



STRENGTH TO CHOOSE

By Michael Pickett

I was ecstatic when a man called me one day and said he'd seen my bodybuilding shows and wanted to sponsor me. He would pay for my clothes and protein and fly me to Europe to do shows there. He even said I could be in a magazine. Bodybuilding was my passion, and this was my dream! The only problem was that I'd sent in my mission papers a few days earlier. I told the man I would think about his offer and call him back.

I was faced with the hardest decision of my life. For my parents, accepting the sponsor wasn't an option. They said, "Maybe you'll have this opportunity after your mission." But I couldn't stop thinking about it. I knew I should go on a mission and serve the Lord, but my dream was sitting right in front of me.

I asked a lot of my friends what they thought I should do. Some said I should take the sponsor, and others said it was Satan working against me because he didn't want me to serve a mission.

One day, a great friend of mine shared with me a quote from President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994): "Men and women who turn their lives over to God will discover that He can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, *strengthen their muscles*, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace."¹

That quote hit me hard. So did a scripture I read in the Book of Mormon: "And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them" (1 Nephi 17:3).

With the help of this quote and scripture and the support of my friends and family, I decided to serve a mission and was called to serve in the Bolivia Cochabamba Mission.

Serving a mission was the best choice I've ever made. I saw countless blessings while serving, including being blessed to learn Spanish quickly.

The Lord blessed my family too. While on my mission, I received an email from my parents telling me that my older brother went to church for the first time in 12 years. He later changed his work schedule so that he could go every Sunday, and he set a goal to read the Book of Mormon.

Also my younger brother who had been struggling made some changes in his life and strengthened his faith. My cousin became active again and started going to the temple every week to do baptisms for the dead. We truly have been blessed. ■

The author lives in California, USA.

NOTE

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 42–43; emphasis added.

Serve a mission or become a professional bodybuilder? A scripture and a quote that my friend shared with me helped me decide.