



"You Have to Be

When my friends at camp asked me "What religion are you?" all I could say was, "Nothing." But that answer eventually changed.

BY LORAIN JORDAN

When I was in the sixth grade, my class went to the Marin Headlands (California) State Park for a weeklong field trip. After a long drive on the bus, we unpacked our belongings and settled in to our bunk beds. We started talking excitedly about what activities lay ahead of us over the next week. Slowly, the conversation changed, and somehow the subject of religion was brought up. One person after another briefly stated what faith they belonged to. I didn't want anyone to know that I didn't go to church and was different from them. However, they noticed that I wasn't participating in the discussion.

"What are you?" my friend asked curiously.

"I don't go to church, so I guess I'm nothing."

"You can't be nothing. You have to be something!"

I decided to ask my mom what she was, because I thought that whatever she was, I must be the same. "Mom, everyone in my group at camp goes to church except me. They told me what religions they were and when they asked me what I was, I told them that I was nothing. I'm nothing, right?"

"Yes, I guess that's right." my mom said assuredly.

SOMETHING"

"But they said I have to be something," I complained.

My mom repeated herself, "If you don't belong to a particular church or religious group, then you are no religion at all."

Two years went by, and I didn't think too much about religion or the religious discussion we had had until my best friend invited me to attend a camp with her during the summer. After getting my parents' approval, I excitedly told my friend that I could go. There were a lot of fun activities but also classes about principles and stories in the Bible that were brand new to me. I enjoyed learning about them, and I learned how to look up scriptures in my new Bible given to me by my friend. By the end of the week, I was "saved." I wasn't sure what that meant, but there were other people that were "saved" too.

I asked my parents if it was all right if I went to church with my best friend's family every Sunday. They agreed. Unfortunately, something came up the next Sunday, and I wasn't able to go. One week after another went by, and for one reason or another I did not go to church. The good feelings from camp slowly faded away. My freshman year of high school began, but my best friend and I drifted apart. Now I knew there was no chance of going to church with her family.

"Mom, can we go to church?" I asked several times, but I never really got the answer I was looking for. One day was different. Instead of the usual reply, she answered, "Well, I do know of a church we can go to. I know that they teach good things, because I used to go when I was little. I can take you to that church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." That was the first time





As weeks went by, I learned more about the Church. I wanted to do the right things: pray, eat good food, dress modestly, and try to live a Christian life. After trying all these things, I felt good about myself.

I learned she ever went to church, even though I knew my grandparents went to church.

I was more than satisfied with this answer. I was finally on my way to becoming something.

My mom, sister, brother, and I were finally going to church! My grandmother helped by locating which church building to attend in the area where we lived. Looking back, I do remember feeling welcomed.

Over the next few Sundays, I was welcomed like a friend that hadn't been seen for some time. When people noticed that I was new, they smiled and extended their hand to greet me and introduced themselves. I went to Young Women with the girls. I was 15 and belonged to the Mia Maid class. I quickly made friends despite my

shyness. Everyone made me feel comfortable. My sister was in the Beehive class. Being four years old, my brother went to Primary. He didn't like going by himself, so he always made my mom go with him. I think she enjoyed it. She sang children's songs and relearned stories from when she was younger.

The missionaries came to our house and taught us the lessons. I was delighted when they came over. Even though they were around 20 years old, they knew a lot about the scriptures and the gospel of Jesus Christ. They had a special presence and a warm glow about them. I soon found out that other members of the Church had that glow as well, including my Young Women teacher, who always let me know how happy she was to have me in her class.

I became good friends with a girl named Julia. We decided to be “buddies” at girls camp. Even though I don’t like camping or hiking very much, I really enjoyed the entire experience. There was a different feeling at this camp. Our counselors made a special effort to see that we were having a good time and that everyone was included in all the activities we participated in. During the week, we had devotionals, a nature walk to learn about different plants, a first-aid class, and campfire skits. There was also a service project that everyone in the camp happily participated in. In fact, the service project table was always crowded with volunteers. All through the week there was a sense of organization, cooperation, and friendship.

On Saturday morning, the last day, everyone got together around the campfire, and whoever wanted to stood up and told the others of their testimony of the Church and expressed their gratitude for their family, friends, and what a great and memorable experience they had at camp. Most of them cried while they talked, and I cried along with them. I was surprised to see my sister go up on stage. She said how happy she was to come to this Church and how thankful she was for her family, especially me. That was one of the first times she had ever expressed her love for me as her sister. Once she sat down, I got up and sat next to her. I told her how grateful I was for what she said, and we cried together. We really made a special connection.

We continued going to church and taking the missionary lessons. As the weeks went by, I learned much more about the Church. I wanted to do the right things. I began reading the Bible and the Book of Mormon, praying, eating good food, dressing modestly, and trying to live a Christian life. After trying all these things, I felt good about myself.

My mother, who had not wanted to go to church, continued to participate in the missionary lessons and continued to take us to church every Sunday. We made the decision to be baptized, and my mother, sister, and I became members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on June 3, 2000. This was a decision that has changed all of our lives. My brother was too young

to be baptized, and my stepfather did not share in our beliefs, but he always supported all of us in our Church-related activities and meetings.

We now have numerous friends that we would not otherwise have if we had not gone to church. We participate in many community service projects and have become happier people. I went on to receive my Young Women in Excellence award and attend community college. After high school, I became active in the single adults ward, where I met a wonderful returned missionary. We were married and have now had our first child.

Through all these experiences in the Church, our family has grown closer, and we are striving to become an eternal family. Seven years after our baptism, both my stepfather and my little brother made the decision to join the Church and were baptized together on January 20, 2007. **NE**

