

Young Women— MISSION or NOT?

SMALL, QUIET ASSURANCES

By Lynne Crandall

Growing up I never wanted to serve a full-time mission. Talking to strangers about the gospel and inviting people to change their lives sounded too scary. But as I got closer to being old enough to go, I started thinking about it more and more. I wanted other people to have the blessings of the gospel, but I wasn't sure I wanted to serve a mission. I decided that if Heavenly Father wanted me to serve, I would do it—but I desired a loud and clear answer. I soon learned that receiving revelation doesn't always work that way, but that doesn't mean God leaves our prayers unanswered.

There was no lightning-bolt answer to my many prayers about serving a mission. However, over time I felt

many small, quiet assurances that serving a mission would be a good thing for me to do. I remember feeling a strong desire to serve God while studying the scriptures one day. Then during a Sunday School class, I felt the Spirit when the teacher talked about how serving a mission had blessed his family. I also felt peace while sitting quietly in the temple and thinking about serving a mission.

I hadn't fully committed to serving a mission yet, but I knew I needed to act. So I scheduled an appointment with my bishop to start filling out my papers. After my interview, I called my parents and told them my thoughts. As I talked to them, I felt the Spirit confirm that I had made a good choice.

I never got the big, showy answer I wanted, but I felt that the combination of my positive experiences constituted an answer. I put my trust in the Lord, worked with my local leaders to have

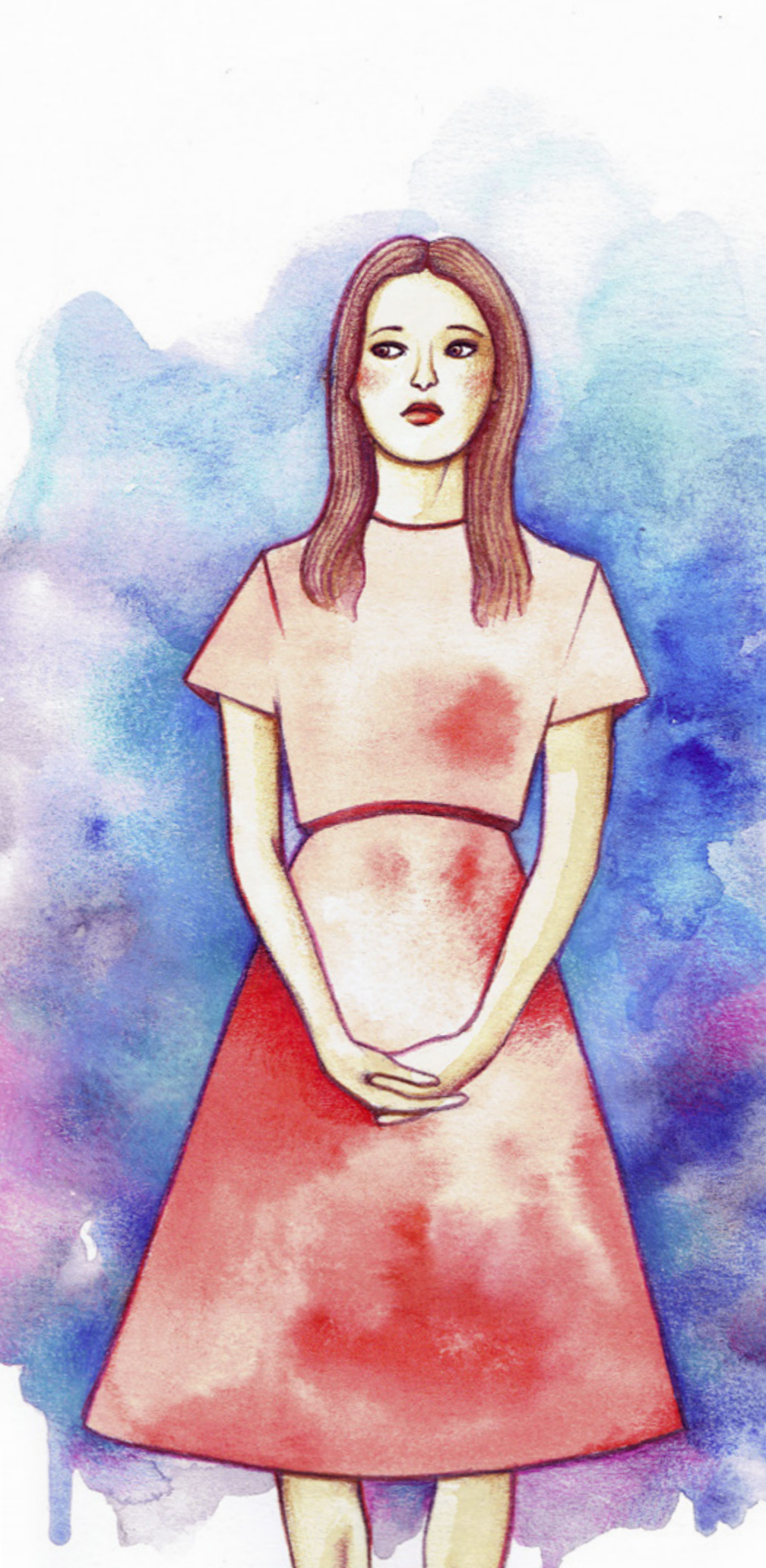


Two young adult women share their experiences in deciding whether or not to serve a full-time mission.

a missionary recommendation submitted, and was called to serve in the Canada Toronto Mission.

