

WE WERE BOTH BLESSED

BY JENNIFER COLEMAN

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tolerating our visits.
Would we ever be friends?*

The two and a half years that Cami (name has been changed) was on my visiting teaching route were a challenge. She didn't return our phone calls. Sometimes she stood us up when we were able to make an appointment, or she often called at the last minute to cancel. She and her husband both came from solid Latter-day Saint families, but they had not been active in the Church for several years.

When I got discouraged about her lack of interest in having visiting teachers, I would reflect on how I would feel if I had a daughter or sister who had placed herself outside the warm embrace of the gospel. I would want her visiting teachers to be loving and persistent. Cami even told me once that her mother had prayed she would have good visiting teachers. That encouraged me, even if Cami thought she didn't need us.

Because Cami was so unpredictable, I often dropped by unannounced. Sometimes I would only visit on her doorstep because I had come at a busy time. I dropped off

cookies, jam, or bread occasionally to let her know I was thinking about her. I also tried to add an extra phone call each month so we could visit a little longer and I could get a better idea of how she was doing.

I never had any indication that she appreciated my visits or phone calls or that she found them helpful in any way. Most of the time I felt like a pest that she was merely tolerating.

After many months, Cami agreed to let my companion and me take her to lunch on her birthday. As we sat in the restaurant, Cami commented on how nice it was to go out to lunch. In fact, she said, she had never been out to lunch with girlfriends. This really surprised me, and I was glad we had been able to arrange the outing.

Cami started responding more warmly when we called and was more welcoming when we visited. Then I learned that she was about to move from the area. Two or three months before the move, I stopped by her home. While I was there, she said she had something for me. She went into the other room and came out holding a large, beautifully



framed copy of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” She hugged me and told me that my friendship had meant a great deal to her and that she wanted to thank me. I was dumbfounded and touched by her generous gift.

As I was getting into my car to leave, her husband came out to talk to me. He had always been a little standoffish and had seemed even less thrilled with my visits than Cami had. But that day he looked into my eyes and said, “I want to thank you for being a friend to Cami. It’s meant a lot to her.” His eyes teared up, as did mine.

Shortly before she left, Cami called me one afternoon and asked if I would do her a favor. I said of course I would. (She had never asked me for anything, and I was thrilled that she would reach out.) She then shared with me some things she was troubled about and asked if my husband, Kevin, might be willing to give her a blessing. She didn’t know him, but because she felt close to me, she felt comfortable asking.

Kevin and our bishop gave her a lovely, inspired blessing. I think it was the first spiritual nourishment she’d had in many years.

At our final good-bye, the two of us went out to lunch and had a good conversation. She thanked me for being a good friend and said, “Because of your love, I want to come back to church.” She told me that she was going to be active in her new ward and take her children to church. I was so happy to know that she was going to once again embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ. I bore my testimony to her that the gospel is the only way we find peace and happiness in this life.

As I left her house, I was overcome with gratitude for this experience with Cami.

As I thought about what she had told me—that the love she felt from her visiting teachers had made a difference in her life—I saw the power of the pure love of Christ. The results were amazing.

Visiting teaching—even when it’s difficult—is a powerful tool for good. Service in the Lord’s behalf is never wasted, and we never know what good might come from it later. Some of my greatest joys and closest friendships have come through visiting teaching. I know the Lord will enlarge our abilities and magnify our efforts as we are faithful and consistent in fulfilling this important responsibility. ■

