE OFFENDED

"You and I cannot control the intentions or behavior

of other people. However, we do determine how we will act. Please remember that you and I are agents endowed with moral agency, and we can choose not to be offended."

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "And Nothing Shall Offend Them," *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 91.

