



Would I Ever Belong?

By Jill Bitner, Texas, USA

As I sang different words from everyone else, I felt like an outsider.

In January 2009, my husband and I flew to Germany. He had accepted a job there, and we spent a week in Berlin to prepare to move our family.

Instantly, I felt overwhelmed by the differences between Germany and the United States. That night, I didn't dare leave our hotel.

But the next morning, Sunday, I gathered my courage to attend sacrament meeting. When we entered the chapel, a kind man recognized us as Americans and gave us an English hymnbook. As I sat on the back row and sang different words from everyone else, I felt like an outsider.

The ward offered English translation and gave us headphones.

Halfway through the meeting, I wanted to tear mine off and return to my American ward. But when I sang the second verse of "How Firm a Foundation," the Holy Ghost took hold of my heart.

*At home or abroad, on the land
or the sea—
As thy days may demand, . . .
so thy succor shall be.¹*

The hymn felt like a message from the Lord. Tears poured down my cheeks as I hurried to the foyer, where a soft-eyed man gave me his trusty pocket packet of tissue. (Nobody in the ward was ever without one.)

Fast forward three and a half years.

In the same chapel on a Sunday morning in June, the organist began playing a hymn. I opened my German hymnbook and started to sing.

That's when the Holy Ghost enveloped me again. I was again singing "How Firm a Foundation," but everything was different.

I looked around. Instead of seeing strangers, I saw friends. Behind me sat our former stake president, who had quickly learned our names. On the front row my deacon son rubbed shoulders with the young men who had visited him in the hospital when he was diagnosed with diabetes. Near them sat the ward Young Women leader, who had taught my daughter to make delicious potato pancakes.

Throughout the chapel sat young people I had taught and loved in an English-speaking institute class, my faithful visiting teachers, and others who cheerfully joined the ward ballroom dance classes the bishop had asked me to teach.

Tears blurred my vision, but this time I didn't run from the chapel. Instead, I dug into my purse for my own trusty pocket packet of tissue.

Nobody in the ward was ever without one. ■

NOTE

1. "How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85.