



Two Pairs of Shiny Black Shoes

All I could see was their shoes, but that was enough.

By George Reynolds

When I enlisted in the army, my main reason for doing so was to escape religion in general and Mormons in particular. I had been raised in the Church, but after my parents' divorce I grew bitter and resentful. I had no interest in anything to do with God, and my belief that there was a God at all was teetering.

After basic training I was assigned to the presidential honor guard in Washington, D.C. I thought that here I would find peace from the many familial and religious matters that weighed on my mind.

All enlistees are required to enter religious information for official military records, and I didn't know what else to put, so I listed my religion as "Latter-day Saint." This became known in my barracks, and I became the object of humorous gibes from time to time. But every time I would respond by telling the men, "I am not a Mormon!"

A Knock on Our Door

Two years had passed, and I was living off the military post with two other soldiers as roommates. One afternoon, someone knocked on our door.

I was upstairs, so one of my roommates answered. He called up to me that people were here to see me.

I was excited with the thought of friends coming by, so I ran to the top of the stairs and looked down. All I could see were two pairs of shiny black shoes, but I didn't need to see any more. I knew those shoes belonged to Mormon missionaries.

What's more, I knew my roommate was only entertaining them to play a joke on me. I asked myself, "Why won't they just go away?" But my roommate called again.

I came downstairs and tried to be at least a little cordial. I shook their hands and said hello. With a smirk on his face, my roommate invited them to come in, and they did.

All I was thinking was how I could get this over with as quickly as possible. By now my other roommate had joined us, and both roommates asked the missionaries questions and enjoyed making small talk. All I remember is that one missionary was from Germany and the other from the northwest United States.

After a few minutes, the elders stood up to leave and asked, "Can we come back?" I was going to say no, but before I could, my roommates told them to stop in again when they were in the area. And they did.

Something Happened within Me

During their next visit, something happened within me. I felt an urge to pray and to read from the Book of Mormon. That night I did read, and I got down on my knees to pray. I didn't even know what I was praying for exactly, but I knew I had to call upon God and ask what I should do.

Although I heard no audible words, I was spoken to in a way that I understood perfectly and plainly. I knew there was indeed a God in the heavens and that He loved me and knew me. From then on, I started gaining a true testimony of the restored gospel and the Prophet Joseph Smith. All of my criticism toward God, and especially toward Mormons, withdrew as if a curtain had been opened in my mind. A sweet feeling of peace entered my soul. Alma's words in the Book of Mormon about being born of God describe what I was feeling and thinking (see Mosiah 27:28–31).

A year later I submitted an application for a full-time mission, and at the age of 24 I was called to serve among the wonderful people in Perth, Australia. I came home and married in the temple, and my wife and I are happily married with four children.

The complete change of direction in my life and all of the blessings I now enjoy came because two missionaries that I didn't even know followed a prompting to visit our apartment. I will forever be grateful for those two pairs of shiny black shoes and for the change that came into my life. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.