

HELP ME!

On my second night of study abroad in St. Petersburg, Russia, I met with my friends downtown to play American football. After the game I decided to experiment with taking the bus home. I had never taken the bus in Russia, but my host mother had told me that bus 7 or bus 1 would take me home. So when bus 7 arrived, I climbed aboard.

As we drove along, I looked at the shops and watched the people mingling on the sidewalk. Slowly, the area began to grow unfamiliar. I checked my watch and realized that I had been riding for 30 minutes.

Suddenly the bus stopped, the lights went out, and everyone got off. Trying not to panic, I looked around for assistance. I knew that if I could

locate the metro, I could arrive home safely. I spotted a young couple down the street and walked toward them.

“I am lost,” I said. “Do you know where the metro is?”

“The metro is very far from here,” the man said. “But there is a bus stop over there. Get on bus 5, and it will take you to the metro.”

I thanked him and walked quickly down the street. When a bus approached the stop, however, it was not a number 5 but a number 1. I thought back to my host mother’s words: “Get on bus 7 or bus 1, and it will take you home.”

I reluctantly got on, but once again we drove and drove. The passengers exited one by one until I was the only one left.

I t was getting late, and if I couldn’t find the metro before it closed, I would have to spend the night on the streets of St. Petersburg.

Finally, the bus pulled to the side of the road.

“You must get off,” the driver said. “This is the last stop.”

My whole body shook as I struggled to breathe and hold back tears. It was getting late, and if I couldn’t find the metro before it closed, I would have to spend the night on the streets of St. Petersburg.

“Help me, Father in Heaven,” I prayed quietly and began walking. Then, breaking into a run, I started waving at passing taxis. None stopped.

I soon came to another bus stop, which was crowded with people. The lights of an approaching bus—a number 7—shone down on us. I hesitated. Buses had only gotten me lost, but a strong force from behind pushed me up the steps and into the bus. I sat down heavily in a seat, glancing at my watch. It was 11:50 p.m. The metro would close in 10 minutes.

I closed my eyes, whispering again, “Help me.” When I opened my eyes, I saw the bright lights of a metro station as the bus came to a stop. I ran off the bus and into the metro to catch the last train of the night.

As I sat down, I thought of how our Father in Heaven numbers His sparrows (see Matthew 10:29–31), and I silently thanked Him. I knew on that dark night in that vast city, He had led me home. ■

Tiffany Lewis, Texas, USA





I was about to accept their invitation, but then I remembered what I had been taught in seminary about not going to places where the Holy Ghost would not go.

INVITATION TO DISASTER

Shortly after I began my mandatory service in the Brazilian army, I was selected as corporal over a dozen men. Unfortunately, my 12 young soldiers seemed to have the lowest standards in the barracks. I came to discover that they were or had been involved in drugs, theft, sexual immorality, and other serious sins.

Rather than allow myself to be influenced by their low standards, I took advantage of every opportunity I had to share the gospel with them. For example, during breaks or when we were cleaning rifles together, I talked to them about the gospel. I thought they would make fun of my standards and ridicule me, but they listened and came to treat me with respect. However, despite my efforts to teach them gospel doctrines, they didn't change their attitudes or behavior.

Our time in the army finally ended, and on our last day as soldiers, the men invited me to celebrate with them at a small ranch. "Corporal, you have to come to our party," one of them said to me. "You aren't going to insult us by not showing up, are you?"

I was about to accept the invitation so as not to insult them. But the thought came to me that their party standards would be contrary to my Latter-day Saint standards. I remembered what I had been taught in seminary about not going to places where the Holy Ghost would not go. Despite their resentment, I told the group that I wouldn't be attending. I said good-bye and headed home.

Months passed before I again saw one of the soldiers from that group. What he told me made me grateful that I had skipped their farewell

celebration, which featured lots of alcohol. While under the influence, the men had begun throwing alcohol on each other. Then, as a joke, one of them threw a match on his buddy, who was so badly burned that he died a few days later. As a result, all of the participants at that party faced criminal charges related to his death.

Had I attended the party—even without drinking—I would have been in the same predicament. That incident would have followed me and could have hindered my future. I mourned for the young man who had died, but I was grateful that I had followed the promptings of the Spirit and the counsel of Church leaders. ■
Cesar A. Minutti, Brazil



God's commandments are gifts to us, and if we keep them, they will lead us back to Him.

I CHOSE NOT TO DRINK

While traveling to a youth conference in Stuttgart, Germany, I had the opportunity to speak with an elderly woman about the temple and about my faith in the restored gospel. She was acquainted with the Church and had a fairly good idea of some gospel doctrines.

