



## SUNDAY LESSONS

This Month's Topic:  
**Building the Kingdom  
of God in the  
Latter Days**

# The NEW GUY

*I was the only active priest in my new ward.  
How was I going to get other priests to church?*

**By Matthew Flitton**

Church Magazines

When my family moved a few months after I turned 18, I found myself in a new ward and facing a challenge. Within two weeks of my moving in, almost all of the priests were made elders. I was also called to be the first assistant in the priests quorum.

In giving me this calling, the bishop explained that there were a lot of priests on the roll, but almost no one showed up. We had a lot of work to do to encourage people to attend.

"Just invite people to come," he said.

Only one other priest came to church, a guy named Ryan, who showed up a couple times each month. I decided to go knock on doors of our less-active quorum members and invite them to our activities. I was nervous, afraid that they'd get upset at me for inviting them to church. I figured they weren't coming because they didn't like church. But I also figured it was good practice for my upcoming mission to try to invite, so I gritted my teeth and started

calling the other priests or stopping by their houses. I invited them to firesides, to activities, to church.

What surprised me was that some actually responded and came. We eventually had a group of four priests who started coming on a regular basis. It wasn't that they didn't like church—they had just been waiting for an invitation to come. They were just as nervous about a new situation—attending church—as I had been.

Some activities were more successful than others. Everyone showed up for volleyball, but I struggled to get people to attend other activities.

Youth conference that year was especially rewarding as I watched some of these young men stand up and bear their testimonies. I felt like I had made a difference in their lives.

One of the differences I saw was that Ryan was attending church every week and we had become good friends.

Ryan and I both received the Melchizedek Priesthood about six months after I moved in. I had chosen to wait until after my mission to attend college so I could work to save for my mission. Ryan was already established in a trade, and he decided not to go to college either. After work we often hung out together.

Once, we stayed up most of the night trying to get through the book of Alma as Ryan read the Book of Mormon for the first time. It was exhausting but spiritually energizing. It was also great to see the changes



ILLUSTRATIONS BY GREG NEWBOLD



Ryan was making in his life. He gave up old habits, created better ones, and changed some of his friends so he could be with people who shared his standards.

I had been looking forward to my mission since I had started going to church a few years before. Ryan wasn't sure if he would go. While hanging out, we discussed my mission and my excitement to serve. As I encouraged him and answered gospel questions, I gained more confidence in my own abilities to serve as a missionary. Ryan was old enough to go but struggled with his decision.

"I wasn't sure if my testimony was strong enough, even though I felt

good about the Church at the time," he said. "I did want to go, but it was really difficult to leave family."

The day finally came when I could start filling out my mission papers. When I told Ryan, he surprised me by saying he had decided to serve as well. Our mission calls arrived on the same night. Ryan left to serve in Canada a month before I started my mission in France.

When I came home two years later, I looked up all the priests I

had worked with. It saddened me to learn that some had stopped going to church shortly after I left, but I was happy to see Ryan again. He had served an honorable mission, and just as with Alma and the sons of Mosiah, I had more joy to see that he was still my brother in the Lord (see Alma 17:2). ■

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