

By Marissa Widdison
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(Based on a true story)

INVITING

"I can be a missionary now. I don't have to wait until I'm grown" (Children's Songbook, 168).

Hey, pal, you got mail," Dad said, tossing an envelope to Ryan.

"Thanks!" Ryan said. He never got mail, except for birthday cards from Grandma. Who could it be from?

"Looks like it's from Sister Ray," Dad said. He added that she was writing from a place that sounded like "the empty seat."

"What's the 'empty seat?'" Ryan asked Dad, tearing open the envelope.

Dad smiled. "Not 'empty seat'—'M.T.C.' It stands for 'Missionary Training Center.' It's where missionaries go to learn different languages and how to teach people the gospel."

Sister Ray had been Ryan's favorite Primary teacher before she left for her mission. Ryan knew serving a mission was a good thing to do, but he still missed her sometimes. He read the letter out loud. Sister Ray told about the lessons she was learning and about her companion. At the end of the letter, she told Ryan to be a good missionary.

How can I be a missionary when I'm still a kid? Ryan wondered.

Later that day Mom asked Ryan if he'd come with her to deliver some invitations. She was a Primary leader and wanted to visit the kids who didn't come to church or activities very often.

Ryan felt nervous. Sometimes he didn't like talking to new people. But he knew helping out would mean a lot to Mom.

Before long the two of them were bumping along a dirt road on the edge of town. Soon they pulled into a gated area full of trailer homes.

Ryan followed Mom to a blue trailer and watched as she rang the doorbell. A woman opened the door and invited them inside. As Ryan walked in, he could see a

boy sitting on the floor, playing a video game.

"This is my son, Jacob," the woman said. Jacob turned to look at the visitors, and Ryan smiled and sat down next to him. Soon they were laughing and talking.

"Hey, thanks!" Jacob said as Ryan showed him a secret



JACOB

This was too fun to be missionary work!

passageway that led his character to the next level of the game. “Let’s save this for later and go look at my pet iguana.”

“Cool!” Ryan said.

Ryan liked touching the smooth scales of the iguana

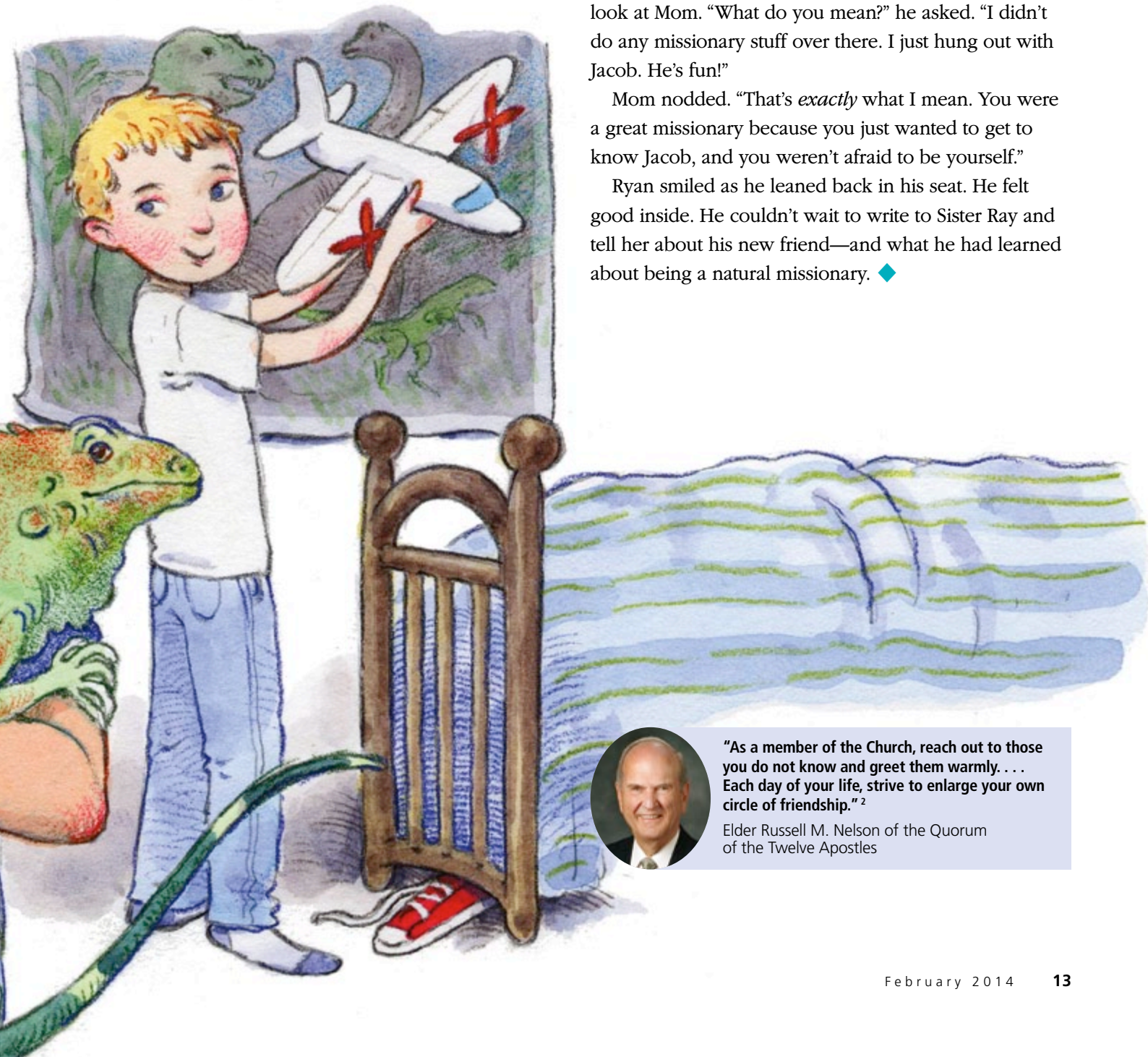
while Jacob showed him other fun things around his room. When Mom said it was time to leave, Ryan made sure to give Jacob one of the invitations.

As they drove away, Mom turned and smiled at Ryan. “You’re a natural missionary, you know that?”

Ryan’s eyebrows scrunched together as he turned to look at Mom. “What do you mean?” he asked. “I didn’t do any missionary stuff over there. I just hung out with Jacob. He’s fun!”

Mom nodded. “That’s *exactly* what I mean. You were a great missionary because you just wanted to get to know Jacob, and you weren’t afraid to be yourself.”

Ryan smiled as he leaned back in his seat. He felt good inside. He couldn’t wait to write to Sister Ray and tell her about his new friend—and what he had learned about being a natural missionary. ♦



“As a member of the Church, reach out to those you do not know and greet them warmly. . . . Each day of your life, strive to enlarge your own circle of friendship.”²

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles