

SERVICE THROUGH COOKIES

One Saturday afternoon my little sister, my mom, and I decided to make cookies. My mom suggested we make a double batch and give them away.



While the cookies were baking, we talked about listening to the Spirit and serving others. My mom told us how grateful she was for inspired sisters around her that had recently brightened her day with a phone call or nice card. She then suggested that we give the cookies to someone Heavenly Father would like us to serve. We all went into different rooms and said our own personal prayer about who should receive the cookies. My mom and I had two of the same names, and my mom and little sister had also agreed on a family. The names we came up with were not even people that we typically interacted with.

From this experience, my testimony of prayer has been strengthened so much! Heavenly Father heard and answered our prayers and guided us to the people we should serve.

I will always remember that special day when we delivered the cookies to those who the Lord wanted us to. I am so grateful to have Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in my life. I am glad that I can pray for direction and help. I love the Church and my family. I am so blessed to have Young Women leaders to teach me about our gospel.
Brooke R., Utah, USA

POWERFUL PRAYER

Prayer is one of the greatest and most important ways to connect to, talk with, and be comforted by our Heavenly Father.

While I was saying my prayers one night, I thought about what my family was in need of, what I was

grateful for, and also what I needed to repent of. Right after closing my prayer, I looked around my room and saw many worldly things that could easily distract me from my goals on this earth.

But during my prayers, I feel that if I pray sincerely and humbly, my burdens are lightened, my sins are washed away, and my problems have answers. I realize how close to God I feel while I say my prayers. It shows me how important we all are in God's eyes. I testify that prayer is one of the most powerful and important things that we can do on this earth.

Austin C., Tennessee, USA

A MOVIE DECISION

I spent 10 minutes squirming, looking around at my friends, trying to make eye contact with one of them. But they were all watching the movie. Before we put the DVD in, I checked the rating and read the movie summary to make sure it would be OK. But even after taking precautions, I still felt uncomfortable.

I rationalized with myself that since my friends thought it was OK, it should be OK. Plus the rating was technically appropriate. But I didn't want them to think I was lame. So I stayed.

After 10 more agonizing minutes I couldn't ignore it any longer. I had to leave. As I left the room, I could hear my friends laughing at me. I felt

The Instant Messages section of the *New Era* features short, easy-to-read stories and messages from youth directly to you. It first appeared in the December 2003 issue. Previously, we often received personal stories or thoughts from youth but couldn't use them because they were too short to stand on their own. This section allows those great experiences to be shared.

The Instant Messages section isn't just for stories. You can submit short articles about your favorite hymns and scriptures, your testimony, and how you understand and apply a certain aspect of the gospel. Keep your submissions to between 300 and 400 words. Go to newera.lds.org and click on Submit Your Material.



my cheeks burning with embarrassment, but I kept on walking.

On my way home, I stopped at my best friend's house. I told her what happened, and she told me she was glad that I had left. Sitting with her, I realized I wasn't embarrassed anymore. I knew that walking away from the movie was the right thing for me. And that was even more important to me than my friends' approval.

Name Withheld

DON'T BE ASHAMED

I have a necklace that has a small rod on it. It was given to me as a Christmas present and reminds me to hold to the rod.

One Sunday I put it on for church but forgot to take it off, so I wore it to school the next day. Someone asked me, "What is that? A dog whistle?"

"Oh, it's a reminder to hold to the iron rod," I said. "It's something in

the Book of Mormon." That led to questions: "What is the Book of Mormon about?" "What sets Mormons apart from other Christians?" They asked about the temple and all kinds of other things. What was amazing was that as I was talking, I felt the Spirit guiding me about what to say next.

I'm sure I was afraid at first, but taking those kinds of opportunities—even small ones like that experience—is so important. A

few months previously, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles visited our stake. The Friday before the meeting, friends asked me about my plans for the weekend. I was *really* excited about his visit, but I stopped myself from telling friends about it. How easy would it have been to say, "I'm going to see an Apostle"? But I worried that they wouldn't know what I was talking about or that they would think it was strange, so I just talked about my plans for Saturday and didn't mention Sunday at all. That could have been a really great opportunity to share a little bit about my faith with my friends, but I pushed it away. I regretted it afterwards.

I've learned since then to never be afraid. A lot of times friends will be interested and ask to find out more, but even if they don't, my friends generally respect what I do and say when it comes to the Church.

Missionary work can be scary, because the gospel is close to your heart and you don't want people to ridicule what you say. A scripture mastery verse, Romans 1:16, really gets to me: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." This helps me to speak up before the feelings of fear hit me too hard. And I know that Heavenly Father blesses us as we do.

Kate N., 17, Kansas

