

Not Burning the

A close-up photograph of a hand pulling a metal chain from a lamp. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with fingers wrapped around the chain. The chain is attached to a dark, cylindrical lamp post. Above the hand, a wooden lampshade is visible, showing a natural wood grain pattern. The lighting is soft, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere.

When it came time to graduate from college, I found that gospel principles had blessed my secular—as well as my spiritual—life.

BY CINTHYA VERÓNICA SALAZAR MÁRQUEZ

Even when I was a young woman, most of my callings in the Church involved teaching Primary children, and this influenced my decision to pursue a degree in elementary education. But the choice of a major wasn't the only way Church teachings affected my education. That became very clear as I prepared to graduate.

The last project I had to complete was a final paper that I would defend in an oral exam before three judges. The judges were some of the teachers who had taught my classes.

My paper carefully finished, I spent part of the evening before the oral exam with my boyfriend's family. When I left to go home, his mother said she hoped everything would go well and quoted, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30).

The next day came. Dozens of memories passed through my mind. I remembered how I decided to leave the city where I grew up to further my education; I remembered all the sacrifices my family had made to finance it. I could not

Midnight Oil

disappoint them. My final exam had to be a success.

My classmates were also waiting to take their exams. All of us were concerned about the questions the judges might pose, but I felt secure because I had prayed for help and because I knew that God knew the effort I had made to organize, research, and write my paper.

My turn came. After explaining my paper to the panel, I began to answer questions. After asking several on the topic I had covered, one of the judges queried, “How much work did you put into this paper?”

“A great deal,” I replied. “I gave it everything I had because I wanted it to be innovative.”

“Burned the midnight oil?”

“No, I don’t usually stay up late doing schoolwork,” I said. “I organize my day so I can get my work done.”

The faces of the judges clearly showed surprise. The same judge remarked, “I find it strange that you should admit you haven’t stayed up late. We know your classmates have, for many a night.”

One of the other judges said, “Let me tell you about this student. She has time for everything. I can say so because I know her. She has time for her studies, her friends, her family, and she even attends church.”

“Really?” the other judge was again surprised. “What church do you attend?”

“I’m a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

“Oh, yes, I know what church that is,” one said.

“And we are taught to go to bed early so we can be invigorated the next day.”

I felt calm and safe talking about the gospel, even though I was surprised to be asked about religion during a professional exam.

“Your paper was written with great feeling. It is excellent. I suppose this is also due to the habits instilled in you by your church.”

“Yes,” I said. “I was taught at church how to teach children, and it has really helped with my degree.”

“You took to it like a fish to water,” one of the judges joked. “We hope you won’t stop going to church, because you owe much to the values you have gained there.”

Soon I was excused from the room so the judges could come to a decision. Two minutes later they called me back in.

“It wasn’t hard for us to reach an agreement. In view of your exemplary conduct, your excellent grades, and the paper you defended today, our verdict is unanimous in favor of graduation, with honorable mention. Congratulations!”

When I told my family, they wept for joy.

I testify that when Heavenly Father commanded us to “retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and minds may be invigorated” (D&C 88:124), He did so with an eye to blessing us. I am grateful to Him for allowing the gospel to bring us happiness in all the areas of our lives. ■