

Young adults share how they found meaning and peace after coming home early from their missions and how you can too.

Early-Returned Missionaries: You Aren't Alone

By Liahona Ficquet

The army of full-time missionaries striving to fulfill their duty to “invite others to come unto Christ”¹ brings “great hopes and much joy” (Alma 56:17) to many. Those missionaries, just like the stripling warriors in the Book of Mormon, fight every day with “miraculous strength; and with such mighty power” (Alma 56:56).

But even among the 2,060 stripling warriors, there were still 200 who “fainted because of the loss of blood” (Alma 57:25). Did it make them less valiant? Less strong? Less courageous? Less worthy than the others? Not a bit.

Just the same, you missionaries who returned home early for mental or physical health reasons are *not* less valiant, less strong, less courageous, or less worthy. Your perseverance through your trials is—and should be—astonishing. You have been spared—maybe greatly wounded, but spared. Your wounds, whether they be physical, mental, or spiritual, now need to be taken care of (see Alma 57:28). For those who have returned home for reasons having to do with



worthiness, repentance will be a vital part of your healing.

As you adjust to being home, make sure you give yourself time to heal and remember to always trust in God (see Alma 57:27). He has reminded us: “When I give a commandment to any of the sons [or daughters] of men to do a work unto my name”—for example, serving a mission—“and those sons [and daughters] of men go with all their might and with all they have to perform that work, and cease not their diligence, and their enemies”—in some cases, our physical or mental illnesses or other injuries—“come upon them and hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at [their] hands . . . , but to accept of their offerings” (Doctrine and Covenants 124:49).

Whatever wounds you have sustained—or had reopened—in battle, as long as you served worthily or repented completely, your contribution was needed and accepted by the Lord.

Reading the following stories may help you find healing in the fact that you are not alone and that sharing your story can help others.

Realize That **THE SAVIOR HAS FELT YOUR PAIN**

On the plane ride to my mission, I imagined what my homecoming would be like. Cheers would erupt, my family and friends would embrace me, and I would live out the rest of my life in peace, enjoying every blessing that came with being an honourably returned missionary.

Eleven months later, on the plane ride home, every moment was spent in aching anxiety about what lay ahead. My family was waiting, and although they did cheer and embrace me, before I knew it, I was alone with no idea about my future.

The Savior saw my dark days. He knew how I felt lying in bed for three weeks crying and sleeping to avoid reality. He knew I would need His strength because no one else around me could understand or even empathise with what I was going through. But He did. I couldn't have survived my mission or returning home early without Him.

Ali Boaza, Queensland, Australia

DON'T WASTE TIME *Wondering Why*

The thought of coming home early was devastating. As soon as the counselor suggested it, I felt a very complicated mix of emotions: Shame. Relief. Guilt. Peace. Sorrow. All at the same time.

I know that God was supporting me because somehow I got through that first week home. And then I got through another week. And another. Until I was finally able to feel like myself again. My dad was my biggest support and really took me under his wing. He always wanted to talk and spend time with me. Not to pry into what “went wrong,” but just to see how I was doing.

When my dad passed away in a rock climbing accident a few months later, I knew without a doubt that God has a plan for me. Being able to be with my dad for the last months of his life strengthened my testimony of the plan of salvation. I still don't understand all the reasons why I had to come home when I did, but I've also learned that if you spend too much time wondering why, then you miss the wonderful miracles God has provided for you every day.

Kristen Watabe, Ohio, USA



Be Willing to **FOLLOW THE LORD'S WILL**

Everything was going well on my mission. I had incredible experiences that will stay in my heart forever. However, after eight months, I started having health problems. After much fasting and prayer, I was sent home. I was devastated. I thought everything was my fault. I stopped reading my scriptures and praying as often. I wondered if I hadn't done everything that I could have to stay.

But I realized I was being tested to see if I would remain loyal to the Lord. It was difficult, but I put my trust in Him, and I returned to the mission field, where I once again had amazing experiences.

Then, my health problems returned. But this time I was more willing to follow Heavenly Father's will. So I returned home a second time. It was difficult, but I know that I can learn from everything I went through.

Even though I didn't serve for 24 months, I know that I served an honorable mission. I know that the time I served the Lord was worth it for me and for the people I helped. I'm grateful to my Savior for His infinite Atonement. He knows each of our challenges.

And if we rely on Him with all certainty, we will never be alone.

Fillipe Hoffman, Goiás, Brazil

SURROUND YOURSELF *with Goodness*

I never thought I would go home early from my mission, and I was embarrassed and nervous about facing everyone. Although it was one of the hardest moments in my life, I also grew from the experience. It molded me into a better person.

I returned home to go through a repentance process. Some of the choices I had made before my mission were not in line with the gospel teachings and commandments. Because of my embarrassment and desire to maintain my standing in the Church, I didn't go through the repentance process with my bishop beforehand. But within the first few months, I felt the need to return home to repent so I could serve with honor and integrity.

Things that really encouraged me when I returned home were participating in spiritually uplifting activities, including Church meetings, service projects, and the temple, once I was able to. What helped me the most, however, were the people around me—family, a few friends, and even people I had never met before showed me love and kindness.

Overall, with the help of the Lord and the Christlike examples around me, I was able to return to Florida to finish my mission. My hope is that we will all strive to be Christlike toward others, whether they have returned home early or are simply in need.

Caigen Stuart, Utah, USA

The promise found in your missionary call letter, made to you as you decided to step forward in this work, will be fulfilled: "The Lord will reward you for the goodness of your life." With attention and care, your wounds can be healed and become a tool for you to be able to help others come unto Christ. That is, after all, the duty of missionaries. ■

The author, who is from France, is attending school in Utah, USA.

Find more stories from early-returned missionaries in the full version of this article at liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org or in the Gospel Library app.

NOTE

1. "What Is My Purpose as a Missionary?" *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*, rev. ed. (2018), ChurchofJesusChrist.org/manual/missionary.