



HERE FOR A REASON

When I reached my teenage years, people started calling me “ugly” and “fat” at school. My confidence and feelings of self-worth were very low. I doubted the Church, Heavenly Father, and the whole plan of salvation. I didn’t want to go to church, Mutual, or firesides. I felt depressed and unworthy.

My mom, wanting me to try and make friends, helped me attend a youth camp when I turned 14. During the first session of scripture study there, I had a prompting to start reading the Book of Mormon. As soon as I read the first few

words, I felt peace. The Holy Ghost was with me once again.

However, some of my negative feelings still remained. I still felt like I wasn’t worth anything. Then I suddenly remembered a story my mom had told me. When I was three years old, my mom was woken up in the middle of the night by the Spirit whispering, “Go to Anna.” She ignored it and tried to go to sleep. Again she heard it, and again she ignored it. The third time it was even louder, so my mom got up and went into my room. She found me turning blue and having some form of a fit, like

a seizure. She called an ambulance, and I was quickly sent to the hospital. The doctors took care of me and told my mom that if I had been left a little longer, I might not have survived.

When I think I have no worth or purpose on earth, I reflect on this story and the peace I felt from the Holy Ghost, and I realize that I’m worth so much to my Heavenly Father. Even though I don’t understand it all yet, I know that I have an important mission on earth. I am a daughter of God, and He truly loves me.

Anna H., England

WHY I'LL SERVE

As I become old enough to serve a mission, the idea of spending two years away from home as a missionary seems daunting. My entire life, I've heard mission stories from my family and ward members about how missions are incredible, testimony-building, life-defining experiences. I have no doubt that this is true, but serving a mission has always seemed far away. Now that it's so close, the reality of it has sunk in.

I know that the Lord expects me and all able-bodied young men to serve missions. I know it is a duty and a commandment, but I wanted to learn more about why I needed to serve. I was struck by President Thomas S. Monson's saying that a mission is an "obligation the Lord expects of us who have been given so very much" (*"As We Meet Together Again,"* Oct. 2010 general conference). With blessings comes responsibility, and serving a mission is one way that I can show gratitude to God for all that He has blessed me with—the gospel, my family and friends, an education, the people I'll serve, and much more.

Even though I know this is true, I sometimes still have fears about leaving. But I just try to remember that God wants me to serve a mission, and He will help support me in the decision to serve. He will not leave me to do it alone and will be there every step of the way (see John 14:18).

David W., Utah, USA

NOT YOUR AVERAGE CLASS GIFT

At my school, each class provides Christmas presents for a different child who wouldn't have presents otherwise. The girl my class was assigned to help had asked for very little: just a doll and a book. At first we grudgingly all brought in a cheap book or discounted doll and put it in a box. But then we soon brought in more and more, realizing how good it felt to give. We were so excited each day to bring in things for this little girl that we would laugh with joy. Over the weeks we collected so many presents that they couldn't fit in the box—the gifts were literally overflowing.

Instead of thinking about what we were getting for Christmas, we thought about the little girl's face on Christmas morning, and it always made us smile and feel happy. It made us realize how the spirit of Christmas is about giving, not getting. And that made me think of what our Heavenly Father gave us that wonderful night: a Savior. He gave us a light, an example, and someone we can always trust. It made me realize how much Heavenly Father loves us—so much that He gave us a Savior, the Holy Ghost, our families, and our friends. I'm so grateful for that little girl and the lessons she taught me.

That Christmas, the best gift for me was the giving.

Emma S., North Carolina, USA

