

WHERE COULD I FIND ANSWERS?

When I was 21, missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were teaching English classes in my area of Russia. I initially attended for the language lessons, but I soon began to stay longer for the spiritual thoughts the elders shared after class and to ask them questions.

I had been raised in the predominant religion of my country, but I had lots of unanswered religious questions. The missionaries and the members of their Church had answers to questions that no one in the past had been able to provide to my satisfaction.

Feeling particularly bold after one English class, I asked the missionaries for a copy of their book, the Book of Mormon. But when I got home, I placed it unread on a shelf.

It didn't stay there long, however. I'd heard members of the Church who attended the English class say that the scriptures had solutions to problems. So when I encountered personal challenges or problems, I pulled the Book of Mormon off the shelf and began to read. Invariably, I found answers—the kind of answers that told me exactly what I needed to know.

At that point I began to feel that I could not live without the Church. It was where I wanted to be. It was where I felt I belonged.



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Still, I wanted to be sure by asking God. The problem was that I lived in a small one-room apartment that I shared with my landlord, an elderly woman, and there was no private place for me to pray. But one evening I slipped by myself into the kitchen—slightly separated from the rest of our home—and asked Heavenly Father if the Church was true. I received such a strong feeling in response that I knew what I needed to do.

I was baptized a short while later, and my time as a member of the Church has been the happiest of my life. Where before I had questions, now I have answers. Where before I felt empty, now I feel full.

I am grateful that Heavenly Father has not left us without answers. I know that He will speak to us, both through prayer and through the scriptures. ■

Olga Ovcharenko, Sverdlovsk Oblast, Russia

I FELT A FIRE INSIDE

I grew up attending Sunday School at a church next door to my childhood home in Michigan, USA. I had a wonderful teacher who filled me with a love for Jesus Christ.

Each week she passed out cards illustrating events from the Savior's mortal ministry, including principles He taught and miracles He performed. Each week I pasted the cards into a scrapbook and reread the stories in the Bible. As I grew older, I continued to study the Gospels in the New Testament.

Years later, during the summer of 1968, missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints visited the home of a family member. She declined the elders' invitation to learn about the Church but sent them to my home.

At our first meeting the missionaries taught me that "a falling away" had occurred from the Church that Jesus Christ had established (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3). What they taught coincided with my personal study, so when they asked if they could visit me again, I agreed.

During their next visit, I had a list of questions. Did Latter-day Saints baptize by immersion? Did they believe in priesthood authority? Did they believe in the healing of the sick? Their answers supported what I had studied in the New Testament. At the end of the visit, they left me with a book they said testified of Jesus Christ.

I set the book on top of the TV and went to bed. But in the middle of the night, I was awakened by a strong feeling I later recognized as the Holy Ghost. I felt prompted to start reading, so I read for an hour and a half before returning to bed. A short time later, I reawakened with the same feeling, so I read some more.

This pattern continued for the next two nights. I loved what I was reading and recognized that the Book of Mormon testified of Jesus Christ.

I decided to ask God for direction. For the first time since I was a little girl, I knelt to pray. I asked Heavenly Father to help me know what to do with the fire I felt inside of me. When I finished my prayer, I felt prompted to revisit the account of the Lamanites' conversion in 3 Nephi 9. I read that they "were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not" (verse 20).

The phrase "they knew it not" spoke to me. The thought came to me: "The Church of Jesus Christ really is on the earth!" I was eager to talk to the missionaries about what I had read and what I now knew. But when they responded to my questions with an invitation to be baptized, I told them I couldn't. My husband wouldn't understand.

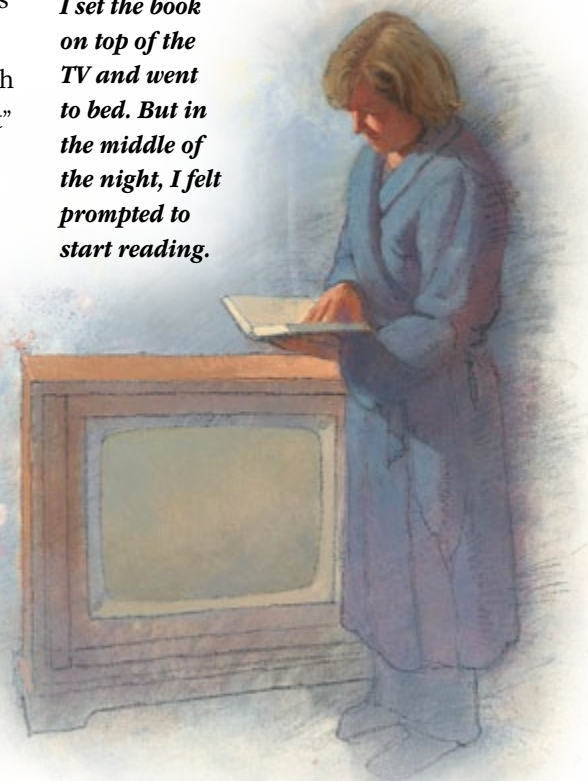
As I continued to think about that verse, however, I realized that it contained clear direction for me to offer the sacrifice of "a broken heart and a contrite spirit." I prayed and asked my Father in

Heaven to help me, which He did. After my husband took the missionary discussions, he gave his consent for me to be baptized.

