

Home Earlier Than Planned

By Destiny Yarbro

Both of my parents served missions. At a young age I heard their mission stories and dreamt of the day when I would be able to serve the Lord as a full-time missionary.

Preparing for my mission was one of the most precious times of my life. I was closer to the Lord than ever before. I received my mission call to the Budapest Hungary Mission and entered the Provo Missionary Training Center (MTC), determined to give my all to my Heavenly Father.

Being at the MTC was an incredibly spiritual experience for me. As I grew closer to the Lord, I sincerely prayed that I was willing to do anything He asked and promised that I would love the Hungarians with my whole heart.

Near the end of my MTC experience, I became ill. After a short stint at home to recoup, I was given the

opportunity to continue my mission to Hungary. I was placed with a wonderful trainer, Sister Sunshine Nestor, who taught me how to recognize the daily tender mercies and miracles of the Lord.

After a few months, I became ill again. Although Sister Nestor and I continued to work the best we could, I had to return home yet again.

In my mind I had let the Lord down because I had not served a “full” mission. I was convinced that there were still Hungarians that I “should have” taught if I hadn’t become sick. I wondered if I did not have enough faith to be healed because, after all, the Lord protects His missionaries. I had *never* considered that my sacrifice to the Lord would not be to give a year and a half of my life, but rather to sacrifice the kind of mission that I had anticipated.

There are many ways to continue to serve the Lord and find meaning after returning home early from a mission.

My Search for Meaning at Home

As I walked off the plane coming home, I couldn’t help but think that I had left the most important work of my life behind in the mission field. It took time, but I learned that there was work at home that would bring my life meaning as well.

No matter your reason for returning from your mission earlier than



anticipated, decide today to make this experience a step *forward* in your progression, not a step back. I came home for medical reasons, but others come home for a variety of reasons, including transgression. As a result, some of the ideas below may not apply to your situation. Pray to the Lord to find ways to serve Him from home. For example, if you came home for transgression and are not yet worthy to attend the temple, you can still find meaning as you regularly walk around temple grounds and commit to one day return to His holy house.

Besides reading my scriptures, praying, and attending church, each of the following steps on my journey was vital to my healing.

1. Staying Connected

My first step to finding meaning in my life was to stay connected with the Saints and missionaries in Hungary.

For some time, I lived for preparation days when I would receive emails from Sister Nestor and my MTC companions. I have to admit; sometimes it wasn't easy to read about my companions' missions or to speak with the Hungarians that I missed so badly. But as I look back now, I realize that it was critical to my healing to hear about the miracles happening there.

2. Indexing Online

My little brother, gently prompted by my intuitive mother, convinced me to start indexing. Initially I did batches

of names to appease him, but one day a registry of Hungarian names popped up on my screen. The Spirit swept over me and taught me that I was still able to help bring Hungarian souls to Christ—just on the *other* side of the veil!

3. Setting Goals

After the mission, all of my pre-mission life goals seemed unattainable with my new health condition. But with time I realized that there were goals I could accomplish while lying down. I called goals such as reading

Jesus the Christ “horizontal goals” and worked on them daily.

4. Going Back to School

One of my pre-mission life goals was to graduate from college. While attending classes would have been difficult with my illness and the constant doctor appointments, my dad encouraged me to take online classes from Brigham Young University Independent Study. Not only was this an achievable horizontal goal, but I also realized that maybe I was capable of doing more pre-mission goals than I had previously thought possible.

5. Serving an Online Mission

One day at church, a sister walked up to my mom and said, “Do you know that Destiny can serve an online indexing mission?” This unexpected question was an answer to my

prayers. I was able to serve the Lord for nine months as an indexing support Church-service missionary. This was a mission I *could* do!*

6. Teaching Mission Preparation

As I became better at managing my health condition, I began studying at a community college while doing my online mission. I was asked to teach mission preparation at the nearby institute. Teaching helped me realize that my enthusiasm for missionary work had not waned and that even my short mission had provided me with many experiences that could be valuable for my students.

7. Volunteering at the MTC

After successfully attending a semester of college near my home, I moved to Utah, USA, to attend BYU. At first, I could hardly walk by the Provo MTC without feeling a rush of conflicting

emotions. But I started volunteering weekly at the MTC and found that it was healing to meet the wonderful missionaries being sent to my beloved Hungary.

8. Performing Temple Work

A Hungarian sister, Edit, who has prepared nearly 150,000 names for the temple asked me to take some of her names to the temple. It was a joy to do the saving ordinances for these Hungarians!

Gradual Healing Through His Work

Serving a mission was my most important life dream and, understandably, I felt a loss when I came home earlier than anticipated. For a time, I struggled to talk about my mission. I had to work through feelings of failure. I had to learn how to judge the value of my mission by my desire to



serve rather than the length. Although I didn't realize it at the time, each of these steps toward meaning in my life also brought healing.

For years I was nervous that returning to Hungary would be difficult for me emotionally. When I eventually traveled there, it wasn't until the second day that I realized that not only was I not feeling any pain, I was also feeling overwhelming joy to be back. I knew then that Heavenly Father had given me the opportunity to experience the healing power of the Savior's Atonement. I now know that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all things will be made right in the end. ■

The author lives in Arizona, USA.

*Many early returned missionaries continue to serve as young Church-service missionaries. See [lds.org/ycsm](https://www.lds.org/ycsm) or meet with your bishop or branch president for more information.



AN ACCEPTABLE OFFERING

“When I give a commandment to any of the sons [or daughters] of men to do a work unto my name, and [they] go with all their might and with all they have to perform that work, and cease not their diligence, and their enemies come upon them and hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those sons [and daughters] of men, but to accept of their offerings.”

—Doctrine and Covenants 124:49

TIPS FOR PARENTS

The following is a list of things to consider:

- Allow your missionary time to grieve and heal.
- Tell your missionary often how much you love him or her.
- Encourage him or her to meet regularly with your stake president and bishop.
- Ask your missionary how much he or she would like others to know about the reason he or she is home.
- Let others know that your missionary is home and that you are excited to see him or her again.
- Give your missionary time to talk with you about the mission, sharing both wonderful and hard experiences.
- Encourage your missionary to pray about what to do next in life and then support his or her decision of whether to return to the mission.

MINISTERING RESOURCES

Leaders can find understanding and ways to help early returning missionaries online at [ministering.lds.org](https://www.ministering.lds.org).

TIPS FOR WARD MEMBERS

It can be hard to know what to say when missionaries come home earlier than expected. You can help their transition to home life by welcoming them home, expressing your love for them, and thanking them for serving a mission.

You may not know why that missionary is home, and the reason may be very different from what you expect. Keep in mind that their healing process is between them and the Lord and that they only need to know of your support.

It can be good for missionaries to share their experiences from the mission in a safe environment. Recognize that they may need some time before they can talk about their missions. If you want a missionary to share a story in class, call them ahead of time to ask if they would be comfortable sharing.