

The Example of One



One woman's example—as wife, mother, and human being—radiated the message of the gospel.

BY ELDER BRUCE C. HAFÉN
Of the Seventy

The recent e-mail subject line brought me sad news: “Funeral for Wendy Knaupp.” As I brushed away the tears, I thought of the day more than 40 years ago when my missionary companion and I met Wendy and Paul Knaupp near a flower shop inside the Frankfurt train station. A young American couple in Germany on military duty, they were far from home, expecting their first baby. Because our mission president had just urged us to be “every moment a missionary,” we struck up a conversation with them.

As we taught them the missionary discussions, I was impressed with the light in Wendy’s soul. She was cheerful and bright and spiritually very alive. She sensed the meaning of the Restoration with sure instincts. It was a privilege to be close enough to watch her testimony grow and watch that light in her face increase.

More than 30 years later, Wendy recalled her first visit with us: “I will always remember the feeling I had when I first heard the Joseph Smith story! I can picture our tiny upstairs German apartment that was probably as big

as our bedroom today, with us sitting on the edge of the bed/couch [facing the missionaries]. I remember feeling marvel and relief. I had always felt that there must be something like that out there somewhere. It didn’t make sense that God would leave us to blindly stumble around as we were so obviously doing. . . . It seemed so right and I believed it.”

Soon after deciding to be baptized, however, Wendy and Paul heard from a family member who criticized the Church’s policy about who could receive the priesthood. They became confused and discouraged. They said we shouldn’t visit them again—except once more to say good-bye. We didn’t know how to answer their questions but knew we had one last chance. As we talked I felt prompted to read with them a scripture I had recently noticed in my personal study, the story of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10–11. That night I realized a fulfillment of the Lord’s promise to missionaries: “It shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say . . . [and] the Holy Ghost shall [bear] record unto all things whatsoever ye shall say” (D&C 100:6, 8). We all felt a spirit of peace as we prayed together.



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Years later Wendy said of this same experience: "I don't remember what they told us or what we talked about, but that light . . . the Spirit . . . was back and I knew that it was true, and that even though I didn't understand everything completely, the message was still true and we needed to accept it, and that at some future time we would come to understand."

Paul and Wendy were baptized. Soon they were sealed in the temple. Amid the normal

trials of family life, they raised five children who eventually all became active in the Church. Some served missions. Paul was a schoolteacher. Paul and Wendy sang beautiful duets in church together. Wendy led her ward choir for years. They loved the temple and came to know for themselves "the joy of the saints" (Enos 1:3).

Once while attending church in London, my wife, Marie, and I met a woman named Libby Casas from Maine. Because the Knaupps

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were the only people we then knew in Maine, we asked if she knew them. Her face lit up: “Know them? Wendy is my dear friend. She introduced me to the gospel!” Wendy had met Libby in a Laundromat—two mothers doing their family laundry—and shared the gospel with Libby just as we had done with Wendy in the train station. What first impressed Libby most about the Church was the power of Wendy’s personal example—as mother, wife, and human being. For Libby, at least at the beginning, Wendy herself was the message of the Restoration.

The Knaapps later lived in Oregon. Then last year, after we heard that Wendy had cancer, we were blessed to discover them visiting in Utah during general conference. Wendy’s husband, their returned missionary son, and I gave her a blessing. We shared our experiences from the past four decades. It was clear that the gospel meant absolutely everything to them. It was the center and purpose of their lives and their children’s lives. Paul and Wendy fervently wanted to be healthy so they could fulfill their dream of serving a mission together.

Not long before she died, Wendy wrote to me in a letter, “I really feel that I am in the arms of the Lord. He can do anything

He wants, and I am in His care.” She expressed gratitude for the gospel and her family, then wrote, “Isn’t the Lord wonderful!”

Now Wendy is gone, and her family misses her terribly. When her son wrote us about her death, he said, “Thank you for bringing Mom into the light of the gospel. She has lived in obedience to the commandments.” He said his mother once wrote to him, “I love the Lord and am eternally grateful [to Him] for bringing the priceless gospel into my life. I want to prove faithful more than anything else and am really trying to do so.”

Because the gospel was everything to Wendy and her family, those of us who were her missionaries understand “how great shall be your joy” (D&C 18:15) with her in our Father’s kingdom. The gospel was *everything* to her, so my missionary experience with her means *everything* to me. No wonder the Lord said that doing missionary work is “the thing which will be of *the most worth unto you*” (D&C 15:6; emphasis added).

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: “I want to plead with the Saints to do all that you possibly can to provide referrals [of people] whom [the missionaries] might teach. . . . Everyone that you see come into the Church because of your effort will bring happiness into your lives. I make that as a promise to each of you” (“Inspirational Thoughts,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Oct. 2003, 3).

I have tasted firsthand what that promise means. I too plead with you to introduce even one person to the Church this year—and not to give up when they encounter some opposition. If you make sure that opportunity does not pass you by, you will say with Wendy Knaupp, “Isn’t the Lord wonderful!” ■

