

The Message Tasted

I wasn't really looking for God, but when two young men asked if they could share a message with me, I decided to listen.

By Anthony X. Diaz

Although I was baptized as an infant in one church and attended another on and off during my childhood, religion was never a huge part of my life. As I grew older, my family moved a lot, and we stopped attending worship services. I believed in God, but I did not think about Him or religion very often.

That all changed in 2006, when I was 14. My uncle Billy died; he was only in his mid-30s. His premature death made me realize how much I loved him and caused me to start asking questions internally. Where did he go when he died? Did he continue to live and have a future? What would become of his children and other family members left behind? What did his life mean? What did *my* life mean?

These thoughts ran through my mind for the next several months. One evening in September 2007, my mother, my three younger siblings, and I were leaving a deli in my hometown of Haverhill, Massachusetts, USA, and stopped to sit on a bench.

I remember reading in Alma 32 about the seed of faith developing and tasting good. That description was exactly how the Book of Mormon seemed to me.

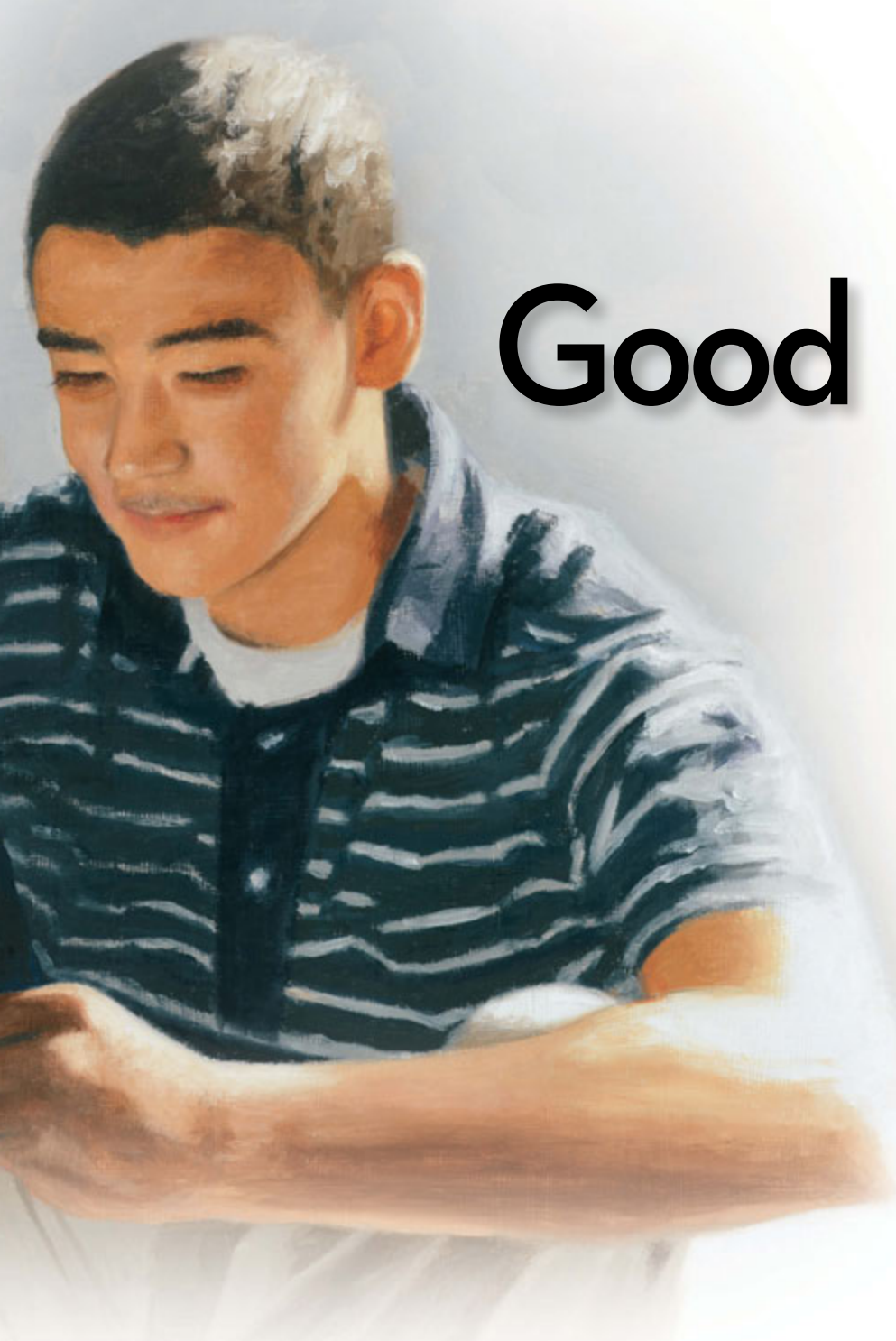
Two young men in black suits, white shirts, and ties approached us. One of them said, "I know it may seem a little bit awkward to talk to two people you don't know, but could we share a message with you?"

