

One Couple Serving, ONE FAMILY LEARNING

*Recipe for a miracle: two couples, two inspired leaders,
one question, and one knock on the door.*

By Mindy Anne Leavitt

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Lonne and Nancy Gubler of Santa Clara, Utah, sat in their stake president's office, stunned. The stake president had just told them that he felt inspired that they needed to serve a mission and wanted them to submit their mission papers as soon as possible. While the Gublers had considered serving a full-time mission together—in 10 years or so—they felt unprepared to do so at age 48.

Their stake president had been trying to ignore the prompting that they should be called to serve, knowing how young they were. When the feeling wouldn't be quelled, he finally went to Lonne's father, a former stake president himself, and asked if it would even be feasible for his son and daughter-in-law to serve. "We'll do whatever it takes to make it possible," he replied. Satisfied with that answer, the stake president called the Gublers in for a meeting, where he expressed his feeling that they should serve a mission.

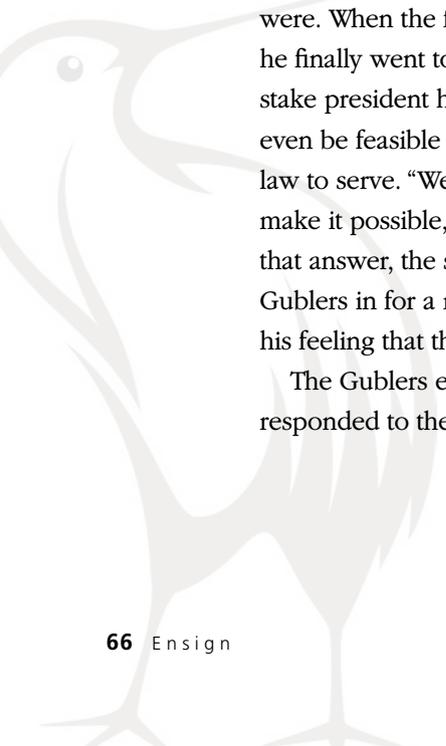
The Gublers exercised their faith and responded to their stake president's charge.

They received a call to serve in the New Zealand Auckland Mission. Their call didn't specify what they would be doing, and as neither of them had ever left home or served a mission in their youth, they were understandably nervous.

Through a series of miracles, they were able to get their finances in order for the time they'd be serving. All three of the Gublers' children were grown and married, their two daughters living nearby. Lonne's father, a self-employed rancher like his son, agreed to oversee the Gublers' own farm and ranch, with their sons-in-law taking over the work, allowing the Gublers to leave for 18 months.

Sister Gubler explains, "Leaving our children and grandchildren was probably the hardest thing we have ever done, but we knew the Lord had a plan for us and we were ready to serve Him with all we had!

"We felt very inadequate in the MTC, placed in a district with former mission presidents, stake presidents, and a patriarch. We







TRUST IN THE LORD'S PLAN FOR US

"The Lord knows what He wants to accomplish with each one of us. He knows the kind of reform He wants to achieve in our lives, and we do not have the right to counsel Him. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts [see Isaiah 55:8–9]."

Elder Rafael E. Pino of the Seventy, "The Eternal Perspective of the Gospel," *Ensign*, May 2015, 119.

were just a small-town couple who had always served in the Church, but never to that degree. We didn't know our scriptures as well as we should have, so we studied hard and gave it the best we had!"

Armed with that preparation and the assurance they felt regarding the Lord's plan for them, they set off on their missionary service.

An Unexpected Question

Meanwhile, halfway around the world sat another stunned couple, Reuben and Nara Hayward of Gisborne, New Zealand. They had not been active in the Church for over 11 years and hadn't taught their two sons anything about the gospel, when one day their eight-year-old son, Hikurangi, asked about the meaning of life. "It came out of nowhere," Reuben recalls. "There was no reason for him to want to know about that."

