

I'M NOT INTERESTED IN THE CHURCH

I didn't want to have anything to do with the Church when my wife asked if the missionaries could teach our sons. But I didn't say no because she was already a member.

When the missionaries started coming to our home twice a week, I would go to my friend's house next door. My friend was a strong member of another Christian church. Every time I visited with him, he wanted to talk about the Bible. I told him I was not into that sort of thing and didn't want to study religion. But he kept trying to convince me, and I finally said yes. So for a long time I studied the Bible with my friend while

the missionaries taught my boys.

One day it was time for the missionaries to come to our house. But instead of leaving, I decided to stay in the next room. As the missionaries started teaching my sons, I found myself wanting to hear more. I moved closer and closer to the door to hear better. They were teaching my sons about apostles and prophets.

Later I realized I wanted to learn more. I spoke with the missionaries

and decided to take the discussions from them—privately. My wife was always there, but no one else knew about it.

So when the missionaries came to teach my

boys twice a week, I would go to my friend's house. Then, on a different day, they would teach me.

One day when my friend said something bad about the Church, I refuted what he said. Like many people in the Marshall Islands, he did not know much about the Church and misunderstood some things Latter-day Saints believe. When he said other negative things, I again defended the Church.

That's how it went for seven months. Then one day I realized that the Holy Ghost had been confirming to me that everything the missionaries were teaching me was true. I realized I needed to get baptized, even though I still knew so little about the gospel.

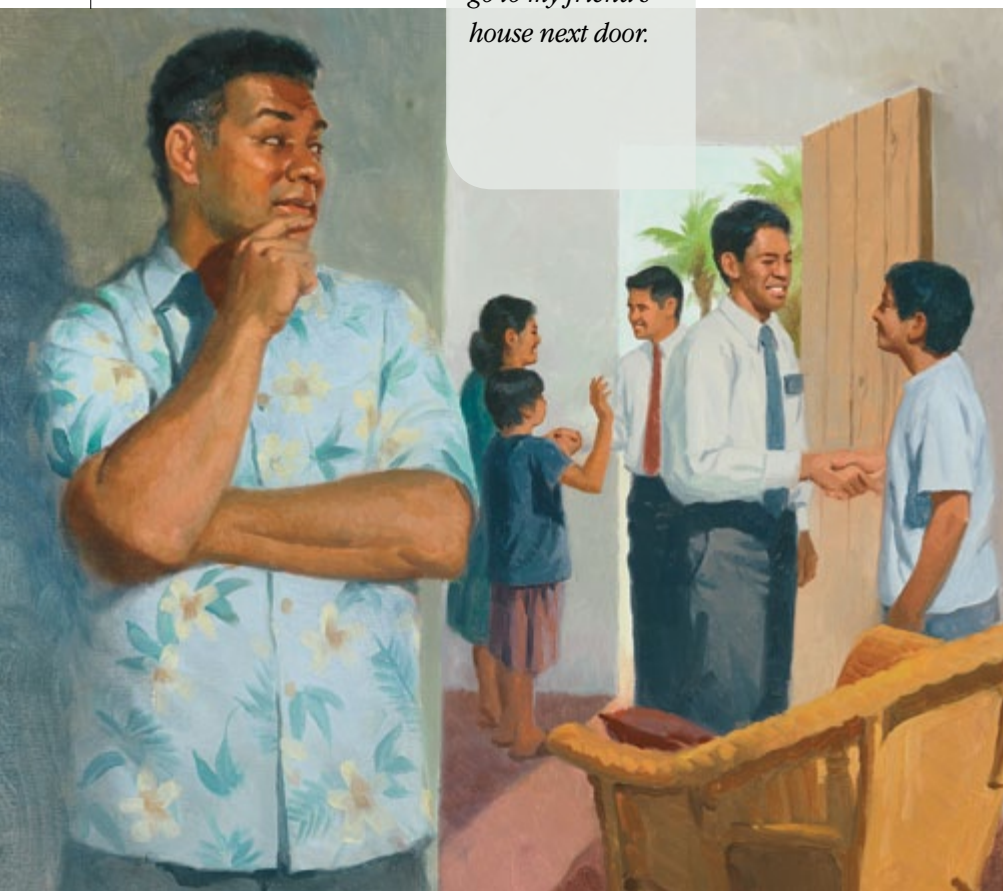
After my baptism in 2007, I was so happy. We started saving money to go to the temple in Hawaii, where my wife, our three children, and I were sealed in December 2008.

Being a member of the Church has made a huge impact on my life. I decided to quit my second job entertaining at a restaurant because I would come home late and my garments would be saturated with tobacco smoke. Despite the loss of that extra income, the Lord has taken care of us.

