

Succeeding as a New Convert

BY GAYLE S. ILIFF

As we reach out to others in friendship, engage in service, and feast upon the scriptures, our confidence will wax strong.

The winter morning that I first attended The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was unusually bright and crisp. As I approached the meetinghouse, I had no idea how joining the Church would change my life. Fortunately, there are things converts like me can do to become strong in the gospel. We need to cultivate friendships, serve in the Church, and “feast upon the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3).

Cultivating Friendships

All members of the Church, especially new converts, need friends to help them along. Here are some ways that developing friendships can make a difference.

Members can reach out to converts. Prior to my baptism, a kind sister walked from the farthest end of the meetinghouse simply because she wanted to meet me. I was touched that she went out of her way to help me feel so valued. Many others acted similarly. As converts realize how much the members of the Church love them, their own hearts will be filled with love.

Teachers in Church classes care about us too. My Gospel Essentials teacher was a great source of inspiration to me. Often I felt as though the Savior were speaking directly to me through these lessons, uplifting me and encouraging me to press forward.

Likewise, home and visiting teachers watch over and bless the members of the Church. Welcome them into your



CARING FOR CONVERTS

“Every [convert] needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with ‘the good word of God’” (Moroni 6:4).

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “Converts and Young Men,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 47.



home, and express gratitude to them and to the Lord for their service. As Elder David B. Haight (1906–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

taught, “Gratitude . . . can bless our hearts and our minds and our souls to where we’d like to continue to carry on and do those things that we are asked to do.”¹

Converts will be blessed when they, too, reach out to others. One day I bought a greeting card with a picture of a giant eyeball on its cover. Inside it said, “Thanks for keeping an eye on me!” I sent the card to a sister in the ward who had been friendly to me. As I did so, I felt a warm feeling of Christian love for her.

Finally, we need to strengthen our relationships with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. This will happen as we serve others, express gratitude, and pray. The Spirit will confirm that we are worthy of the great sacrifice the Savior made for us.

Serving in the Church

Usually at some point soon after baptism, new members will be asked to take on a greater role in serving in their ward or branch. The bishop or branch president will issue a calling. This can be a difficult time for some.

When I accepted the first calling I received—Relief Society secretary—I wondered, “How could I be given such an important responsibility?” President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, explained how: “There will be times when you will feel overwhelmed. One of the ways you will be attacked is with the feeling that you are inadequate. . . . But you have access to more than your natural capacities, and you do not work alone.”²

Sometime later, the Relief Society president commented that the suggestions I had made at a presidency meeting showed that I was inspired. Confused, I replied, “I am?”

She kindly reassured me that I was responding to the Spirit. Recognizing the hand of God guiding the work we do is not

easy at first, but as we keep the commandments and work diligently, we will recognize that He magnifies those whom He calls.

Feasting upon the Words of Christ

Perhaps the best way to discover that the Lord loves us and will sustain us is through studying the scriptures. The scriptures teach that the Lord invites “all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him” (2 Nephi 26:33).

Some new members might marvel at the knowledge and testimony of others. But remember, the Lord’s way of teaching is “line upon line, precept upon precept” (2 Nephi 28:30). Each of us has to learn as we go. Even Jesus “received not of the fulness at the first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness; and thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fulness at the first” (D&C 93:13–14).

That knowledge has deepened my reverence and respect for Him. He truly knows the pain, temptation, adversity, and loneliness I have experienced (see Alma 7:11). I can turn to Him with complete confidence. The scriptures teach that the Savior’s love, understanding, and compassion for us, wherever we may be, are perfect and boundless.

As we reach out to others in friendship, engage in service, and feast upon the scriptures, our confidence will wax strong and we will become the faithful Latter-day Saints that we desire to be. ■

NOTES

1. David B. Haight, “Were There Not 10 Cleansed?” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 26.
2. Henry B. Eyring, “Rise to Your Call,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 76.