

# WAITING

# Faithfully

BY ELIZABETH RHODES

*When people asked about my religion, what was I going to say?*

**T**hings were going great. I finally felt I was with the program: I attended Sunday meetings regularly, read my scriptures every day, had prayer morning and night, regularly fasted, paid a full tithe. I had even shared the Book of Mormon with one of my neighbors and was well on my way to completing the Young Womanhood Recognition requirements.

Just one problem.

It nagged at me, constantly in the back of my mind. I wasn't baptized yet.

Sweet 16, here I come, and the only thing I wanted for my birthday was to be baptized. I had asked my dad several times, and we had compromised. Yes, I could go to church more often now, but I still wouldn't step into a font until I turned 18. That was that.

This was some birthday. I flopped on the couch, realizing two years had passed since I first read the Book of Mormon and wanted to be baptized. I sighed. Two years down, two to go.

The doorbell rang. A salesman, I thought.

Ready for disappointment, I turned the corner and saw two silhouettes in the frosted glass. The missionaries!

"Hi, Liz, how are you?"

"Great! How are you? Come in!" They had no idea how glad I was to see them. They stopped by sometimes to see how I was doing and were always ecstatic when I made it to sacrament meetings.

"So what's happening?" asked Elder Rizutto.

"Oh, not much," I said. "Well . . . it's my birthday."

"Really? How old are you? Eighteen?"

"I wish."

My testimony was strong, I felt the Spirit often, and I knew Heavenly Father was watching over me. But I was tired of being patient. I wanted to be a Latter-day Saint, a real member with a certificate. When people asked me about my religion, I wanted to shout from the top of the hills, "I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Can't you tell? Can't you see the miraculous changes in my life?"

"We should go, it's getting late," said the elders after a short conversation. "We just wanted to see how you were doing."

"Wait. I just have one question. What do you call people like me? When people ask me what religion I am, I'm not sure what to say."

"You haven't been baptized, so you're a nonmember," one elder said.

"How do I tell a nonmember that I'm a nonmember?" I asked. "I believe in the Church. I have a testimony."

A pause.

"Liz, you are a daughter of God," said Elder Rizutto.

"And to be a Saint is to be a follower of Christ. If you believe Jesus Christ is your Savior, Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and the Book of Mormon is true, then you are a Latter-day Saint."

"Oh," I said quietly. He was right. Why had I been so

worried about a title? Heavenly Father knew the intent of my heart. He knew I was doing my best to be a good member of the Church—even as a nonmember. The gospel was not stamped on a certificate but in my heart. I still needed to be baptized for a remission of my sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, but I knew who I was.

Two more years passed. I was baptized

and received the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands by those in authority.

Thinking back on the years of waiting, I wondered again why I had to wait so long to become an official member of the Church. Then I remembered what the missionaries told me, and I realized it didn't matter how long I had to wait or why. The baptism sealed in my heart the knowledge of what had been true all along: I am a daughter of God, a Latter-day Saint. **NE**

