

SERVING A STRANGER

By Yong Gil Park

As my departure from Korea came closer, I was worried. Who would take care of my aunt after I left?

My mom never accepted the gospel in her earthly journey, even though I had prayed for her and felt she would accept it someday. She was a strong woman who sacrificed throughout her life to support our family after the Korean War. On the one-year anniversary of my mom's death, my wife and I went to the Los Angeles California Temple to perform her baptism and confirmation. The strong Spirit in the room confirmed to me that my mom gladly accepted the gospel and the ordinances.

Just before my mom passed away, she asked me to take care of her younger sister, who was in a hospital in Korea. My family and I lived in California, USA, so unfortunately there seemed to be no way to fulfill my mom's compassionate last wish. Then my job unexpectedly relocated me to South Korea, and I had to be separated from my family for a year. Although I was concerned about living far from my family, I also anticipated visiting my aunt and my dad, who was in a Korean hospital suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

I asked Heavenly Father for divine help in living away from my family. As I thought about the time I would spend in Korea, I resolved to visit my

dad, my aunt, and the temple weekly as well as to pray for my family daily.

Once I was in Korea, the bishop of my new ward called me to be the Young Men president and the Gospel Doctrine teacher. My ward and the hospitals where my dad and aunt stayed were far from each other, and I had a very demanding job; but Heavenly Father blessed me with strength and stamina to magnify my callings and to keep my resolutions.

Soon after I started visiting my aunt, I discovered she rarely had any visitors. I decided to pick her up and have her stay with me on the weekends at my hotel, which had an extra room. However, I had a problem: should I take her with me to church on Sunday? I thought she would neither be interested in nor understand the meetings, and she would have to wait for hours after church for me to be done with meetings and other duties. But for some reason I felt I should take her.

That Sunday I took her with me, and, as expected, she had to wait for me afterward. After my meetings, I took her back to the hotel to eat. I noticed that she held a bag. I asked her about it, and she said a sister had given her some snacks.

Whenever I had duties after church,

this sister—who did not know my aunt—always offered my aunt snacks. One week during my Sunday School lesson, a familiar voice volunteered to read a scripture. I had never imagined my aunt would volunteer, but a kind sister sitting next to my aunt had prompted her to read for the class. Although my aunt was not good at socializing because of her time isolated in the hospital, all the members kindly greeted and chatted with her.

Every Sunday evening I would take her back to the hospital and promise to pick her up the next weekend, which always brought a happy smile to her face.

One day a friend of mine shared a concern that my aunt might have a hard time when my visits suddenly stopped when I left Korea. As my scheduled departure from Korea came closer, I felt mixed emotions—happy to be soon reunited with my family but distressed and sad about leaving my aunt alone.

Finally, I explained to my aunt that I would not be able to visit her as often. She paused a moment, obviously disappointed. Then she tried to compose herself and asked if I could visit her again in a year. I cried and desperately asked Heavenly Father to help this lady.

On my last Sunday in Korea, the



bishop asked if ward members could pick up my aunt on Sundays to bring her to church. He said that a number of members were willing to visit her on a regular basis—so many that they would have to organize and take turns. I could not believe his offer! This was the unexpected answer to my desperate prayers.

Since the members lived far away from my aunt's hospital, I offered to leave some money for them to cover the travel expenses, but the members refused to take my money. They told me they would take turns visiting once a month, but I found out later that they actually visited every week. One faithful sister picks up my aunt every Friday to attend institute and have lunch. She even took her to a beauty shop for a haircut. Another sister, a single mother of two teenage children,

volunteered to pick her up every Sunday morning. She cooks for my aunt, takes her for a walk, and listens to music with her. Most importantly, she tries to be a friend, and my aunt has finally opened up and comfortably chats with her and other members. Every Sunday evening the bishop picks up my aunt from a member's home after his long day of Church meetings and other duties to take her back to the hospital. Every Thursday he sends a kind email to me to report their heavenly service for my aunt.

I believe that my mom saw the actions of faithful Latter-day Saints serving her younger sister. And now I know, more clearly than ever, why we call our fellow Church members "brothers" and "sisters." ■

The author lives in California, USA.



WELCOME ALL

"Reach out to anyone who appears at the doors of your Church buildings. Welcome them with gratitude and with-

out prejudice. If people you do not know walk into one of your meetings, greet them warmly and invite them to sit with you. Please make the first move to help them feel welcome and loved, rather than waiting for them to come to you.

"After your initial welcome, consider ways you can continue to minister to them."

Bishop Gérald Caussé, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, "Ye Are No More Strangers," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 51.