I know the Church is true and that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God because of the Spirit that I have felt and the blessings I have received. ■

Tanintoa Sexton, Marshall Islands

When the missionaries started coming to our home twice a week, I would go to my friend's house next door.



MY CROSS-STITCH PONIES

I have a cross-stitched picture of two pinto ponies that I worked on for about a year. It was almost completed when I discovered I'd made a mistake in the color of one of the ponies. Since it was a possible color for a horse's hide, I didn't realize my mistake until I saw that the color of the pony clashed with the adjacent colors on the canvas.

I was devastated. I had spent all that time working on the picture, and the thought of taking out all the stitches of the wrong color was almost overwhelming. With tears in my eyes, I opened the trash can and threw the picture in.

I sat down at the table where I kept my sewing supplies to mourn the loss of my pretty pony picture and move on to other projects. But I couldn't do it—I couldn't just let go of the project I had worked so hard on. I opened the trash and retrieved the cloth. I found a knot on the back of the offending color and snipped it carefully. Turning the picture over, I began removing the thread.

Sometimes the removal went quickly. Other times I found it wasn't so easy. I wasn't sure how to undo what I had done. Sometimes I had to cut the thread one stitch at a time. My son remarked that he was impressed that I would go to all that work to make it right. It was only a cross-stitched picture, after all.

As I removed the stitches, I began

to think of repentance and how hard it has been to correct some of the errors I have made. True repentance requires intense desire, labor, and suffering, but it is worth the effort.

As I restitched the horse, I was reminded that repentance allows Jesus's Atonement to remove the stain of sin from my life and help me begin anew. My "repentance ponies" hang in my home, a gentle but vivid reminder to do what is right, never give up when I fall short, and remember that through repentance, the Atonement will make up the difference. ■

Sandra Jennings, New Mexico, USA

I had spent all that time working on the picture, and the thought of taking out all the stitches of the wrong color was almost overwhelming.



BUT THERE'S NO CHURCH HERE

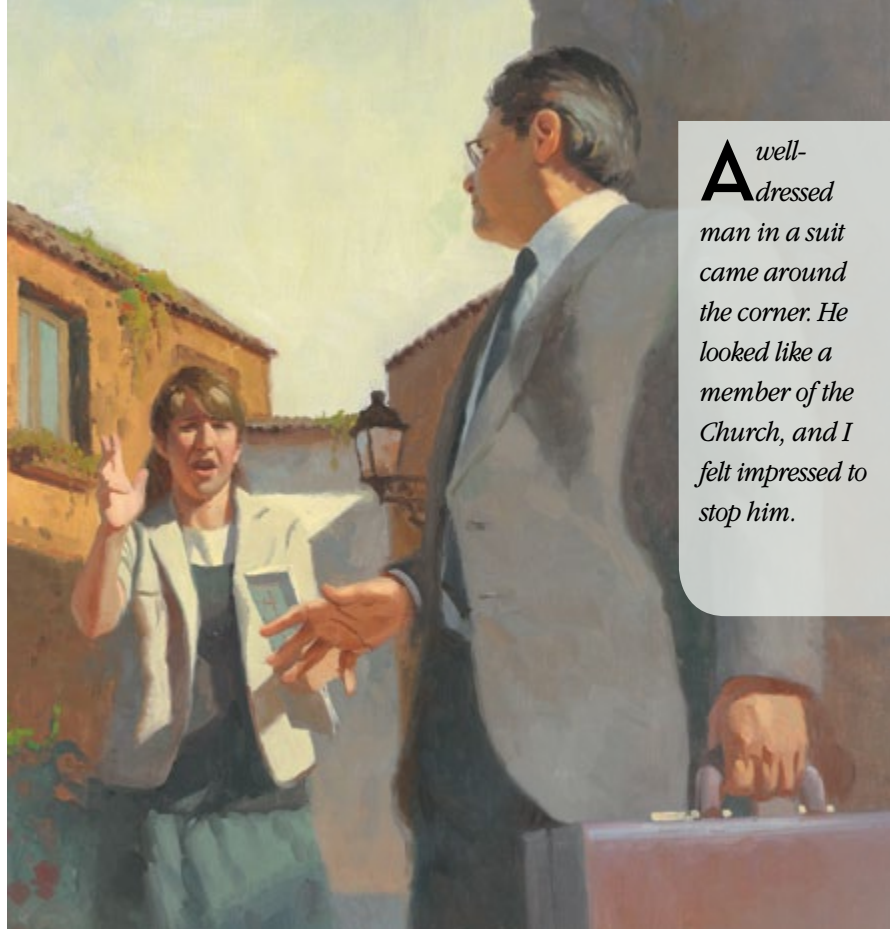
During a trip to the Mediterranean, I diligently attended Church meetings wherever I could. In Seville, Spain, I enlisted the aid of a hotel receptionist, the local telephone directory, and a city map to help me find the local Latter-day Saint meeting-house. I wrote down the address and the name of the Church in Spanish. Saturday evening I prayed to know what time the meetings started, and I felt a strong impression that I needed to be there by 10:00 a.m.

