

KNOCK AGAIN

BY SEDLEY PARKINSON

The Browns knew how to get rid of home teachers, but my dad taught me why we couldn't give up.

I was surprised when the door actually opened! A boy poked his head out, glanced down the street, and then at us. "Please come in," he said.

When I was 17, I was assigned as my father's home teaching companion. We visited a few families in our ward and gave them a message from the bishop or read an article from a Church magazine. Home teaching was actually not so bad. Some of our families really appreciated our company.

We visited an older couple who always looked forward to our coming. They were talkative and gave us cookies when we were there.

Another of our families was actively involved at church. They were easy to home teach. The TV would be turned off, and the family always gathered around, sitting quietly while my dad and I gave our message.

Our ward was spread out over a large area of farms and small communities outside of Pocatello, Idaho. Many of the people had chosen the semi-country life to escape from the city. They liked being away from the traffic noise. Some simply wanted to get away from society. The Browns, a family newly assigned to us, fit right into that last category. As I look back, I wonder at the patience my father showed.

It was my job to set up our home teach-

ing appointments. Brother Brown answered the phone and told me they were too busy this month and to maybe call back later if I wanted to. The same results occurred four weeks later on my second attempt. My father decided we needed a more direct approach.

The next month came, and after visiting our other families, we drove straight to the Browns' house. A pickup truck and a car were in the driveway. Our printout showed a family of three: a father, a mother, and a 9-year-old boy. We went up to the door and knocked. No answer.

A month passed and again it was time for home teaching. Visiting our regulars went smoothly, and then it was time for our not-so-regular.

"Do they really want us to come?" I asked.

"We don't know for sure," was the answer from my senior companion. "They haven't told us to go away, and we haven't done anything they could get mad at, have we? We can't give up so soon."

We drove to their house. This time the cars were switched. They had to be home. There were only two drivers. We went up to the door and knocked. Silence.



“Knock again,” said my dad. I heard some noise inside the house, but the door stood still. From the corner of my eye, I saw motion. I turned to the window and, for a split second, locked eye contact with a brown-haired child, who disappeared. We left. It seemed apparent that this family did not want us around. I did not know if I wanted to be around them. I suggested to my father that we report back to the high priests group leader that this family did not want home teachers and call it good.

“Hm.” My dad was not a man of many words, but I knew well the meaning of this. We would be going back.

The next month came all too soon. It was, again, time to do our home teaching. Our visits with the regular families quickly came and went. I then found myself standing in front of the door with the two cars in the driveway. My dad motioned me, and I timidly knocked. No answer. “There, that’s that. They won’t answer, Dad. Let’s go home.” A nod from my senior companion prompted me to knock again. I reluctantly did so, keeping my thoughts to myself. Then it opened; not the door, but a window. A gruff male voice asked what we wanted. A waft of cigarette smoke followed his question. I was ready to bolt. My dad smiled. He told the voice who we were and why we were there. He explained that we wanted to get to know this family and become friends. Then he asked if we could come back next month. That was all he said, nothing more. Hesitating, the faceless voice behind the window agreed and we left.

“He knew exactly who we were,” my dad said as we drove away. “He gets new home teachers every couple of years. He just knows how to get rid of us.”

The next month was much the same—the same voice from the window, the same brief conversation, and the same hesitation to let us come again next month.

Our third month was not the same, however. The pickup was not in the driveway. We went up to the door and knocked. We both looked toward the window in anticipation. To my surprise, the door opened! That same child I had seen earlier poked his head out, glanced down the street, and then at us. “Please, come in,” he said.

A lady was standing in the front room. “Thank you for coming, we only have a few minutes,” she said. “Do you know when Cub Scouts meet?”

“We will find out for you, Sister Brown,” my dad answered.

This little boy who had opened the door for us began attending Cub Scouts each week. He and his mom even started coming to church on Sundays. I remember some of the families my father and I visited as home teachers better than others, but I will never forget the Browns.

The child was staring at me. I was in shock now that we were standing in the house and not on the porch. Had he said something? “Can you baptize me?” he repeated, with a sincere ring in his voice.

His smile was contagious, but all I could say was “What?”

“He wants to become a member of the Church like his cousins in town. He has been watching you come to the door each month. I told him you could probably baptize him.”

“Can you baptize me into the Church?” he asked a third time.

I was beginning to recover. “Yes, uh, I think so.”

My dad helped me out. “Let’s talk to the bishop,” he said. “He can tell us what you need to do to get ready. Can both of you and Brother Brown come to church on Sunday?”

That was our whole visit. Then we were gone. I contemplated the entire situation

during the quiet drive home. Being a home teacher was something more than cookies and pleasant conversations. Being a home teacher could be seriously important. Why had I suggested we give up on this family? The example my father gave me was beyond my years. I was experiencing guilty exhilaration, guilt because of my murmuring and exhilaration because of the unexpected results of our visit. I glanced at my dad.

“You did good,” he said, reading my mind. “Let’s watch for them on Sunday.”

I have always cherished my memories of home teaching with my father. I can remember some of the families we taught better than others. I will never forget the Browns.

We saw the mom and the boy at church that next Sunday and many other Sundays. We saw the boy at Cub Scouts the next week and many other weeks. I’m sure some deep conversations were held at the Browns’ house, because the door always opened for us, even when Brother Brown was home. He even learned how to smile and shake hands.

Then came the baptism. I felt the smiling eyes of the city cousins looking down on the boy and me. The bishop had let them kneel by the baptismal font, which was recessed into the floor at the stake center. A deep, peaceful feeling swept over me as this wet, glowing boy and I stepped up and out. I almost felt that it was I who had been baptized. The boy’s parents were beaming. I saw Sister Brown brush a tear from her cheek. I looked up at my father; he nodded his approval.

Warmth grew inside me as I realized the wisdom of His patience, His patience for this little family and for me. **NE**

