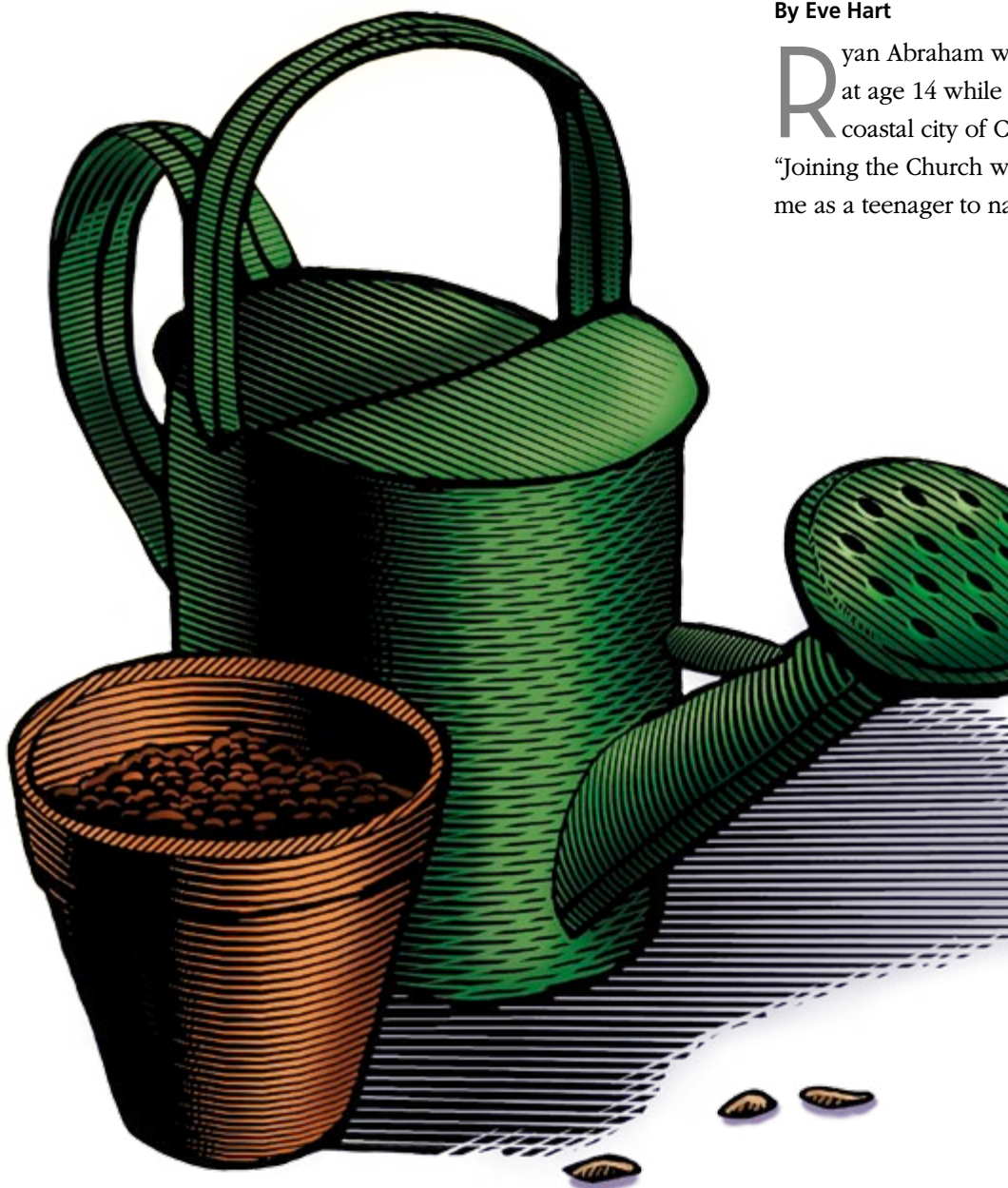


Nurturing

OUR NEW LIVES

By Eve Hart

Ryan Abraham was baptized into the Church at age 14 while living in the mountainous coastal city of Cape Town, South Africa. “Joining the Church was a great blessing—it helped me as a teenager to navigate those years,” he



THE SEED OF FAITH

“One of the purposes of the Church is to nurture and cultivate the seed of faith—even in the sometimes sandy soil of doubt and uncertainty. Faith is to hope for things which are not seen but which are true [see Alma 32:21].

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters—my dear friends—please, first doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 21.

explains. “But after I joined the Church, I learned that you don’t just change where you go to church; you change your life.”

