

SHARING MY LIGHT

It was an unusual day for Southern California, USA, with thunder, lightning, pouring rain, and oppressive heat. I looked forward to relaxing and watching a movie in my air-conditioned home. But just as I sat down, I felt that I should call my friend Sherrill.

When I called, I learned that she had been without power since that morning. She was concerned that her frozen food would thaw and her milk

would spoil, so we moved her food to my refrigerator.

The next evening Sherrill and I stood in front of her home. Every house on her side of the road was in total darkness, while those across the street had power. One house in particular caught my attention. Directly across the street, the home blazed with light as people sat on the porch talking, laughing, and enjoying themselves.

In the days that followed, I could not get that scene out of my mind. The contrast was striking: total

darkness on one side of the street and bright lights on the other; people sitting in darkness while their neighbors were enjoying light.

The image made me wonder how often I was like those people across the street—enjoying the light of the gospel while others sat in darkness. I imagined myself sitting on my porch with a few friends from church, enjoying the light of the gospel without sharing it with others.

Everyone in the world is born with light—the Light of Christ. As members

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of the Church, we have the privilege of adding to that light by sharing the gospel. The Savior taught:

“Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house;

“Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your

Father who is in heaven”

(3 Nephi 12:15–16).

As members of the Church, we have the responsibility to let our testimonies of Christ shine for all to see—especially for those in spiritual darkness. After this experience, I determined to be the kind of person Heavenly Father can trust to come away from the comfort of my porch and carry the light of the gospel to my neighbors who are in darkness. ■

Dolores Sobieski, California, USA

MY FIRST PRAYER ABOUT THE FIRST VISION

When I decided to get baptized, it was because some of my troubles were resolved while I was taking the discussions. It wasn't because I had prayed and received a testimony that the Book of Mormon was true or that Joseph Smith saw Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. The missionaries had invited me to pray about these things, but I never did. I simply believed what the missionaries had taught me.

Three years after my baptism, a sister stood at the chapel podium and shared her testimony of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith. She asked everyone to ponder this question: “Have we truly prayed about the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and about the experience Joseph Smith had?” This question hit me hard, and I thought to myself, “I

have never prayed about these things, but I should and I will.”

I was motivated to take action because my faith at the time was weak and my testimony of the scriptures was shallow. That night I prayed to my Father about Joseph Smith and the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

I didn't feel anything the first time I prayed, nor the second time. Not to be discouraged, I opened the scriptures to Joseph Smith—History 1:14–17, where it describes how Joseph went to the grove to have a personal prayer:

“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered. . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages.”

As I read the words, I started shaking as if an electric current had gone through my whole body. Instantly I knew that Joseph Smith had indeed seen Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. I knew that we had the Book of Mormon because God had it translated through His prophet.

I'm grateful that Heavenly Father granted me this witness of the truthfulness of the First Vision. I realized that if the gospel had not been restored, I would not have known my Redeemer. I know the fulness of the gospel is true, and I know I will receive God's promises if I endure faithfully to the end. ■

Jing-juan Chen, Taiwan



CAN I HAVE A BLESSING?

Many years ago I accompanied a brother I home taught, Brother Schaaf, to the hospital to give his wife a priesthood blessing before her surgery. Sister Schaaf shared her hospital room with a woman named Annie Leddar, a long-term patient with terminal cancer who was not expected to live much longer.

I reached out to pull the dividing curtain between the two hospital beds before beginning the blessing, but I stopped. Not wanting to exclude Annie, I explained what we were about to do and asked if she would

like to witness the blessing. She said she would like to watch. Her husband, who had passed away, had been a minister in another faith, and she was interested in what we believed. Brother Schaaf and I proceeded with the blessing while Annie listened.

A few days later, before Sister Schaaf went home from the hospital, Annie asked if she could receive a priesthood blessing as well. Brother Schaaf and I gladly returned to the hospital to give her a blessing. Annie was not cured of her cancer, but her health greatly improved.

She was interested in learning more about the gospel, so I asked the missionaries to stop by the hospital to teach her. She listened to the gospel message with an open heart and chose to be baptized. Every week after her baptism we came to the hospital to take Annie to church in her wheelchair.

Because Annie was ill, it was difficult for her to get around, but she soon found her own way to serve the Lord. We brought her a typewriter, and she spent hours every day in the hospital doing family history work. Annie lived three years longer than expected and prepared hundreds of family names for the temple before she passed away.

After Annie's death, Sister Schaaf did proxy temple work for many of Annie's female ancestors.

As far as I know, Annie was the only member of her family to join the Church. Her living family was never enthusiastic about her involvement with the Church, but I am sure many of her deceased family members were grateful for the vicarious work that was done for them.

We never know if people we meet are ready to receive the gospel. I am grateful that I was able to see a seed—planted in Annie's heart after she witnessed a priesthood blessing—flourish and bless hundreds of Heavenly Father's children. ■

Art Crater, New York, USA

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MY BIRTHDAY WISH

When I accepted the gospel at age 18, I recognized that I had tasted the sweetest fruit above all. I felt great joy, but I thought about the members of my family, who were lost and wandering. I felt great sorrow from being the only member of the Church in my family, but I didn't know how to open others' eyes and ears to the truth.

I attempted in many ways to convince my family to listen to the missionaries. But the more I tried, the more hesitant they became.

I became discouraged, and so I thought about not going to church anymore. But as I prayed, a scripture came to my mind: "After this should [you] deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me" (2 Nephi 31:14). I prayed harder, read the scriptures, attended my Church meetings, and focused on the blessings in my life. As a result, the pain began to vanish.

As my birthday approached, I felt inspired to have a birthday party at my house and to invite all of my Church friends, including the full-time missionaries. I wanted my family to have closer interaction with members of the Church, who seem to me to be the happiest people in the world. For me, the party felt just like family home evening.

After that day, things changed. The missionaries were welcome in



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our house and became great friends with my family. One day my father announced that he wanted all of our family to listen to the missionaries and go to church. I was shocked.

Three years after my baptism, my family was all baptized. At the baptismal service, my mother bore her testimony, and my father thanked the missionaries. Ward members were amazed at their conversion.

How did it happen? All of the

tears I shed and the goals I set played a part. But most of all, the heart of my father was softened by the love and friendship of the missionaries and ward members. All of the members were missionaries because of their examples of living the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am grateful for them and for Heavenly Father's plan, which allows families to be together forever. ■

Angelica Carbonell Digal, Philippines