



**By Elder  
Koichi Aoyagi**  
Of the Seventy

**A**s a teenager in Matsumoto, Japan, I was very interested in learning English. At age 17 I joined the English club at my high school. At the start of the school year, the club decided to find a native English speaker to teach us English conversation. We searched and searched, but the English instructors we spoke to charged a fee, and the club couldn't afford to pay. Discouraged, we almost gave up.

Then one day, as I rode my bicycle to school, I saw some young American men in suits handing out flyers. I took one and put it in my pocket. After school I examined the paper and found that it was an invitation to attend a free English conversation class. On the flyer was the name "The Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints." I had never heard of such a church, but I was excited; I had solved the English club's problem!

On the day of the next class, about 30 club members attended with me. The missionaries taught the class, which we all enjoyed very much. From the very first day of class, I noticed that there was something different about the missionaries. Their warmth, love, positive attitudes, and cheerfulness deeply impressed me. There seemed to be a light around them—I had never before met anyone quite like them.

After several weeks I began asking the missionaries about their church, and they invited me to learn more. I accepted, and they taught me the missionary lessons. At the time I did not fully understand or appreciate the importance of what I was learning, but I felt the Spirit, and I understood that the principles the missionaries were teaching me were good. When they invited me to be baptized, I accepted.

Before I could join the Church, however, I had to receive my parents' consent. At first they were very much against it—the teachings of Christianity were foreign and strange to them. But I was not yet ready to give up. I asked the missionaries to come to my home

# THE PATH OF

and explain to my parents about the Church, what they had been teaching me, and what would be expected of me. The Spirit softened my parents' hearts, and this time they gave me permission to be baptized.

## **Drifting Away**

After I was baptized and confirmed, I attended the little Matsumoto Branch of 12 to 15 active members. I made friends, and it was fun to attend every week. About a year later I graduated from high school and moved to Yokohama to attend the university. The nearest branch was the Tokyo Central Branch, which had more than 150 active members.

When I attended this new branch, I felt like a country boy in the big city. I had a hard time making friends. One Sunday I stayed home from church. Soon I stopped attending altogether. I began making friends with my non-member classmates, and the Church drifted further and further from my mind.

This continued for several months. Then one day I received a letter from a sister in the Matsumoto Branch. “I heard you have stopped attending church,” she said. I was surprised. Apparently someone from my new branch had told her I was not attending church anymore! The sister continued her letter by quoting Doctrine and Covenants 121:34: “Behold, there are many called, but

myself. I decided that I must pray. If I felt nothing, I could completely forget about the Church and the commandments, and I would never go again. However, if I did receive an answer, as Moroni promised, I would have to repent, embrace the gospel with all my heart, go back to church, and do all I could to follow the commandments.

# THE CHOSEN

few are chosen.” Then she wrote, “Koichi, you have been baptized a member of the Church. You have been called, but you are no longer among the chosen.”

As I read these words, I was filled with regret. I knew I needed to change somehow. I realized that I did not have a strong testimony. I wasn’t sure if God lived, and I didn’t know if Jesus Christ was my Savior. For several days I grew anxious as I thought about the message in the letter. I didn’t know what to do. Then one morning I remembered something the missionaries had taught me. They had asked me to read Moroni 10:3–5, promising that I could know the truth for

As I knelt and prayed that morning, I pleaded with Heavenly Father to answer me. “If Thou live—if Thou are real,” I prayed, “please let me know.” I prayed to know if Jesus Christ was my Savior and if the Church was true. As I finished, I suddenly felt something. I was surrounded by a warm feeling, and my heart was filled with joy. I understood the truth: God *does* live, and Jesus *is* my Savior. The Lord’s Church was truly restored by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the Book of Mormon is the word of God.

Needless to say, I prayed for forgiveness that very day and resolved to follow the commandments. I returned to church and promised the Lord that I would do whatever it took to remain faithful.

***It’s one thing to be baptized. It’s another to endure to the end.***



#### FOUR GOALS

1. *Receive as much higher education as possible.*
2. *Serve a full-time mission.*
3. *Marry in the temple.*
4. *Gain skills to support a family.*

A short time later the Church began making plans to build a chapel in Yokohama. At that time members of the branch were expected to contribute money and provide labor for the building's construction. When the mission president challenged the branch members to contribute all they could, I remembered my commitment to do whatever the Lord asked of me. So every day for nearly a year, I helped with the construction after my university classes were over.

#### Achieving Four Goals

About this same time, Elder Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), then of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, visited Japan and encouraged the youth of the Church to achieve four goals: (1) receive as much higher education as possible, (2) serve a full-time mission, especially the young men, (3) marry in the temple, and (4) gain skills to support a family. Until that point I had never planned to accomplish these four things. But I later knelt and prayed: “Heavenly Father, I want to accomplish those four goals. Please help me.”

I knew that in order to stay on the path of the chosen, I needed to follow the counsel of the Lord's servants. I committed to do all I could to follow Elder Kimball's advice and to work hard to build up the Church.

For the next several years I continued to work toward my four goals. I served as a construction missionary for two years, helping build two chapels in my home country. Then I was called to serve a full-time proselytizing mission. Soon after returning home, I married in the temple the woman from the Matsumoto Branch who wrote me the letter. Later I landed my dream job in a foreign trading company.





As I followed the word of the Lord and the counsel of the prophets, I felt that again I was on the path of the chosen. And I am striving to stay on that path today.

### Hearing His Voice

My young brothers and sisters, the Savior calls continually to all of us, bidding us to follow Him. The Lord taught, “My sheep hear my voice, . . . and they follow me” (John 10:27). You have heard the Lord’s voice; you have followed Him by being baptized into His Church. Indeed, you have been called. However, to be chosen is a very different matter.

Decide now that you will do whatever it takes to remain faithful. Decide to endure to the end by following all of God’s commandments. Set righteous and worthy goals for yourself. Gain an education, serve a mission, marry in the temple, and support your family both spiritually and temporally. If you have not yet gained a testimony, please get on your knees and ask Heavenly Father to help you gain a knowledge of the truth. Then, when the answer comes, commit yourself wholeheartedly to the work of the Lord. Do whatever it takes to get on the path of the chosen. **NE**