We agreed. I knew they were going to talk to us about religion, and I was impressed that they didn't just thrust a card or pamphlet at us and

walk off. Rather, these young men genuinely seemed interested in us and excited about their message. At the conclusion of their message, they asked if they could visit our family. My mother agreed and set up a time, so I have her to thank for what became a great change for good in my life.

We started learning the gospel.





Good



YOUR CONVERSION

“You will know that the gospel is being written in your heart, that your conversion is happening, as the word of the Lord from His prophets, past and present, feels more and more delicious to your soul.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “When Thou Art Converted,” *Ensign*, May 2004, 12.

exactly how the Book of Mormon seemed to me. What I was reading and what the missionaries were teaching me rang true, felt right, and tasted good.

My mom teased me about what she called my “hermit crab stage” because I would retreat to my bedroom and spend several hours reading the Book of Mormon. Although I didn’t recognize my feelings as the Holy Ghost at that time, I felt that this path was right.

When the missionaries asked me to be baptized, they encouraged me to pray about the decision. When I prayed to know if joining The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was what I was supposed to do, I received a very direct answer, to the point that it shocked me. The direction was clear: go forward with baptism.

I remember vividly the day I was baptized—December 15, 2007. As I stood in the cold water with Elder Kelsey and he raised his hand to the square, the Spirit just filled me up; it seemed to take over my whole frame.

After a while Mom became busy with different things and didn’t continue to meet with the missionaries, but I did.

I connected easily with Elder Kelsey and Elder Hancock. Perhaps part of the reason was that they weren’t that much older than I was. I felt great love from them and for them. Soon I felt that same love from ward members and from

other youth in my stake.

The missionaries taught me the plan of salvation, which answered the questions I had about my uncle and about my own purpose in life. The elders also introduced me to the Book of Mormon. I remember reading in Alma 32 about the seed of faith developing and tasting good (see verse 28). That description was

ILLUSTRATION BY ROB WILSON

I could say that I was also grinning from ear to ear, but that description doesn't even come close to describing what I felt.

After my baptism I continued to feel the Spirit. I *felt* sanctified. I *knew* that my sins had been remitted. I felt the approval of Heavenly Father that this was, indeed, the path I was supposed to take.

Occasionally, when little doubts pop up, I go back to that experience and remember how I felt that day. Remembering what I felt then helps me dispel any doubt I may encounter.

Even though we don't reenter the waters of baptism to have those powerful feelings again, we can remember that feeling when we renew our covenants through repentance and the sacrament. Each time I repent, I can find that feeling again—one of being cleansed and of being loved.

Feeling that love helps me identify with what Joseph Smith taught: "A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race."¹ Knowing the worth of a soul helps me be excited about opportunities to go teaching with the missionaries in my area. I also look forward to the day when I can serve a full-time mission and share how happy the gospel of Jesus Christ has made me. **NE**

NOTE

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 330–31.



PRODIGAL SON, BY LIZ LEMON SWINDLE, FOUNDATION ARTS, MAY NOT BE COPIED

KEEP LIVING THE GOSPEL

Although Anthony is grateful for the powerful spiritual experiences he had when he joined the Church, he knows that the light of one pivotal experience isn't enough to live on. "We have to keep our testimony burning," he says. "And we know the ways to do that. Read the scriptures. Go to church. That kind of thing."

Anthony notes that he can feel a difference when he is consistent with these practices and when he is not. And he has discovered ways to keep the pattern of gospel living "fresh."

"I remember studying in the Gospel Principles class the story of the prodigal son (see Luke 15:11–32). As I read about the young man who left his father's home, I thought, 'I could have been that son.' The Spirit bore a powerful witness to me that like that son, I could also return to my Father. The feeling was as though Heavenly Father was saying, 'I love you.' It was as powerful a feeling as I felt on my baptism day."

He has also found that it's important to ask questions in his prayers and scripture study. "When I read the scriptures," he says, "I look for answers to things I am thinking about or wondering. I ask Heavenly Father what He would have me learn from what I'm reading. I do the same thing when I go to church.

"When I ask questions, whether it's about something specific I should do in my life or about what something I'm studying means, I'm able to more easily feel the guidance of the Holy Ghost. I know Heavenly Father really is there and that He will always answer us."