

Following Heavenly Father's PLAN FOR YOU

By Shelley D. Bennett

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When I turned 20, I wanted to finish my university education. I also deeply desired to serve a full-time mission. The minimum age for sister missionaries at that time was 21, so I was preparing for a mission while still enrolled in school.

During one evening activity at the institute, I met a seemingly shy, *very* recently returned missionary—he had been home only 24 hours! Rand and I quickly became friends. We got to know one another at group activities, and then, as we began dating, our friendship deepened.

After several months and much fasting and prayer, Rand asked me to marry him. I felt love for him, but I felt conflicted because I still yearned to serve a mission. I also felt inadequate as a future wife and mother. Those feelings led me to decline his offer of marriage.

Over the next few weeks, Rand expressed to me that he felt he had received his own personal revelation, but he also knew he needed to respect my own inspiration. I appreciated his respect and encouragement for me to seek my own personal revelation.

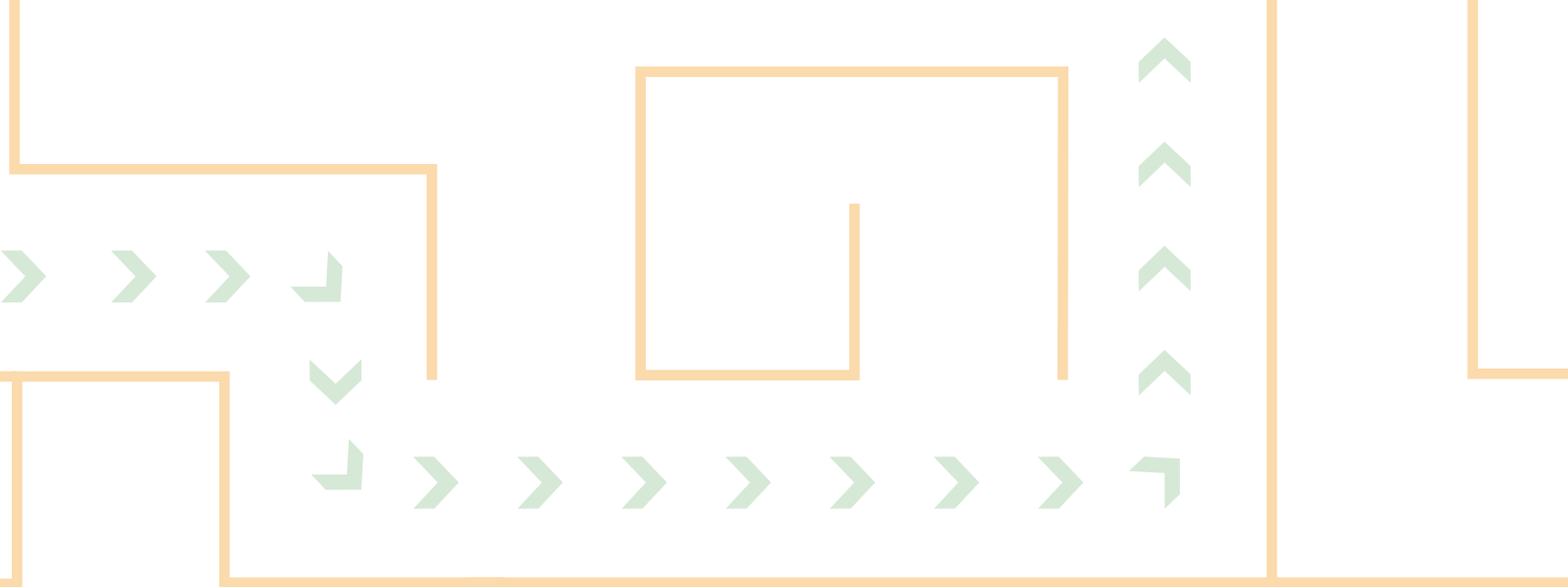
Rand asked—and I declined—more than once, but at no point was he offended. He just felt that the Spirit was prompting him to be gently persistent.

Throughout this time we both searched our scriptures and the words of our prophet and apostles. One evening Rand was reading the counsel of the prophet, which reemphasized the importance of temple marriage. I smile today as I remember him bringing me flowers and his highlighted copy of that Church magazine. He sincerely asked me if I would read the prophetic counsel, focusing on the highlighted parts, and then prayerfully ponder that counsel.

As he was leaving, Rand suddenly turned back and said, “I *will* take you on a mission and we will serve as missionary companions after we have raised our family—I *promise*.” I didn’t feel pressure; I simply felt Rand’s encouragement to seek again for an answer from Heavenly Father.

This time as I read the words of our prophet and then pondered, fasted, and prayed, I felt it was right to accept Rand’s proposal. As soon as I made this decision, a sweet calm enveloped me. I felt assured that my decision to marry him was the right answer for me. I still felt inadequate about filling the roles of wife and mother, but my faith overcame my fear.

I still felt determined to serve a mission someday. But *for me*, marrying this worthy man in the temple now would be a *better*



decision—the *best* decision—and I trusted that he would keep his promise to serve as my missionary companion when the time was right.

The next time we met, I accepted Rand’s proposal on the condition that he keep his promise (which he has, by the way!).

I had a plan for my life, but I decided to trust God enough to follow His plan for me instead.

In the years following that crucial decision, it has been confirmed to me again and again that the decision to marry in the temple and raise a family in the light of the gospel, prior to a later mission as a couple, was the right path for me.

This, of course, is *my* story. Others may make different choices as prompted by the Spirit. For those sisters who decide to serve

a mission in their young adult years, they will surely find that full-time missionary service is great preparation for marriage, parenthood, and lifelong service in the Lord’s kingdom. As President Thomas S. Monson stated, sisters “make a valuable contribution as missionaries, and we welcome their service.”¹

Other sisters may feel specifically directed to focus on education while being actively engaged in sharing the gospel with others, helping rescue less-active members, strengthening recent converts, being a faithful visiting teacher, or participating in family history and temple service. All of these can play a great role in preparing us for specific works that the Lord has for each of us to do (see D&C 9:4; Moses 1:6; Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

Heavenly Father loves each of us, and as we remain faithful and worthy, through the gift and power of the Holy Ghost we will be guided along the gospel path and receive answers to our sincere prayers (see 2 Nephi 32:3, 5). If we will act with faith in Jesus Christ, He will help each of us fulfill His plan. ■

NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Welcome to Conference,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 5.