Ryan’s journey has been much like other converts’ journeys: he believed in the truthfulness of the gospel but faced the difficult task of transitioning into a new culture with new expectations. “Sometimes I found myself asking, ‘Can I really do this?’” Ryan says. “But when we live what we know, more knowledge and strength will come. The Lord will make of us what we could never make of ourselves.”

This article is a compilation of converts’ testimonies and experiences. We hope you will find among these seven topics the encouragement you need to stay involved in the Church and nurture your new faith until it can “get root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit” (Alma 32:37).

Overcoming Trials

When we live by the light of the restored gospel, we can endure the turbulence of our mortal existence and live with God again. Our Heavenly Father is waiting to say to us, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21). That is His promise, and He will certainly fulfill it if we do our part.

Elson Carlos Ferreira, baptized in Brazil in 1982

Whenever you feel as if you are the only one who has struggles, you can stop and think about what Christ did for you and how He suffered for you. He will always be there to help us find out who we are and what we are meant to be. He knows us better than we know ourselves.

Mikiko O’Bannon, baptized in Japan in 1993

Working on the Basics

I haven’t done anything extraordinary to remain faithful in the Church. I haven’t walked 50 miles (80 km) to get to sacrament meeting or been thrown into a fiery furnace. But consistently doing simple things—attending Church meetings, studying the scriptures, praying, and serving in callings—has helped me nourish my testimony (see Alma 37:6–7).

Alcenir de Souza, baptized in Brazil in 1991

When I first joined the Church at age 19, I was excited about the gospel, and reading my scriptures daily was an amazing adventure.

However, after some years of membership in the Church, I felt tired physically and spiritually. I dragged myself to church each Sunday, getting little out of the meetings and feeling keen to return home for my Sunday nap.

A conversation with a friend shed some light on my situation. I took inventory of my spiritual habits, and I realized that my prayers had become insincere, and reading the scriptures every morning was a chore—not a pleasure. I realized I needed to add some spiritual nourishment and exercise to my day.

I started praying every morning before reading the scriptures, asking specifically that I would be guided and directed in my study. I worked part-time and had a 15-minute break in the morning that I used to read a few pages of the *Ensign*—my spirit’s midday snack. In the evenings I read uplifting books. On Sundays I read the *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* manual.

Each night as I went to bed, I felt peaceful because I had satisfied my spiritual hunger throughout the day. Because I decided to follow a spiritual regimen every day, I’ve become a more positive person and my testimony has grown.

Tess Hocking, baptized in California, USA, in 1976

Going to the Temple

From the first time I learned about the temple, I really wanted to go there. I learned that the temple is a place where we can perform baptisms for the dead, be sealed as families, and make higher covenants with Heavenly Father. I have prepared myself and kept myself worthy so that I can go to the temple.

Yashinta Wulandari, baptized in Indonesia in 2012

After I got baptized, my boyfriend, JP (who was already a member of the Church), and I planned to get married, but we delayed our wedding day because I wanted to have a big celebration.

On Tuesday, January 12, 2010, my fiancé and I went to school to attend our classes. As I sat at my computer waiting for the professor to start class, the building started to shake. I didn't dare run outside because the shaking was so terrible.

I stood in a corner and closed my eyes, praying to Heavenly Father in my heart: "Please give me a chance to marry JP in the temple."

Moments later, the shaking stopped and I looked around. I couldn't see anything because dust was raining down. I cannot remember how I got out of the room, but I eventually found myself outside. With tears in my eyes, I started screaming JP's name.

I soon found JP's sister. "He is OK!" she shouted. "He's trying to help some students who are stuck under the rubble."

I am not more special than others who were unable to escape, but I know that Heavenly Father answered my prayer. JP and I were married in the temple on April 6, 2010, a little more than a year after my baptism and almost three months after the earthquake. It was a day of peace and joy that I will never forget. We didn't have a big party, but it was the most wonderful thing to me.

Marie Marjorie Labbe, baptized in Haiti in 2009





Sharing the Gospel

As a new member of the Church, I love missionary work. Everyone can be a missionary. Every time you share the gospel with someone, it changes his or her life, but it also helps you strengthen your testimony. People can see the light in your eyes, and they will want to know why you have such an amazing spirit. Doing missionary work not only gives people a chance to learn about the Church but also helps them feel the Spirit and have personal spiritual experiences.

Elena Hunt, baptized in Arizona, USA, in 2008

I love missionary work! Three months after my baptism, I traveled to Martinique to spend time with my family for summer break. I spoke to my brother every day about the Book of Mormon and the gospel.