Just before I left for church at 9:30 on Sunday morning, I prayed again that I would be able to find the meetinghouse. Following my map, I began to navigate a maze of narrow streets. It was a delightful morning. I passed cafés and a bird market full of squawking birds.

I made it to the designated address only to find nothing that remotely resembled a church. I walked up and down the street looking in vain. I was confused and anxious, and it was almost 10:00 a.m.

Finally, I prayed to my Father in Heaven: "Thou hast commanded me to go to church, and here I am, but there's no church here."

Just then a well-dressed man in a suit came around the corner. He looked like a member of the Church, and I felt impressed to stop him. In a somewhat garbled manner, I



A well-dressed man in a suit came around the corner. He looked like a member of the Church, and I felt impressed to stop him.

told him I was looking for a church. He said something I didn't understand, and I looked perplexed. So he opened his briefcase, and I saw two leather-bound books that looked like scriptures. I handed him my slip of paper on which I had written "La Iglesia de Jesucristo" (The Church of Jesus Christ). He smiled and pointed back along the way I had come, and together we walked to church. The building was located at a different address just a few minutes away and was easy to miss if you didn't know it was there. It was set back in a small square, behind large gates.

At the meetinghouse I soon found out that the man who had helped me was none other than the bishop of the ward and that the meetings began at 10:30 a.m. I had arrived with time to spare.

During the ward's fast and testimony meeting, I felt impressed to

bear my testimony. With a missionary translating my words from English into Spanish, I bore my testimony and described how the Lord had provided a way for me to get to church. The bishop then bore his testimony and explained that he had to park farther away that morning, so he was later than normal. When he saw me, he thought I looked like a member of the Church, so he stopped to help me. He then spoke of members who are lost spiritually and said we have to help them find the Church.

Over the years my memories of the sights of Seville have faded, but my memory of finding the church there hasn't. That memory is a testimony to me of the great love our Father in Heaven has for us and that His hand is visible in my life if I just look for all the things that "work together for [my] good" (Romans 8:28). ■

Julie Ismail, Western Australia, Australia

HIS SUFFERING EASES OURS

As a nurse in the newborn intensive care unit, I care for sick, sometimes very small, babies. One night I was assigned to a little boy born 17 weeks early and weighing just over one pound (0.5 kg). His hands were tiny, his little legs about as big around as my finger, and his feet about the size of my thumb. Because of his severe respiratory problems, doctors didn't expect him to live through the night.

A quiet hush falls over the entire unit when a newborn is fighting for life. There is increased stress on everyone, especially the baby's nurse, and tonight that was me. His parents had been with him most of the day, but they were exhausted. His mother had returned to her room for some much-needed rest.

The baby's private room contained an isolette (incubator), monitors, ventilator, and IV pumps, which were keeping him alive. Because he was so ill and needed such intensive care, I wasn't assigned any other patients that night. I would be at his side all night, busy with medications, monitoring, treatments, and tests.

As the night wore on, I tried to imagine how I would feel if I were his mother. The heartache would have been unbearable.

I gently washed his face, touched his little hands and feet, gingerly changed and positioned him in a soft new blanket. I wondered what else

I could do for my little patient. What would his mother do? What would Heavenly Father want me to do?

This precious, innocent little spirit would soon be returning to his Father in Heaven. I wondered if he was afraid. I thought of my own children. When they were young and scared, I had sung to them. "I Am a Child of God" was their favorite. Choking back tears, I sang to the baby.

As a nurse I saw the tubes and the blood, counted the rise and fall of the baby's chest, listened to the beating of his heart, and watched the numbers on the monitors. As a Latter-day Saint I saw a celestial spirit and marveled at the plan of salvation.

As the night progressed, his health deteriorated. He eventually developed a condition that caused him to bleed into his lungs.

In the morning my little patient slipped silently through the veil. He left his mother's arms and was "taken home to that God who gave [him] life" (Alma 40:11).

I grew closer to the Savior and Heavenly Father that night. I developed a greater understanding of the Lord's love for mankind—and His love for me. I was reminded, even surprised, by the depth of love I felt for Him. And I felt a desire to be more kind, more gentle, more forgiving, more compassionate—more like Him—one day and one heartbeat at a time. ■

Barbara Winter, Arizona, USA

Choking back tears, I sang "I Am a Child of God" to the baby.