Preparing to leave on my mission was an exciting time, but my fears and doubts didn't magically disappear. To help me prepare, I watched *The District*, a video series used to help train missionaries. The videos showed

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TALYA BALDWIN



the day-to-day lives of real missionaries and probably helped a lot of future missionaries be excited about serving a mission, but seeing what missionaries actually did just made me more anxious. One episode showed a new missionary giving the Book of Mormon to someone on the street. I remember sitting on my bed thinking, “Oh no. What have I gotten myself into?”

I remembered the small spiritual experiences I’d had that helped me decide to go, but I started wondering: Were those small experiences really my answer? Were they enough? Despite my questions, I chose to trust the good feelings I’d experienced earlier and entered the missionary training center a few months later.

Even in the MTC I still had fears and doubts. I met a lot of missionaries who told stories about how they received a clear, distinct impression from God that they needed to serve a mission. I didn’t feel I had ever received a distinct answer of confirmation like that, and I wondered if it mattered to Heavenly Father that I was there.

Gradually I learned that I wasn’t serving a mission for me. I was there to serve Heavenly Father by serving His children. As I came to understand more about the gospel and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, my desire to share the gospel increased, and I was less anxious about talking to strangers about the gospel or inviting people to

change. I was no longer concerned by the different ways missionaries had received answers from God. My fears and doubts didn't matter anymore because I saw how the gospel blessed the people I loved and served.

The people I served weren't the only ones who were blessed. I received priceless blessings as well. Most important, my testimony of and faith in Jesus Christ were strengthened, and I came home with a greater desire to live His gospel.

I'm grateful I didn't receive the big, loud answer I wanted about serving a mission. Because I learned that God answered prayers with quiet impressions, I was able to recognize the impressions I received while serving my mission and have confidence they were from God. I was also able to help the people I taught recognize their answers from God, which often came gently and quietly. It turns out the impressions I had early on in my decision-making process hadn't led me astray. Serving a mission was a good thing for me to do. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

AN ANSWER THAT WAS HARD TO ACCEPT

By **Bethany Bartholomew**
Church Magazines

The historic announcement had been made lowering the age that

young women could serve missions,¹ and thousands had been called. Over the next two years, I would see many friends leave to serve the Lord as full-time sister missionaries.

Caught up in the excitement, I wondered if I should serve too. I knew it would be hard, but I admired those sisters who courageously served away from their families for 18 months, sometimes learning an unfamiliar language.

But after I prayed and fasted, I felt that I shouldn't go.

I had tried to be humble and follow the Lord's plan for me, and I was relieved to have an answer. But then my friends started returning from their missions, and I saw the incredible blessings in their lives because of their service. They all seemed different—in a good way. I loved having spiritual conversations with my roommates who had served



missions, and I loved hearing mission experiences in Church.

However, I found myself feeling a little jealous. Wasn't I good enough to have those same experiences? I wondered if maybe I hadn't listened well enough when I prayed about a mission.

I prayed and fasted some more. Again the answer: *Not right now.*

I tried to move forward, trusting I had received God's answer, but it wasn't long before doubt set in again. It felt like young men were noticing the amazing changes I was seeing in my friends as well. Certainly I had had amazing spiritual experiences through callings, college, and work, but I began to feel like I had to compete with the mission stories and experiences—and I couldn't even keep the difference between a zone and a district straight in my mind.

I even heard about young men who said they wouldn't marry a young woman who hadn't served a mission. I started to panic. Was that why some of the guys I had gone out with recently had lost interest in me after just a few dates?

In desperation I prayed again. Still, I felt that I shouldn't go.

It was so hard to accept. For a time I felt like everyone around me was either going on a mission or getting married and that I was stuck in some kind of in-between space. At one point I even felt that I *should* go on a mission. I started



NO YOUNG WOMAN SHOULD BE JUDGED FOR NOT SERVING A MISSION

"President Monson never intended for all of the young women in the Church to go on missions by dropping [the] age [to 19]. We're very grateful for those who go. It's changed the face of the Church. . . . But we do not want anyone feeling inadequate or left out or undignified or tarnished because she did not choose to serve a mission. And we're a little irritated with young men who say, 'Well, I'm not going to date you because you didn't serve a mission.' . . . We do not want that kind of climate over dating or marriages. . . . It isn't our place to pass a judgment."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, *Face to Face* broadcast, Mar. 8, 2016, facetoface.lds.org.

to prepare. I even canceled my contract for an apartment I was going to move into with one of my best friends. But just a few days later, I felt strongly once again that Heavenly Father was asking me to wait.

Trying hard to act in faith instead of fear or frustration, I decided to evaluate why I wanted to serve. Did I want to go for the right reasons? Did I want to go so I could become more "datable"? Was it to see miracles or for self-improvement? Did I want to serve Jesus Christ and bring people to Him? Was the mission I wanted so much for Him or for me?

I fasted and prayed for the courage to be willing to grow through the experiences that Heavenly Father had planned for me if I *wasn't* supposed to serve a full-time mission right then.

After two and a half years, I finally felt at peace. Heavenly Father had a plan for me, and if I was willing to

learn and serve in the ways that *He* wanted me to, I didn't have to serve a mission to see miracles and have life-changing experiences. Those things had been happening all along the way as I kept my covenants and trusted God. With His help, I was able to stick to my decision to stay.

Soon after, I ran into the young man I would marry. I was so grateful that he didn't judge me or hesitate to date me because I had decided not to serve a mission. He loved me for the person I had become, and I loved him for the person he had become. Heavenly Father had prepared us both through our different experiences, even though mine didn't include a full-time mission. ■

NOTE

1. See Thomas S. Monson, "Welcome to Conference," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 5.

For more, see "For Young Women: Making the Mission Decision," lds.org/youth/article/for-young-women-making-the-mission-decision.