

I PRAYED FOR COURAGE

My parents are members of the Church, but they're not very active. This sometimes leads to conflicts because they believe family time should come before everything else—before going to church, magnifying my Church callings, and doing other activities.

Because I am a leader in the Primary and a member of the ward choir, my Church meetings sometimes interfere with family duties. One day when I was preparing to attend a general conference broadcast at our meetinghouse in Antananarivo, my parents reminded me that we had guests in our home.

"You'll have to choose between your family and the Church," my mother told me. "Either you stay here with us and miss conference, or you go to conference and face punishment."

I decided not to get into an argument with my mother. Instead, I took a moment to ask Heavenly Father to give me courage and strength. I also asked Him to help me know what to do. Should I stay home with my family or go to church and hear the voice of the prophet?

As soon as I finished my prayer, I could feel the Holy Ghost. I could feel the Spirit encourage me to tell my mother how important it was for me to go and listen to the prophet. I felt that I should tell her that I would receive wise counsel not only for my life today but also for my future.

God can do miraculous things, and He softened my parents' hearts so that they let me go to general conference without being punished. This was a remarkable experience in my

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life. It confirmed to me the truth of the scripture that says, "By the power of the Holy Ghost [we] may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5).

I know that if we base our actions on the principles of the gospel and listen to the Spirit, we can always be happy with our choices. This experience strengthened my testimony that God is there for us and that the Holy Ghost helps us in our lives. ■

Fy Tianarivelo, Madagascar



WHERE I BELONG

Before I joined the Church, my life was full of unhappiness. Following my parents' divorce when I was seven years old, my father went to prison. My mother was an alcoholic and lost everything that was important to her. I was sent to live with a foster family.

Because of these things, I grew up a lot faster than many of my peers. I never quite felt that I could find my place, and consequently I was constantly in a state of rebellion. When I was still very young, I began smoking and doing other things that I now understand are contrary to the Word of Wisdom. I was certain I was doomed to fail in life.

The one thing I did find happiness in was helping people—whether it was cleaning alongside them or listening to their life stories. I desperately wanted people to know they could depend on me. One year I went on vacation and met an elderly woman I decided to serve by listening to her. She was a Christian and started to talk to me about religion.

I had never really believed in God. At times, when I had thought that *maybe* He existed, I blamed Him for the troubling things I had experienced. But as this woman described the importance of faith in God, I found myself intrigued. Before I left, she said something that was particularly interesting: “The Mormons follow God’s commandments.”

I had never heard of the Mormons,

so I went home, got online, and searched. I arrived at Mormon.org and ordered a free copy of the Book of Mormon. Missionaries delivered it a few days later.

I wasn't sure I could start to believe in God, but the missionaries helped me discover that I could not only believe in Him but also know Him. As I began to pray and study the Book of Mormon, I found myself on a beautiful journey of finding happiness. I quit smoking. I stopped blaming God and started thanking Him for the good things in my life. I came to know that His Son had suffered for my sins and for all the pain I had ever felt. On October 28, 2007, I was baptized into His Church.

If I hadn't personally experienced the change from disillusionment to

happiness, I wouldn't believe it is possible. Today I love my calling in Primary and am grateful to have had the opportunity to help organize a service project at a young single adult conference in Poland. To be able to regularly help others through Church service has added to the happiness I have found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Everything I do now, I do with pure love because of Jesus Christ. I believe that life is beautiful and that even when we have challenges, if we follow the Savior, we won't be lost.

The woman I met was right: having faith in God *is* crucial. We cannot find our place in this world if we don't know Him. I am grateful to finally have a place where I know I belong. ■
Dorota Musiał, Poland

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TELL US ABOUT YOUR CHURCH

On a trip to visit my brother, I was seated in the back of the plane where the flight attendants sit. The two rows of seats in that area face each other.