I invited him to church the first Sunday, but he declined. The second Sunday, he followed me to church. At the end of the meetings, he was mostly indifferent, as if he hadn't experienced anything special during those three hours.

Even though I continued to speak to him about the gospel the following week, I didn't invite him to come to church this time.

A miracle happened Saturday evening: while ironing my Sunday clothes for the next day, I noticed he was doing the same thing.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

He answered, "I'm going to church with you tomorrow."

"I'm not forcing you to come," I said.

But he responded, "I want to come."

He continued coming to church each Sunday after that.

After I returned to southern France, where I was going to school, my brother told me over the telephone that he was going to be baptized. I told him I would like to be present at his baptism but that the most important thing was that he would still be in the Church when I returned to Martinique.

One year later, I visited again. During sacrament meeting, my brother testified with great strength of the truth of the gospel. I shed tears when I think that my brother, with whom I have shared the most beautiful moments of my life, can also share with me the gospel of our Lord (see Alma 26:11–16).

Ludovic Christophe Occolier, baptized in France in 2004

To learn more about how you can share the gospel with your friends and family, consider reading the following: Elder M. Russell Ballard, "Put Your Trust in the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 43; Elder Neil L. Andersen, "It's A Miracle," *Ensign*, May 2013, 77; Elder Dallin H. Oaks, "Sharing the Gospel," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 7. See also www.lds.org/training/wwlt/2013/hastening.

FIRST-TIME FAMILY HISTORIAN?

You can extend the joy you felt at your baptism to others by working on your family history and helping your ancestors come unto Christ. FamilySearch.org is a great place to start. You can build your family tree by adding family members with their birth and death dates. Family history consultants in your ward or branch can help you find your ancestors and their information, including censuses and marriage certificates. As you collect information, you and others can perform temple ordinances for your deceased relatives.

Doing Family History Work

After I received the missionary lessons, I prayed to know whether the gospel was true. My beloved grandfather came to me in a dream and testified of its truth. At this point, I began to understand my divine obligation to my ancestors. President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said it this way: “When you were baptized, your ancestors looked down on you with hope. Perhaps after centuries, they rejoiced to see one of their descendants make a covenant to find them and to offer them freedom. . . . Their hearts are bound to you. Their hope is in your hands.”¹

Steven E. Nabor, baptized in Utah, USA, in 1979

My wife, Laura, and I were heartbroken when our first child, our four-month-old daughter, Cynthia Marie, died because of complications with spina bifida. This tragedy caused us, two grieving young parents, to search for a way to be with our daughter again someday. We were not members of the Church at the time.

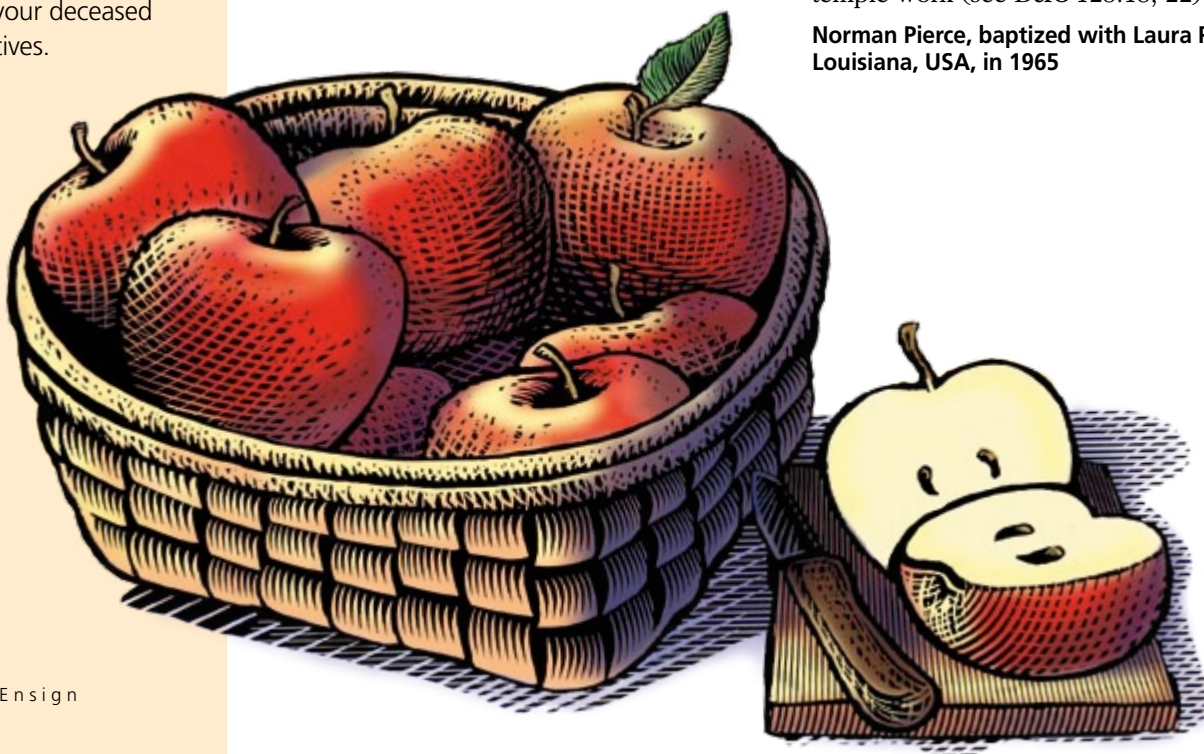
One morning Laura poured out her heart to Heavenly Father, pleading, “Dear Father, I want to be with my daughter again someday, but I don’t know how. Please show me how.”

