

Why Did the Lord Call Me?

I learned that the Lord enables imperfect people to work beyond their natural abilities.

BY KIMBERLEE B. GARRETT

A friend in my ward once shared part of a letter from her missionary son, who was serving in Japan. His letter expressed feelings of inadequacy in doing the work to which he was called. However, the letter reported the missionary was confident he would be victorious in the end because “the Lord can draw a straight line with even the most crooked of sticks.” I have since spent much time reflecting on this insight.

I learned a similar lesson on my own mission. I was called to serve in São Paulo, Brazil, at a time when it was very difficult to obtain a visa. After 10 weeks in the MTC, I learned that my visa was on hold and I was being temporarily reassigned to the Washington D.C. South Mission. With a suitcase full of clothing inadequate for the cold Virginia winter, I left to report to my new mission. My first assignment was nearly ideal.

I had a wonderful companion, and we were assigned to open a new area for sister missionaries. We found someone to teach the very night we arrived. We met a part-member family on our first Sunday; we had the opportunity to teach the father, who chose to be baptized a few weeks later. Teaching the gospel came easy to me, and I felt somewhat proud of the progress I was making as a missionary.

After two months in Washington, D.C., I received a call informing me I would be leaving for Brazil the next day. I was shocked but excited as well. I assumed that this new assignment would go as smoothly as my first one.

I went from one of the coldest winters on record in the United States to the middle of a Brazilian summer. The sun beat down on me and burned my face, arms, and neck. My feet were covered in blisters that bled and caused me great discomfort with every step. My companion was a native Brazilian, and despite our best efforts, we could not communicate well. My weakness and shortcomings were painfully apparent as my every endeavor seemed to fail. I felt like Peter in the 14th chapter of Matthew. Peter had walked on water. I had been enjoying success, yet now I found myself sinking and crying out to the Lord.

Just as Jesus came to Peter's rescue when Peter was floundering in the boisterous waves, He came to mine as well. The language began to come as I tried to study and be obedient. I found myself especially able to communicate when I was teaching and testifying of Christ. The sunburn and blisters healed more rapidly than I expected, and I was soon able to walk the many miles a day that our work required. I found myself performing

missionary labors in a manner beyond my own abilities. This time, instead of feeling somewhat proud of my labor as I had in the United States, I felt humbled that the Lord would bless me and enable me to do His work.

This same enabling power (see 1 Timothy 1:12) has blessed me many times throughout my life. When I receive callings that seem beyond my abilities, I try to remember those times on my mission when I was blessed to do a work greater than I was personally capable of doing.

I have come to love a scripture in the last chapter of Moroni, which explains that this enabling power is the grace of Christ: "Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love

God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ" (Moroni 10:32).

I know that I can never be perfected through my efforts alone, and there are still times when I feel as if I am sinking like Peter. However, I am strengthened when I remember that Christ's commandment is not for me to become perfect and *then* come to Him. Instead, He invites me—and each one of us—to come unto Him and to be *perfected in Him*. This power has helped me be a better parent and a better teacher than I could ever be on my own. When I focus on Christ, do my best, and recognize my dependence on Him, I am strengthened. Crooked though my stick may be, the Lord is somehow able to draw a straight line, and I become an instrument in His hand. ■

The Lord can draw a straight line with even the most crooked of sticks.



AN ENABLING POWER

"The enabling and strengthening aspect of the Atonement helps us to see and to do and to become good in ways that we could never recognize or accomplish with our limited mortal capacity."

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "In the Strength of the Lord," *Ensign and Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 77.