During our conversation, however, the woman said something that made me sad. When she was introduced to the Church approximately 40 years before by a Latter-day Saint friend, something her friend had said still stood out to her. “I’m *not allowed*

to drink,” her friend had said. The woman then added that she knew of a few Latter-day Saints who did drink “now and then.”

Contrary to what this woman thought, the gospel is not forced upon anyone. We all have the right to make our own decisions. Heavenly Father gave us the Word of Wisdom to help us keep our bodies holy, but each of us must choose whether to live His law of health because He also gave us our moral agency.

I decided several years ago when I was baptized that I would follow

Jesus Christ.

For that reason, I don’t drink alcohol. God’s commandments are gifts to us, and if we keep them, they will lead us back to Him.

From this simple encounter, I was reminded that as members of the Lord’s Church, we are always examples to others. We choose, however, what that example will be. ■

Torsten König, Germany

TURN OFF THE TV!

The Saturday night following the Thanksgiving holiday, I found myself alone in my off-campus apartment. I didn't have much to do, so I flipped through the channels on the TV until I came across a movie that had just started.

It didn't take more than a few minutes for me to realize that the movie was inappropriate. For a minute I thought, "What's the big deal? No one is around. After all, it's on TV, so all of the worst parts must be edited out."

The Spirit, however, prompted me to turn off the TV. I decided to read a book instead.

About half an hour later I heard a knock at the door. It was a member of my elders quorum, who told me that one of the young women he home taught was sick and needed a blessing. He had spent the past 30 minutes calling around and knocking on doors, trying to find someone who was home and able to help him. Finally, he had come to my door. I agreed to help and quickly changed into Sunday dress.

While we were walking to her apartment, I asked him how ill she was. All he knew was that he had received an urgent call from the young woman's roommate, requesting that he come right away.

When we arrived at the apartment, it was apparent that she was not well.

She had a high fever and looked pale. Her roommate said she had been sick for several hours, was weak, and was unable to eat because of an upset stomach.

I had assumed that I would anoint her with oil, but the brother from my elders quorum asked me to give the blessing instead. I felt inadequate and was not sure what I would say. I had not had time to mentally prepare to give a blessing, but I silently prayed that God would direct my words.

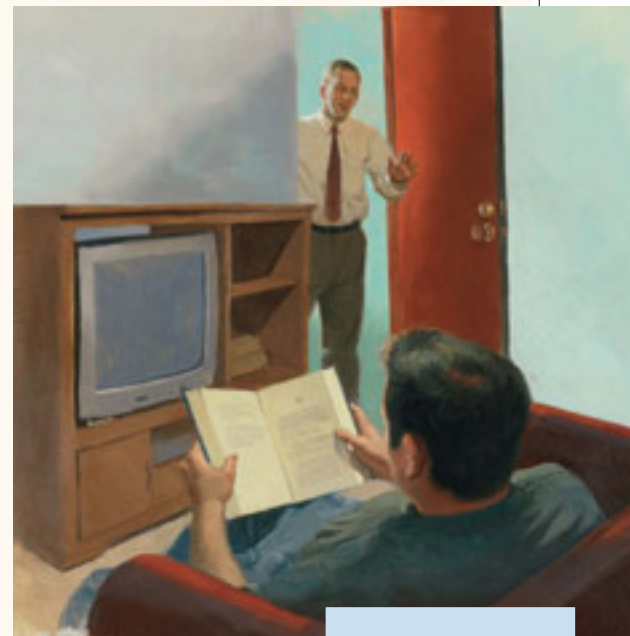
After the anointing, I addressed the young woman by name and pronounced the blessing. I found myself making promises of restored health and providing words of comfort that were not my own. I then closed the blessing. As we opened our eyes, I saw a huge smile on the young woman's face, and she thanked us for the blessing. She soon recovered and was able to return to her studies and finish the semester.

As I reflect on that experience, I feel great gratitude for the opportunity to hold the priesthood. The experience lasted only about 10 minutes, and I am sure the ill young woman has since forgotten about it. But it has had a lasting impact on me.

I am grateful for the whisperings

of the Spirit, which prompted me to avoid temptation and to remain spiritually ready. Additionally, I am grateful the Spirit directed the brother from my elders quorum to my apartment.

Most of all, I am grateful for a kind and merciful Heavenly Father, who strengthened me in my inadequacies, guiding my words in the blessing and



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then fulfilling the words He had me speak. I know that as we remain worthy, we will have the Spirit to guide our path so that we can be ready to serve those around us. ■

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