

Growing into Knowing

By Sonia Padilla-Romero



When I was 14, some Latter-day Saint missionaries came to our home and taught my mother and me. They soon invited us to be baptized. My mother declined, but I said yes. Looking back, I don't know that I was converted. I think that, like many teens, I was simply looking to do something different than the norm.

For the next year I went to church by myself. I didn't really feel like I fit in, and I didn't understand much of what was taught. But I was active. The next year I lived away from home and attended a Church-owned high school in Mexico City. Although I had loved the high school during my initial visit and worked hard to be accepted to the school (and to convince my parents to let me attend), I quickly found that being on my own wasn't easy. I still didn't have a testimony. I didn't really understand who Joseph Smith was or what the Book of Mormon taught. More than ever I felt like I didn't fit in.

Of course, I didn't tell my parents. I had spent a lot of time convincing them to let me come to this school. How could

I admit that maybe this wasn't the place for me after all? Because of my pride, I just struggled silently.

My difficult situation became worse when I received news that my parents were divorcing. I felt as though my whole world was being destroyed.

It was at that point that my bishop took me aside and asked how I was doing. I told him about all of my frustrations and my sorrows. "I feel like I really don't know anything anymore," I said.

That good bishop started teaching me about the gospel. We started with how to truly communicate with Heavenly Father. Over time we talked about the Atonement. He taught me truths of the gospel, and for the first time, I felt I had a testimony. I was glad I had something to cling to in that shaky period. Even though I felt powerless to help my family, I was able to feel a sense of happiness in being close to Heavenly Father. I knew that He knew me, and that changed everything.

Perhaps it's common for new members of the Church to feel as I did about not fitting in. What I've learned is that it doesn't



As I learned the doctrines of the gospel, my difficult circumstances didn't change, but I felt happier.

matter if you don't understand everything in the gospel right away. What *does* matter is that you understand your relationship to Heavenly Father and that He has a purpose and plan for your life. It *does* matter that you understand that the Savior atoned for your sins and that He understands you perfectly, even if no one else does. Once I knew these doctrines, other things fell into place.

Thanks to the love and patient teaching of my bishop, high school became a positive period in my life. Attending the Church high school changed my vision of who I was and what my life could be. When I graduated, I stayed in Mexico City. The first thing I did

once I found a place to live was find the local ward so I could continue to have a place of refuge, a place where I could grow in the gospel.

A short time after that, I served a mission on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. I found great joy in sharing with others the truths that had given me a solid foundation in an otherwise turbulent time of life.

I am grateful to be a member of the Church. I know that Heavenly Father is aware of each of us and that He has a plan for our lives. It has been a great blessing to watch Him unfold His plan for me. **NE**

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