How grateful I am to a loving Heavenly Father for that precious and powerful experience I had as a young mother in reading the Book of Mormon. It led me to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result, the influence of the Holy Ghost I felt those nights in 1968 is now a constant gift—something that has guided me during my more than 40 years as a member of the Church. ■

Claudia Williams, Florida, USA

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THE BOOK OF MORMON SPOKE TO ME

When our youngest child, Amanda, was two years old, she was diagnosed with leukemia. Her case was difficult, and her cancer did not go into remission following chemotherapy. She then had to have a bone marrow transplant.

While my husband and two sons were home in Utah, I stayed with Amanda in another state from September until the first part of January. We missed celebrating Christmas together, but with the end of follow-up care, we returned home.

On our first visit to the hospital for a checkup after returning home, doctors again found leukemia cells in Amanda's blood. The transplant had failed. Hearing the news, I felt as though I were sinking right through the floor. Our family had been through a lot of worry, work,

separation, and difficult times. Now we would lose our daughter anyway.

I returned home that afternoon to my two sons. While we waited for my husband to come home from work, we got out our copies of the Book of Mormon and began to read. We were in 2 Nephi 9. As we read, the following words spoke to me:

"I speak unto you these things that ye may rejoice, and lift up your heads forever, because of the blessings which the Lord God shall bestow upon your children.

"For I know that ye have searched much, many of you, to know of things to come; wherefore I know that ye know that our flesh must waste away and die; nevertheless, in our bodies we shall see God. . . .

"For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the

great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection. . . .

"O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death. . . .

"And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam.

"And he suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day" (2 Nephi 9:3–4, 6, 10, 21–22).

As I read these words, the Holy Ghost filled the room. I felt that my Heavenly Father knew the news I had received that day. I felt that the words the prophet Jacob had written more than 2,000 years before were written to me for that day and came directly from the Savior. He knew the pain and sadness I felt after hearing that our daughter would die. And He was there to comfort our family with His promise that He had prepared a way and that one day, through the power of the Resurrection, "in our bodies we shall see God."

Amanda lived for almost another year, but I have never forgotten that day when the words of the Book of Mormon spoke to me in my need and the Lord gave me hope, comfort, and understanding of His plan. ■

Gina Baird, Utah, USA

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I PUT MORONI'S PROMISE TO THE TEST

A few years ago I was at the house of a friend when I met two well-dressed young men who introduced themselves as Latter-day Saint missionaries. I thought it was strange that they had come all the way to Italy to convert people who already believed in the Savior.

I later asked them to come to my house. "If you want, you can come see me for a cultural exchange," I said. "But don't think I'm going to change religions."

When we met the next night, the missionaries spoke of the Book of Mormon. I thought it strange that I had never heard of it before. I invited them back, but after the second visit my wife, Anna Maria, decided they were crazy and would leave the house during our discussions. The missionaries seemed a little unusual to me as well, but I was curious to know what they had to say and continued to meet with them.

One night when Anna Maria came home, she heard us talking about eternal marriage. This greatly interested her, and we decided that we would start the discussions again together. She had a great knowledge of the scriptures and always had a long list of questions. The elders answered some of them right away, but others they had to go home and research. Each week without fail



I asked Heavenly Father, "Is the Book of Mormon true, and if so, when should I be baptized?"

they returned with responses, and each week Anna Maria had another list of questions.

Shortly after we had finished the discussions, Anna Maria surprised me by asking for my permission to be baptized. I told her I had nothing against it if she was truly converted. I attended her baptism on March 5, 1995, enjoying a wonderful feeling during the service.

I continued to read extensively about the Church, and the missionaries continued to encourage me. Finally I decided to put Moroni's promise to the test (see Moroni 10:4–5). I wanted to know whether the Book of Mormon came from God or whether it was just a nice novel.

One day in June 1995 while I was alone at home, I knelt at the foot of my bed and asked Heavenly Father, "Is the Book of Mormon true, and if so, when should I be baptized?" Suddenly I felt in my heart and in my

mind a clear voice that told me, "The Book of Mormon is true." I then had a clear impression when to be baptized. A week later I prayed again and received the same answer. My heart was bursting with joy. I now knew that God had spoken to me: the Book of Mormon was inspired of God and Joseph Smith was a true prophet.

Finally, on September 17, 1995, I entered the waters of baptism, a year and a half since I started meeting with the missionaries. Soon our daughter, Aba Chiara, became interested in the Church and was also baptized. In January 1997 our family was sealed in the Bern Switzerland Temple.

We know that this is the true Church, governed by Jesus Christ through a prophet and the priesthood. We are thankful to the Lord for His love, for leading us to the missionaries, and for our knowledge of the gospel. ■

Francesco Ferraresi, Lombardy, Italy