

# A WORN, MARKED CONFERENCE *ENSIGN*

By Cynthia Goodwill

*When I saw the marked-up pages of my roommate's Ensign, I realized that listening to conference was not enough. I felt the Spirit say, "You can do better."*

As a returned missionary from the Philippines Olongapo Mission, I was finishing up my degree at Brigham Young University and really enjoying life. There were six women in our off-campus apartment, and we were all returned missionaries. We all had classes, jobs, and social scenes to manage, but we were all solidly grounded in the gospel, and the spirit in the apartment was sweet to us all.

One of my roommates, Courtney, was especially busy and rarely had time for watching TV or attending any social events, but she always had a kind word for each of us and helped maintain the apartment. We all respected her.

One day, I noticed Courtney carrying something as she headed out the door. It was her general conference edition of the *Ensign*. It was the most tattered and used-looking conference

issue I had ever seen. I asked her if I could look at it later because I was curious as to what she saw in these talks that I hadn't already seen.

When I later browsed through her magazine, it seemed to me that she had underlined every word in every talk. There were comments in the margins. There were lines drawn and pictures here and there. The edges were very worn. She had obviously spent considerable time reading, re-reading, and marking up her *Ensign*. I was impressed. I loved general conference and I loved listening to the talks, but I had never put that much time and effort into studying my general conference *Ensign* issue. When I saw the worn, marked pages of Courtney's magazine, I realized that listening was not enough. I felt the Spirit say, "You can do better." I agreed.

## Finding Answers by Study

As time went on, I eventually married and no longer lived near Courtney, but every time general conference came around I would remember her marked-up *Ensign* and the feeling that I could do better. However, every conference something seemed to get in the way of my acting on that prompting. Then the time came that I decided nothing would get in my way. I grabbed the conference *Ensign* when it came in the mail and started reading it cover to cover.

As I underlined passages and wrote comments in the margins, I experienced each talk in a deeper way than I had when I had just listened. The Spirit spoke to me as I read, and I wrote down what the Spirit told me to do and acted on it. It was the most wonderful general conference I have ever



experienced. I found myself saying to people all the time, "Oh, there's a wonderful conference talk about that!"

One evening before going to bed, I prayed about a disagreement my husband and I had had earlier in the day. I couldn't figure out how I could have acted differently. I prayed that I would be able to solve the problem.

When I woke up the next morning, the Spirit turned my thoughts to a general conference talk I had read the day before. One part of the talk answered my question perfectly. Humbled, I

started out the day by saying a prayer of thanks to my Father in Heaven for answering my prayer through the teachings of His chosen servants.

**The Blessings of Studying Conference Talks**

At the conclusion of the October 2012 general conference, President

Thomas S. Monson said: "As always, the proceedings of this conference will be available in the coming issues of the *Ensign* and the *Liahona* magazines. I encourage you to read the talks once again and to ponder the messages contained therein. I have found in my own life that I gain even more from these inspired sermons when I study them in greater depth."<sup>1</sup> Now I know what the prophet meant when he said that.

I know that the Spirit can speak to us more personally as we put forth the effort to really study the Lord's word given through His servants in each general conference. I know that we will be blessed as we do. ■

*The author lives in New York, USA.*

**NOTE**  
1. Thomas S. Monson, "God Be with You Till We Meet Again," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 110.