I introduced myself to the people sitting around me and then mentioned that I would be attending Brigham Young University. A man sitting across from me said his daughter had a good friend who had just left on a full-time mission. His daughter knew a little about the Church, but he knew almost nothing. The flight attendant immediately proclaimed that she wouldn't want to belong to "that church" because it opposed women. The man said he had heard something similar—that Latter-day Saint women were considered less than men, that they couldn't hold the priesthood or preside in meetings, and that the Church was male dominated.

Then, turning to me, he asked, "How do *you* feel about that?" All seven people turned to me and waited.

My heart began pounding. As a child I had memorized the Articles of Faith for just such an encounter, and as a teenager and young adult I had practiced bearing testimony of Joseph Smith's vision and of the Book of Mormon. But I didn't have the faintest idea how to answer the man's question. I prayed silently for Heavenly Father to guide me.

Then I said the first words that came to my mind: "You simply don't know about Relief Society." The looks on their faces indicated that they didn't.

"The priesthood functions in conjunction with the women, all of whom are members of Relief Society," I explained. "We have a woman Relief Society president who guides the activities of the women in the Church all over the world. The responsibility of the women is to bring tenderness and charity into the lives of the members and especially into the lives of their families."

The people around me listened attentively.

"We live in a strange time when some women want women to act and think and be like men. But we believe God divides tasks. We expect women to be leaders among the women and joint leaders in their homes. The men lean heavily on us for counsel in these areas. It is a righteous balance. It makes our Church organizations and our homes successful. And we truly believe that the man is not without the woman, nor is the woman without the man in the Lord (see 1 Corinthians 11:11). We believe we are not whole without each other. We do not believe we were created to compete with one another but to complement one another."

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I felt blessed when I had finished. I knew the words I had spoken were from the Spirit. Every person seemed satisfied with my explanation. Then the man said, "Tell us more about your church."

Then, for the next two hours, I had the joyous opportunity of talking about the Restoration, answering questions, and bearing testimony of the gospel I love. ■

Shauna Moore, Virginia, USA

SHOULD I CHOOSE WORK OR CHURCH?

My wife and I were married in 1981 in the Tokyo Japan Temple. Our life after marriage was not easy at first. I was grateful to have a job, but we had trouble meeting our expenses. We asked Heavenly Father for His help and did all we could to

make ends meet and pay our tithing. We knew that if we trusted in the Lord, He would provide for us.

One week both my wife and my friend brought me the same small clipping out of the newspaper. It was an ad for a full-time English teacher.

I sent my résumé to the

company and was asked to come in for an interview. At the end of the interview, the interviewer said, "You wrote in your résumé that you had been involved in volunteer work as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. So that means you go to church on Sundays, don't you? If you had to decide whether to go to church or to work on Sundays, which would you choose?"

It was a difficult question because I needed a better job. But after pondering, I replied, "I would go to church."

With a vague smile, the interviewer said, "Oh, I see." Then he dismissed me with the promise that the company would make a decision by that evening and that I should call to find out the results. As I left the room, I thought I had failed.

Later that evening when it came time to call, I dialed the company's number with great fear.

"What about the results of the interview?" I asked the secretary. "I failed, didn't I?"

I was stunned but happy with her answer.

"We'd like to ask you to work for us," she said.

About a month later I learned why I got the job. The secretary explained that the interviewer lived next door to full-time Latter-day Saint missionaries. He had often watched the missionaries briskly riding their bicycles to their work in the morning.



The interviewer asked me, "If you had to decide whether to go to church or to work on Sundays, which would you choose?"

"He believed that you, belonging to the same church, would work for us just as hard as the missionaries worked for their church," she said. "Lucky you!"

Since then our family has always had what we needed.

Whenever I think of this choice experience, I am encouraged and comforted. I know that God often uses other people to bless His children. I cannot adequately express how grateful I feel for my wife and my friend for their inspiration in bringing that newspaper ad to me, for those hard-working missionaries and their great example, and for our merciful, loving, and caring Heavenly Father, who has miraculous power to consecrate our experiences for our good. ■

Kenya Ishii, Japan