



Banana Bread MISSIONARIES

For these young men, sharing a slice of bread has blessed countless lives, including their own.

By Mindy Raye Friedman

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If someone offered you a piece of delicious banana bread, how would you react? For the young men in a ward in Ecuador, that's one way they start conversations about the gospel.

Every two months they have a missionary day with open houses in a different area of their ward. They split into several teams, each made up of a young man, a full-time or recently returned missionary, and an elder or high priest. Some of the groups work at a tent, some go to contact people in the park, and some go door to door.

When they meet someone, they offer the person a piece of banana bread. When the person accepts, he or she is told that although the bread is delicious and good for the body, the missionaries have a message that will be nourishing to the person's soul. The young men and their companions then invite the person to meet with the missionaries. In this way, they've been able to get 40 to 50 referrals for the missionaries in a couple of hours.

The young men also fellowship the members of their own quorums. On Saturdays they meet for a Young Men

activity and to work on Duty to God. Then they visit the less-active members of their quorum. They encourage them to attend church and then invite them to come back to play sports or participate in another activity.

In this way and many others, these young men are preparing to be lifelong missionaries. Two of them (at right) share how they feel strengthened and inspired by their experiences.



CHANGED BY THE GOSPEL

I have been a member of the Church for five years. My parents are not members, but my uncle Jorge is the Young Men president, and he has been a great support. I am also grateful to my bishop for his constant support and encouragement.

I decided to get closer to the Church after one of the missionary days they had in the ward. It was one of my first experiences that motivated me to join the Church. As a deacon, teacher, and now a priest, my leaders have always supported and encouraged me to participate in all of the missionary work activities. I like the open houses, where I have the opportunity to share with others the blessing of being a member of Christ's Church. What inspires me most are the service

activities, where I have the opportunity to serve my neighbor as Jesus taught us to do.

A year ago, my younger brothers, Luis, age 15, and Israel, age 12, joined the Church. Together we have been working on the projects in *Duty to God*, and since their baptisms we have shared wonderful experiences working together. All of the young men in the ward are very close, and we support each other.

I know that baptism is the gate to enter the kingdom of heaven. When we are in the service of our fellow beings, we are in the service of God (see Mosiah 2:17). Missionary work blesses families, and I know that my life has changed because of the gospel.

Alvaro T., 17

LEARNING MY RESPONSIBILITIES

As a deacon I learned my responsibilities thanks to the support of my parents and leaders and working with the goals in the *Duty to God* booklet. As a teacher I learned more by going to do visits as a home teacher, participating in the open houses on the missionary days, sharing banana bread, attending Mutual, and participating in ward and stake activities.

Now as a priest I get to focus more on missionary work. Working with the Young Men president and as an assistant to the bishop, I have learned much more about my responsibilities as a priesthood holder.

Our leaders constantly invite us to come with them and the full-time missionaries so that we can become familiar with missionary work. They also exhort us to read the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. All of these experiences motivate and prepare me to receive the higher priesthood and to serve a full-time mission.

Isaac G., 17

Your Missionary Experiences

How have you shared the gospel through small and simple means? Share your stories by visiting newera.lds.org and clicking "Submit Your Work" or by emailing newera@ldschurch.org.

