

FROM A SMALL AND SIMPLE INVITATION

BY TOM SMITH



Through an invitation from a friend to read the Book of Mormon, I learned that “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass”

When President Gordon B. Hinckley invited Church members in 2005 to read the Book of Mormon, I was reminded of how a similar invitation had changed my life. Through an invitation from a friend to read the Book of Mormon, I learned that “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (see Alma 37:6).

In the spring of 1979, during my senior year at the University of California, Irvine, I was enrolled in an upper-level Spanish class. I had just left class with my friend Rick Meyers when he asked, “What are you writing your term paper on?”

“The Panama Canal Treaty,” I responded. “What are you writing about?”

“I’m writing about Christ in America,” he stated enthusiastically. I was intrigued and asked him what he meant.

He clarified, “I’m writing about when Christ came to America.”

“I didn’t know He did,” I admitted.

“Well, He did,” he continued. “And since you’re a history major, you would probably like to read the history about it.” When I said I would, Rick invited me to his apartment, where I met his wife and received my first copy of the Book of Mormon.

Later that afternoon I was at home reading when my brother-in-law, Fred, entered and asked me what I was reading. I told him I was reading the Book of Mormon. He surprised me by saying, “I’ll bet you didn’t know I’m a Mormon.” He explained that he had gone to church when he was a boy but had stopped attending when he was 14. Then he said, “You know, seeing you read that book makes me want to read it. Can I borrow it tonight?” I gave him the book, and he stayed up most of the night reading. The next day he went to his bishop and asked how he might return to the Church.

Several days later he invited my sister Marty and me to listen to the missionaries the next Sunday. Marty and I were active in our parents' faith, but we accepted the invitation to attend church with the missionaries after listening to their message. Within two months Marty was baptized.

I continued attending worship meetings with my parents, but I would also go to sacrament and priesthood meetings each week. One Sunday after listening to many testimonies in fast and testimony meeting, I went to the pulpit and said, "I have listened to you all say you know this Church is true. And I do not know that. What I know is that the church I grew up in is a good church and that its members are good people. But with all my heart I want to know if this Church is true. And if it is true, I will join it."

As soon as I said these words, I was filled with a peaceful assurance that indeed the Church was true. I said nothing more. I returned to my seat next to my sister and told her, "I want to be baptized next Sunday." She said, "But you just said you did not know the Church was true."

"Yes," I whispered, "but I know it now!"

I was baptized the next Sunday. A simple invitation from a friend to read the Book of Mormon led to my sister's baptism, then to mine, and then to my call to serve as a missionary in Montevideo, Uruguay,

where I saw many more of Heavenly Father's children enter the waters of baptism. Surely from small and simple things do great things come to pass.

After returning from my mission, I dated Becky, a girl I had dated before leaving for Uruguay. We were married in the Jordan River Utah Temple, and we now have eight children. My other sister and a brother were baptized, and each was later married in the Los Angeles California Temple. My mom and dad were baptized in 1984 and sealed to four of their six children in 1985. My remaining brothers have both recently been baptized. My widowed grandmother, who told me when she was 78 that she was too old to change religions, was baptized when she was 85 and has been sealed to my grandfather. Many generations of our ancestors have now gained the same privilege and blessing of being sealed for eternity.

I am grateful to a friend who told me he was writing his paper on Christ in America and then took the opportunity to invite me to read the Book of Mormon. This small and simple invitation not only changed my life and the lives of my family but began a journey of conversion that will never end. ■

