

THE STRANGER'S SMILE

I normally would have avoided him—a worn-down man playing a game of cards at a table in the play area of a local fast-food restaurant. He had a soft smile on his sad countenance as he watched the children play. “He must be warming himself from the cold,” I thought as I passed his table to throw away my daughter’s half-eaten meal. As I noticed his table, bare of any food wrappers or paper cups, the still, small voice whispered to me, “Buy him some food.”

I returned to my table with some cash still in my pocket. “I’ll embarrass him,” I told myself. Then a feeling of peace came, and the Spirit’s sweet whispering stilled me: “Buy him some food.”

I didn’t tell my children what I was doing; I just picked up some trash and went to throw it away so I could get near the man’s table without letting my friend who I was eating with know.

I leaned in and asked, “Can I buy you some lunch?”

He looked startled and softly replied, “If you want to.”

I pulled out the small amount of cash I had left—just enough for a meal and a drink—and gave it to the man. I returned to my seat, undiscovered by the busy moms around me, and watched the man get up to buy his meal.

As I loaded my children into the car to go home, I looked through the window and saw the man carrying a tray of food back to his empty table. On his once-solemn face was a smile.

The winter breeze blowing against my face didn’t feel quite so cold. I basked in the warm, joyful Spirit that filled me from my boots to my frozen ponytail. I remembered the teaching of the Savior:

“For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink . . .

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? . . .

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:35, 37, 40).

I am thankful for the smile of a stranger that helped me find the courage to do what is right. ■

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HELPING MIRTA RETURN

I was called to serve as a counselor in the Relief Society in my family's new ward. During our presidency meetings, we would go over a list of names of Relief Society sisters in our ward and consider how to help them and their families.

I was drawn to a sister in the ward named Mirta. She had been a member of the Church for many years, but for some reason, Mirta had not been attending for several years.

I noticed that her husband was the elders quorum president but that their children, who were members, did not attend church either. Each Sunday I would see her husband attend alone.

I felt that we needed to help this

family return to church together and enjoy the blessings that the Lord wanted to give them. During the following presidency meetings, I shared my hopes of helping Mirta return to church. We planned activities in which we could include her in a special way, and we identified a few assignments we could give her.

When we visited her, she accepted each one of the assignments and afterward fulfilled them perfectly. We noted that she would eagerly wait to be picked up by one of us for Relief Society activities.

When we organized the visiting teaching companionships as a presidency, I asked the others to consider

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the possibility of Mirta and I becoming companions. Each month, without fail, Mirta and I would go visiting teaching. Every time we went out to visit the sisters was an opportunity to talk and get to know each other more.

Each time I invited her to attend church, she would merely say, "When I feel like I'm ready, I'll go." I didn't understand, but I respected her decision. Eventually her answers became, "Maybe I'll go on Sunday."

I would wait for her anxiously every Sunday. She never came, but I continued to keep her in my prayers. A sudden move caused my family to return to where we had previously lived, and I didn't have a chance to say good-bye to Mirta. When we left the ward, she still had not returned to church.

Some months later I was told that Mirta had returned to church and was a counselor in the Relief Society.

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught, "You may never know how much good you accomplish. Someone's life will be blessed by your effort" ("To the Women of the Church," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 115).

Many times the results are not what one expects and don't come when anticipated. Let us not cease to labor; this is the Lord's work, and we are His instruments chosen to change the lives of many people. ■

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