

REACHING FOR THE LIGHT

A struggling sunflower seed taught me about repentance and testimony.



By Dawn M. Mangum

One spring I received three sunflower seeds. The instructions for their planting were very clear: place the seeds in soil with the pointed top down, cover completely with soil, and then water regularly. I carefully followed the instructions and placed my new sunflower pot on the windowsill. After a few days I noticed two sprouts; I figured the third sprout would soon follow.

A week later it was time to replant the growing stems in my small porch garden. The third seed had never sprouted; I thought it must have been defective. As I began to dig around the sunflower pot, I discovered that my careful planting had not been so careful. The third seed was not defective—I had just planted it upside down. The seed had grown—it just hadn't grown upward. It had

pushed itself down through the dirt to the bottom of the pot. As a result, the sunflower's stem had become badly twisted. I wondered if I should even replant the flower outside. Would it ever grow well with such a bad start?

My sunflower had tried to grow properly—had tried to reach the light of the sun—but my carelessness prevented it from doing so. I realized this sunflower bore a remarkable resemblance to my own life.

As a young woman, I had planted myself upside down. My halfhearted efforts at attending church, paying tithing, and having regular prayer and scripture study had slowed my spiritual growth almost to a halt. In high school it became clear that I would need to choose between my current direction and the Lord's direction. I then decided



to replant myself, try my best, and rely on the Lord's care.

With all my strength I began pushing up toward the Son, working my way past feelings of doubt, anger, insecurity, and selfishness. It wasn't long before I realized how much Heavenly Father loves me, how much He has blessed me, and how much He wants me to reach my full potential as His daughter. I was given nourishment from Young Women leaders, bishops, seminary teachers, and friends. My righteous desire, however, was not without trials and tears. In His loving mercy, Heavenly Father gave me a push here and there when I felt that I could push no more. He helped me grow from my setbacks and successes. No sunflower, after having sensed the light of the sun, would bury itself back in the ground. I too could



IT IS NEVER TOO LATE

"If you have made covenants, keep them. If you haven't made them, make them. If you have made them and broken them, repent and repair them. It is *never* too late so long as the Master of the vineyard says there is time. Please listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit telling you right now, this very moment, that you should accept the atoning gift of the Lord Jesus Christ and enjoy the fellowship of His labor. Don't delay."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Laborers in the Vineyard," *Ensign*, May 2012, 33.



sense the light of the Son, and I would no longer hide myself from His goodness and joy. I would "follow the Son, with full purpose of heart" (2 Nephi 31:13).

Back in my garden, I decided to replant my sunflower and hope for the best. After a few weeks, my sunflower made an amazing recovery. It was beginning to grow just as tall and straight as the others. A poor beginning had just slightly stalled the sunflower's eventual growth and potential, and I knew that it would continue to thrive and reach toward the sun, a beautiful reminder for me to do the same. **NE**

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Editor's note: Learn more about how you can reach toward the Son at lds.org/go/MarchNE3.