

My Answer at the Door



BY VICTOR L. HARRIS

Shortly after Janet and I became engaged, the missionaries began teaching us the gospel. Janet had been raised a member of the Church but had not attended regularly since her teens; I had worshipped infrequently at a Baptist church while growing up.

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Although I already believed Jesus was our Savior, I was surprised to learn other aspects of LDS doctrine; Christ's visit to the Americas, Joseph Smith's First Vision, and a living prophet all were new to me. I compared points of doctrine in the Book of Mormon and the Bible and learned how to pray. While I continued to take the missionary discussions over the next two years, perhaps with an intellectual more than a spiritual approach, we attended church regularly. The ward's bishop performed our wedding ceremony.

Through it all, though, I really had no strong feelings one way or the other about the Church, no real conviction or testimony. In retrospect, I realize I was simply going through the motions

without a heartfelt desire to know the truth. It took a personal crisis to finally break through my intellectual cobwebs and to help me undeniably feel and see the Spirit in action.

Our second son, Forrest, then two months old, had been sickly since birth. One night while I was driving home with him and our two-year-old son, Houston, Forrest's condition weighed heavily on me. I recalled the missionaries' discussion about how we each have different things to accomplish in life and varying time spans in which to do them. The feeling that Forrest's time was going to be short consumed me. I tried rejecting the thought, but the apprehension wouldn't fade. Tears flowed down my face as I drove.

I arrived home just before Janet. I situated Houston with some toys and sat down with Forrest on my lap and looked at him. I couldn't shake the awful feeling and began crying again. Houston sat next to me, held my hand, and looked at me as if asking, "What's wrong?" I didn't know. That made me cry even harder. I felt out of control, as if something unstoppable was happening in front of me.

In the midst of the gloom, the thought came to pray for help. I prayed fervently, humbly thanking Heavenly Father for all He had blessed me with. I recognized my shortcomings. I acknowledged that perhaps Heavenly Father had other plans for Forrest, but I pleaded with Him to continue to entrust me with him, to allow him to tarry, to bless and heal him.

I immediately felt a ray of light and hope pierce the darkness in my heart. As the gloom began to fade, Janet arrived home. I set Forrest down and went to her. Her moist eyes and the tissue in her hand betrayed the fact that she had been crying. I asked what was wrong. She



NOW IS THE TIME FOR PERSONAL CONVERSION

"Now is the time for each of us to work toward our personal con-

version, toward becoming what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. As we do so, we should remember that our family relationships . . . are the setting in which the most important part of that development can occur. The conversion we must achieve requires us to be a good husband and father or a good wife and mother. . . . Exaltation is an eternal family experience, and it is our mortal family experiences that are best suited to prepare us for it."

Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Challenge to Become," Ensign, Nov. 2000, 33.

surveyed the used tissues on the end table and my red eyes and asked me the same question. During her drive home, Janet had experienced the same foreboding thoughts about Forrest, thoughts so powerful that she was also moved to tears. We held each other there in the living room and sobbed.

There was a knock at the door. We dried our eyes, and I answered it. It was one of the ward members with two missionaries. He apologized for stopping by without an appointment but said they were in the neighborhood and had a feeling they should stop by. He asked if there was anything they could do for us. I said, "Yes, could you please give my son a blessing?" They proceeded to anoint Forrest

with consecrated oil and give him a blessing of health. I thanked them, and they excused themselves.

Forrest's health improved immediately. At Forrest's next appointment, the doctor was impressed with his condition and weight gain. "Was it by chance?" I wondered. Such bleak feelings were not usual for me, and I couldn't explain why I felt better after praying, how Janet had the identical experience at the same time, or how the elders stopped by at the right moment.

I pondered these events over the next two months and concluded that I had been foolish in trying to pass them off as coincidence. I was baptized in January 1985, and our family was sealed in the Dallas Texas Temple in June 1986. I am so thankful that the Lord demonstrated to me that He answers prayer, that the priesthood is powerful, and that the Holy Spirit can be a powerful influence in our lives. My life has been richly blessed by this experience, which helped me know our Father in Heaven in ways that I never could have learned through intellectual study alone. ■