



By Elder
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Of the Seventy



THE GOSPEL IS FOR EVERYONE

*I had often wondered where true happiness came from.
Then I found it in “the big box.”*

When I was 16 years old and living in Porto Alegre, Brazil, my older brother had a friend who often visited our home. One day this friend told us that he had found a church and that he liked its members’ way of living.

He told us a little bit about his experience with joining The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but he wasn’t sure that my brother and I were “church material.” He knew that our lifestyle included smoking and drinking and worldly pursuits, and he thought that the standards of the Church would be too much for my brother and me to embrace, that the change would be too drastic for us to handle.

Our sister, however, didn’t smoke or drink. She lived a clean life and was a good, kind girl. Because of these traits, our friend thought that she might be interested in what Latter-day Saints stood for, so he asked our mother if she could attend a Church activity with him.

Our mother agreed but only on the condition that my brother or I go too. My brother was faster than I was and quickly said, “Not me!” So I was designated to go to the activity with my sister.



My brother’s friend wasn’t sure that my brother and I (above) were “church material.” But I was curious.

I didn’t really mind. I had been curious about the Church since I had first seen the large, square chapel across from my school. I had seen people coming and going from the church often, and I had noticed that the men wore white shirts and ties. I wondered what could be going on inside “the big box,” as I then thought of the building.

My First Activity

My sister and I arrived at the church with our friend. Inside, at the center of a large cultural hall was a small group of

people: two sister missionaries and maybe six others. They were playing a simple game and enjoying popcorn and juice. Everyone was laughing and having a good time.

“Who are these people,” I wondered, “and why are they so happy?” I knew it certainly couldn’t be because of the game they were playing or the physical environment or the treats they were sharing. Those were all so simple. The happiness seemed to be coming from inside them.

I had often wondered where true happiness came from and what I could do to find it. I thought maybe it came from exciting activities or taking exotic vacations or pursuing

all that the world has to offer. I had tried some of that, but it hadn't filled the emptiness I felt. And then I went to that meetinghouse, where these people were so happy without any of those things. It made a significant impression on me.

After the activity the missionaries stood at the exit to shake hands with everyone. When my sister got to the door, they asked her if she would be interested in knowing more about the Church. She said, "No, thanks." But I was still curious. I felt a "desire to believe" (Alma 32:27), so when they invited me to learn more about the gospel, I said yes.

My parents weren't interested in the missionary lessons or in having them conducted in our home, so I arranged to have the lessons at the meetinghouse. Over the next month I learned about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ—about what made those people in that cultural hall so happy. I learned that happiness came from doing what the Lord wanted me to do, that it came from within, and that I could be happy no matter what was going on around me. That doctrine was "delicious to me" (Alma 32:28). I wanted it in my life.

A month after that first activity, I decided to join the Church. In the years that followed, both of my parents also joined the Church.

Trials after Baptism

I faced a lot of challenges after my baptism. The changes I needed to make in my life were significant. On top of that, sometimes I felt that I had no friends in the Church, and it was tempting to go



Elder Godoy as a missionary in Brazil, 1982.

My experience with conversion—my own and that of others—has taught me that the Spirit can touch anybody, anywhere and that there is no ideal profile for a potential member of the Church. All of us need the gospel of Jesus Christ.



AN INVITATION TO SHARE GOSPEL JOY

"To young men of the Aaronic

Priesthood and to you young men who are becoming elders: I repeat what prophets have long taught—that every worthy, able young man should prepare to serve a mission. Missionary service is a priesthood duty—an obligation the Lord expects of us who have been given so very much."

President Thomas S. Monson, "As We Meet Together Again," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 5–6.

back to my old friends. My parents later divorced, which was also difficult for me. But my desire to feel joy—and my understanding that we can be happy regardless of external circumstances—helped me keep coming back to church. I knew I couldn't "lay aside [my] faith" (Alma 32:36). Over time I made friends within the Church who helped me during the transition. And as I continued to live the gospel, my testimony and my happiness grew (see Alma 32:37).

My experience with conversion—my own and that of others—has taught me that the Spirit can touch anybody, anywhere and that there is no ideal profile for a potential member of the Church. All of us need the gospel of Jesus Christ. All of us are in the process of becoming more like Him.

That realization helped me as a missionary in São Paulo, Brazil; as a mission president in Belem, Brazil; and as a member of the Church. It has helped me as my wife and I have prepared our children for missionary service. Two of our children have already served full-time missions, and before they left, I reminded them not to judge people by their appearance or their way of living. "Don't give up on someone because you find them strange," I told them. "Try to see the inside. There might be another Carlos out there."

I am grateful to recognize that we are all children of God and to know that everyone—not just a few people—is a candidate for receiving the joy that comes from living the gospel of Jesus Christ. **NE**