

Staying Strong in France

By Mindy Anne Selu
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Training to be a helicopter pilot isn't an opportunity that most people get. But when Pierre O., 24, decided to enlist in the French Army, he got just that. Now in his second year of the four-year training, Pierre is doing his best to live as an example of the believers, despite his environment.

Stationed about an hour and a half outside of Bordeaux, in southwestern France, Pierre is far from his friends, family, and hometown of Rennes. The nearest meetinghouse is an hour away, meaning that he doesn't get to interact much with members during the week. "It's not easy to be a member of the Church in the army," Pierre says, "because there are a lot of temptations and it's really just two opposite worlds. You're judged a lot in the army not based on what you do but on who you are." Pierre wants those around him to see that he doesn't drink alcohol, smoke, view

pornography, or party—commonplace activities in the army—because of who he is: a member of the Church. While he struggles to earn the respect of those around him, prayer and scripture study help keep his testimony strong. "I try to not go to sleep without having read my scriptures first," he explains, "and I try to pray whenever I can."

"Reading the scriptures and praying helped me a lot during all of my schooling to know that God exists, that He is there—without really understanding the rest of the gospel," Pierre explains. "I just knew that God was there, and so that helped me to stay on the right path."

That foundation of scripture study sustained Pierre throughout all his schooling and even now through his army training. Before enlisting, Pierre served a mission in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, where his testimony and understanding of the gospel were

As a member of the Church in the French Army, Pierre relies on prayer and scripture study to be an example of his faith.

solidified. "The scriptures are one of the most tangible ways Heavenly Father answers us," he says.

Through his daily prayer and scripture study, Pierre is able not only to receive inspiration but also to be an example to those in his army unit. While he and his classmates may not have much in common besides their national pride, Pierre knows that by following the teachings of the scriptures, he will be someone they can respect because of and not in spite of his beliefs. ■

MORE ABOUT PIERRE***What foods do you like to eat?***

I like the Breton galette (a waffle-like dish from western France). I also like bread, cheese, sausage, and pâté.

What do you do in your spare time?

I like to go out with my friends. Sometimes we just go out to eat and talk. I like to go shopping with my wife or go to the movies. I also like to read and play sports. I especially like running and swimming.

What's dating like in France?

It's complicated to go out with a girl just as friends, unless the girl knows how people date in the United States: going out together to get to know each other and just become friends. Church leaders try to have lots of single-adult activities because that allows us to meet people and have one massive group date—that's how my wife and I met.

THE CHURCH IN FRANCE

37,812 Latter-day Saints

107 wards and branches

67 family history centers

2 missions

1 temple (under construction)

FRANCE: BY THE NUMBERS

66 million people (estimate as of 2015)

40,000 châteaux (medieval castles, manors, palaces)

80 million tourists visit France each year—the most visited country in the world

