

A VOICE OF THUNDER, A VOICE OF SILENCE

By Kristin Boyce

I had been on my mission only a few weeks when I was awakened in the middle of the night by a rumbling sound. It started in the distance and grew louder as it approached. Soon our entire house was shaking. Fairly quickly the pounding ceased, and the roaring sound faded. Fortunately my companion had warned me that earthquakes were common. Since everything seemed fine, I rolled over and soon went back to sleep.

Several weeks after my middle-of-the-night wake-up, I heard people talking about an earthquake earlier that morning. I wondered what was wrong with them, since I hadn't heard or felt anything. Confused, I finally asked when the "earthquake" had occurred. Realizing that I was exercising or showering at the time mentioned, I couldn't believe it had really happened. The first earthquake had woken me up, so surely if there had been another when I was awake, I would have noticed.

But this was just the first of many supposed earthquakes. I never felt them, so I wondered if people were confused as to what an earthquake was like.

After eight months of what I thought were pretend earthquakes, my Sunday School teacher paused midsentence to say, "Feel that? There was an earthquake." Everyone nodded in agreement—except me. I didn't understand. There was no rumble or roar. My chair didn't

shake. The walls didn't rattle. How could there have been an earthquake?

Then I tried to remember what I had felt when the teacher mentioned the earthquake. It was an ever-so-slight dizziness—almost as if I had just spun around. Could that subtle feeling be an earthquake?

Because of my teacher, I started to be

aware and to know that the supposed earthquakes were real. I realized that I hadn't felt them when I was exercising or showering or sleeping because they were just a subtle shake. But gradually I became more aware of a dizzy feeling or a slight sway, recognizing it as evidence of an earthquake.

Later in my mission, I had a new missionary as a companion. One day when we were teaching, a woman said, "Oh, an earthquake," and I agreed. My companion looked at us as if we were crazy.

But I pointed out the slight sway of the hanging lamp and assured her that with time she too would feel the subtle shifting of the earth.

I'm so grateful for what earthquakes taught me about recognizing the Spirit. There are times when the Spirit is undeniable, a voice of thunder piercing our souls. Yet more often, the Spirit is a silent whisper, a new thought, an impression, a subtle feeling of something to do or say (see Helaman 5:30). If we notice only the strong soul shaking, we miss many of the sweet impressions of the Spirit. We may sometimes need others to point out the feelings of the Spirit so we can focus our attention and fine-tune our perceptions. When we do, we find an entirely new world of awareness and wonder. ■



How could others feel earthquakes when I was oblivious to them? The answer taught me about more than just seismology.