

# I Had QUESTIONS

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Of the Seventy



*I had always been active in the Church, but something was missing.*

When I was three years old my parents joined the Church as some of the pioneers in Davao City, down south in the Philippines. Like some people who grew up in the Church, I went through a time when I kind of took the Church for granted.

I was always active in the Church, but I didn't realize that I didn't yet have a true testimony of the gospel. I guess my beliefs were based on the testimony of my parents and my priesthood leaders and everyone else who helped me in the Church. They knew I participated in everything. I memorized the Articles of Faith when I was in Primary. I participated in the Young Men program. But something was missing.

## I Asked

My search for a testimony was triggered when I was a teenager and my peers started asking questions about our beliefs and practices. Latter-day Saints are a minority in the Philippines, so most of my friends and peers were not Church members. I started wondering why I was required to do things or why I couldn't do some of the things they did.

I also had a question about going on a mission. When I was in Primary, my bishop asked me, "Are you going on a mission?" and my response was, "Of course." When I grew

to be a young man and started enjoying life and high school, "Of course" became "Yes," still with some excitement. And then in the later years of high school, with more peer pressure, I said, "I think I'm going on a mission," and I started to waver. And then finally, I actually didn't know. My response became "Maybe."

So I had these questions and went to my bishop and my parents. They challenged me to read the Book of Mormon. That is when I came to understand that it was time for me to get my own testimony. I'd been reading the Book of Mormon for seminary, but I decided to take the challenge and *really* read the Book of Mormon.

## The Lord's Answer

I made it a point to pray before and sometimes during my reading—just to have a prayer in my heart and afterwards plead with my Father to let me know the truth about the Book of Mormon and what people had been telling me about gaining a testimony.

The first few times, of course, it was the same—they were just words on the page. But later on the scriptures began to be more understandable to me. And then I started to have particular feelings about some principles that were taught.

The next stage was that I was really



*When I talked to my bishop, an understanding of the Atonement—what the Savior has done for us—came to me.*

getting into it. I was looking for opportunities to read, because I was finding myself in there, and it was having a wonderful effect on me. The Holy Ghost was constantly helping me to feel good about the things I was reading, causing a sensation to come over me—a warm feeling in my heart.

Finally, in one of those prayers, I just knew—I just knew that it was true. It was that overwhelming feeling that, no doubt about it, the Book of Mormon is true, the Church is true. When that testimony came, all the questions went away, and I knew that this is the true Church and that I needed to serve a mission.

#### **From Testimony to Understanding**

As I desired to understand the scriptures and the doctrine, I started to learn things—things started to click. This had an effect on me and led me to start doing things differently and also to go to my bishop and talk to him about things I had been carrying around and good things I wanted to make happen in my life.

For me, this was a crossover between gaining a testimony and understanding what the Atonement can do for me. I worked pretty closely with my bishop. I'd always been close with him, but as soon as I got serious and got into the scriptures, I began to recall things that I had done and that I didn't want to carry with me. So I started talking to my bishop about certain things so that I could be free of the burden. I went to him, and we spoke and counseled together. Afterward, as I left the bishop's office, it was like I was free, a big burden was lifted off of me.

That's when an understanding of the Atonement—of



## MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

I'd like to share a favorite scripture. Everyone knows it: 1 Nephi 3:7—"I will go and do." What a great promise in a world where everything is uncertain, where we're a minority, where people disbelieve and you wonder about your capacity and about how you can accomplish the things that the Lord has asked you to do.

"Just go and do, because the Lord provides a way. When you start having callings after you leave the youth program, that can be a guiding principle: It's not about me. I'll just be obedient, and whatever the Lord tells me through His leaders, I will go and do, because the Lord always opens a way.

"If you just follow the counsel of the Lord through your parents, leaders, and the scriptures, the Lord opens a way. That continues to be a source of strength for me and a guiding principle in my life—one of the first things you learn in the Book of Mormon, actually."



*I did not have any hesitation in testifying of the Book of Mormon on my mission (top row, second from right).*

what the Savior has done for us—came to me. And that's when I truly felt that He knew me, He did this for me, and He loved me. Having the courage to go to my priesthood leader and talk to him helped me so much. I had a very tender, sweet relationship with my bishop because he took the time to work with me. And the scriptures were the catalyst.

### The Scriptures and a Testimony

I just loved the scriptures from then on. I did not have any hesitation in testifying of the Book of Mormon on my mission to bring the Spirit into what we were teaching. I felt that I knew and understood what it contains and what it could do for an individual and a family. I could tell them about particular verses in the scriptures that had helped me and that could help them in particular situations they were in. The scriptures and a testimony of the gospel help you through difficult times.

It's very important that you gain your own testimony. A borrowed testimony or just relying on the fun things you do in the Church will only get you through so much. I often use the illustration of the wise man who built his house on rock and the foolish man who built on sand (see Luke 6:47–49). Our

testimonies can be compared to that home. What will determine the strength of your testimony—or how you will survive, in the gospel sense—is whether you will continue to be strong and committed.

In Luke 6:48 it says that the wise man "built an house, and digged deep." We must dig *deep*. Also, digging down to rock is a lot of hard work. We need to invest time in reading, studying, and being involved in the Church so that we can dig that deep foundation and build upon that rock.

The verse then says that "the stream beat vehemently upon that house." Challenges will come to you *vehemently*, head-on. So if you're not prepared, your house will fall, and you will fall. You will not survive, you will not be as committed, you will not be as ready to do what the Lord wants you to do, and you will not be prepared for what He has planned for you. So it is terribly important that you invest the time to gain that testimony.

My experience has shown me that if you put forth the effort to sincerely study the scriptures and pray, Heavenly Father will bless you with a testimony, which can change your life and be a guide to you throughout your days. **NE**