At that moment there was a knock on our door. Laura went to answer it with tears still streaming down her face. There stood two missionaries. Eventually, Laura and I both gained a testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and were baptized.

Laura wanted to make sure that all our family members had the chance to receive the gospel. For the first 15 years after our baptism, Laura prepared names for the temple, and then we took them to the temple together. After a while Laura’s arthritis got so bad that I took the names to the temple unaccompanied.

Laura passed away three years ago after a long battle with arthritis. Searching for a way to be with our little girl has brought about the temple work of thousands of our beloved ancestors. We have experienced many miracles while doing family history research and temple work (see D&C 128:18, 22).

Norman Pierce, baptized with Laura Pierce in Louisiana, USA, in 1965



Participating during Church Meetings

Praying at church, commenting during lessons, and speaking in sacrament meeting bless both you and those listening. When you speak in the name of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit works through you. Heavenly Father not only speaks through the scriptures and prophets and apostles but also speaks through you in order to answer someone's questions, strengthen someone's weaknesses, or ease someone's doubts.

When the bishop asked me to share my testimony in the sacrament meeting after my baptism, I felt scared and inadequate. I had never spoken in front of a congregation.

"Is this really necessary?" I asked the bishop.

"Yes!" he said.

In sacrament meeting, I testified about how Heavenly Father loves me and how He answered my prayers by helping me find the restored gospel. When I stood at the podium, I felt the Holy Spirit so strongly. I felt blessed to

be a member of Christ's true Church. My heart was full of happiness and peace. Heavenly Father turned my fear of speaking into a beautiful experience.

The next month I had the opportunity to give a talk in sacrament meeting. I felt scared again—who was I to teach those who knew more about the gospel? But I prayed for the Holy Spirit to help me speak. Once again I felt the Spirit touch me, and I received the impression that Heavenly Father was pleased with my baptism and that my sins were forgiven.

I know from my experiences that I am a precious child of God and He loves me. Speaking in sacrament meeting was a valuable opportunity for me to serve God by testifying that Jesus Christ has restored His Church upon the earth.

Pamella Sari, baptized in Indonesia in 2012

Serving in the Church

A Church calling helps you learn the gospel and gives you a responsibility that will get you to church and help you to serve others, even when you are struggling.

Su'e Tervola, baptized in Hawaii, USA, in 2008

Visiting teaching and home teaching provide opportunities to feel and to see true Christlike compassion. They provide experiences in humility and love that can forever change you. As Heavenly Father's children, our services are needed to help spread acts of kindness throughout His vineyard.²

Cheryl Allen, baptized in Michigan, USA, in 1980

Soon after I was baptized, the branch president called me as the Young Men president. It was excellent to be with the youth and to help them learn about the gospel.

At the same time I was teaching, I was learning. This was the first in a series of callings that I received. With each of my responsibilities, I felt joy and pleasure for the new challenges. President Thomas S. Monson has taught: "Remember that whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies."³ I had to trust and believe with humility that I would be capable. And in less than six months as a member, I had the great opportunity to become familiar with the programs in the Church.

Germano Lopes, baptized in Brazil in 2004 ■

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, "Hearts Bound Together," *Ensign*, May 2005, 80.
2. See *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 103–124; Thomas S. Monson, "Home Teaching—a Divine Service," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 46.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "Duty Calls," *Ensign*, May 1996, 44.