

A Testimony of Prophets



The missionaries were helping build a chapel. I was so impressed with them that I introduced them to my parents.

BY ELDER CLAUDIO R. M. COSTA
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

When I was 12, I introduced the missionaries to my family. I had met them on the street, and they were friendly to me. They were helping the Church build a chapel in my city in Brazil,

and they invited me to help them, which I began to do in my free time. I had never heard of young men who would choose to spend their time building a church.

I was so impressed with them that I decided to introduce them to my parents, and we invited them to come to our home.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL MANN



That night I began to read the history of Joseph Smith, and I prayed about each paragraph.

The missionaries gave our family the first discussion. We hadn't ever smoked, so our family was already keeping that part of the Word of Wisdom, and we had family home evening every night in our home. We didn't call it family home evening, but that's what we were doing. We were Catholics, and we attended our church regularly, so my father told them we felt comfortable with our religion.

The missionaries left, but they wrote about our family in the missionaries' area book that remained in the missionary apartment, including their impression that we would join the Church.

Learning about Eternal Families

Ten years later I was living in another city when new missionaries arrived in the area where my family lived. They didn't have a single person to teach and decided to look

in the area book. They found the name of my parents and decided to visit. The missionaries prayed before they went, and the Lord inspired them. Despite being very faithful in his religion, my father had a question. He couldn't believe that after death his wife would not still be his wife. He really felt that family ties needed to continue after death. He had asked ministers from different churches about this, and everybody explained to him, "No, after death your wife will be like your sister, and your son will be like your brother."

When these missionaries knocked on my parents' door, my father opened it and told them he had heard their message previously and was not interested. But the missionaries said, "We have another message for you. Do you know that your family can be together forever?" Those words inspired him. My

father invited them to come in and teach him. Guided by the Spirit, the missionaries told my family about eternal marriage and eternal families. With this introduction to the gospel, my family continued to meet with the missionaries until they gained a testimony and decided to be baptized and confirmed.

Gaining My Testimony

Five years later—I was 27 by then—I came back to my father’s home for a time. My father was ward mission leader, and the sister missionaries were teaching someone else in my home. I overheard them teaching about the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith, and I decided to pray about it. It made sense in my mind that if Joseph Smith was a prophet, then the Book of Mormon is true and the Church is true.

That night I began to read the history of Joseph Smith and of his vision in the Sacred Grove. Then I stopped, and I prayed to the Lord. I spent the whole night in this manner, reading and praying about each paragraph. It took me 14 hours. Something happened to me when I began to ponder. It seemed that I was in the grove with Joseph. It was a vivid and real experience. It seemed I could see what happened. When I finished the prayer the next morning, I *knew* Joseph Smith was a prophet.

I went immediately to find the missionaries. At noon, when the sister missionaries came home for lunch, I was



I know Joseph Smith was a prophet. And I know that President Spencer W. Kimball, the prophet at the time I joined the Church, was also a prophet.

sitting in front of their door waiting for them. I asked them to teach me the discussions. After they taught me the seven discussions in a short period of time, I was baptized and confirmed into the Church.

Following the Prophet

About a month after I joined the Church, I met my wife, Magareth, and one year later we got married. While we were dating, I told her that because I knew Joseph Smith was a prophet, I desired to build our family upon the words and teachings of the prophets. For example, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) was the prophet at that time, and he counseled Church members to stay out of debt. In close to 29 years of marriage, my wife and I have never paid one penny of interest. Never.

Since gaining a testimony of Joseph Smith, I have paid attention to every single word of the First Presidency and of the Twelve Apostles, and I put into practice what they teach. Because I know Joseph Smith was a prophet, it has never been difficult for me to follow the Brethren. They can ask me to do anything, and I will do it because I know they are prophets, seers, and revelators.

If you work to have a testimony of the prophets, you will be stronger. That is one of the keys to happiness. When you hear the prophets and do what they counsel you to do, you will be happy being obedient to them. ■