Still, the Haywards knew they had to give their son an answer, and they didn't want to withhold from him their knowledge of the gospel. "We both felt an overwhelming sense of responsibility to teach him the truth," Nara explains. "Even though we weren't active, we never denied the truthfulness of the gospel. We just didn't think the Church was something we needed in our lives at that time."

In the days following their son's unexpected question, the Haywards considered what to tell him. The couple discussed contacting the bishop and getting in touch with the missionaries, but didn't.

A few days later there was a knock on the Haywards' door. There, scared to death and fresh off the plane from the United States, stood the Gublers. They had been sent by the Haywards' bishop, who knew the family—and also knew they were obstinately opposed to receiving missionaries. For more than a decade, Reuben had been chasing missionaries and any other Church-related visitors off their doorstep. "Reuben was ruthless to anybody that came to their home," Sister Gubler explains.

But for Nara, it was a sign. "When the Gublers came to our home it was kind of another wake-up call for us. We didn't call them, but there they were. It was the first time in a long time that I allowed myself to feel the Spirit testify of our Heavenly Father's love for us. It was no coincidence that they called on us that day, and I knew the moment they walked up my driveway that they were inspired by the Lord." Reuben must have felt so too, because for the first time ever, he allowed missionaries to come inside his home. But, as Sister Gubler says, "It wasn't about us—it was all about timing."

A Special Connection

The Haywards felt a special connection to the Gublers right away, asking if the missionary couple would come back every week to teach their two sons. The Gublers happily agreed. Sister Gubler taught the Haywards' sons, Whaimutu and Hikurangi, while Elder Gubler subtly tried to relate the lessons to the Haywards themselves.



Lonne and Nancy Gubler (far right) with Reuben and Nara Hayward and their sons, Whaimutu and Hikurangi. The Haywards have since added a daughter, Theia-Christine, to their family.

The day of the baptism, Reuben's parents were overjoyed, to say the least, to realize that not only were their grandsons getting baptized but their son and daughter-in-law had returned to Church activity and were working toward becoming an eternal family. Similar to Alma the Elder's experience, their prayers and fasting in behalf of their children were answered (see Mosiah 27:14).

A few months after Reuben baptized his sons, the family was sealed in the Hamilton New Zealand Temple. Since

After a few lessons, the Gublers asked if they could pick the children up for church. They were surprised when the Haywards said that they would come to church together, as a family. Little by little, the Haywards' sons soaked up the message of the gospel and the Haywards were reminded of truths they had learned long ago.

Finally, the Gublers decided to ask the Haywards for permission to baptize their sons. Reuben shocked them again with his answer: "Yes, they can be baptized, but I want to be the one to do it."

Over the following months, the Haywards worked to obey the Word of Wisdom and overcome other issues to prepare themselves and their sons for their sons' baptisms. They made sure to invite Reuben's parents to the baptism, not telling them that it would be Reuben performing the ordinance. Throughout the Haywards' 11 years of inactivity, Reuben's parents, devout members, had never given up on the hope of their son's family returning to the Church. They had fasted weekly and prayed daily that Reuben and his family would come back, pleading with the Lord to send someone who might be able to touch their hearts.

their reactivation, two of Nara's brothers have also returned to the Church, and her mother has completed the temple ordinances for her husband and been sealed to him. Both Reuben and Nara have now served in leadership positions in their ward. Reuben's parents were inspired to serve a mission themselves, hoping that they might reach another couple's wayward son or daughter, as the Gublers had with theirs.

The Lord Knows All

Two couples' lives were changed forever—thanks to the Gublers' inspired stake president and their willingness to serve, and the Haywards' inspired bishop and their willingness to change.

Sister Gubler says, "We are so thankful the Lord put the Haywards in our path. He knows all. He puts us in places for a reason.

"We are also thankful for a stake president who followed his promptings to call us on our mission. We know the power of couple missionaries! They are needed so much! We didn't know how we could ever leave our business or our family, but we knew the Lord would provide a way. And He did. It is nothing short of a miracle." ■