

# PUTTING OFF THE NATURAL YOUNG WOMAN

BY KERSTEN CAMPBELL

*My whole life changed, but would it make me happy?*

***After I found the gospel I started spiritual training by daily reading the scriptures and praying. Joining in this marathon of righteous living helped me overcome my natural self and brought me lasting joy.***

**W**hat was I thinking? Me? Run a half-marathon? No way! But there I was for the fourth week in a row, training to run a 13-mile race. Why was I pushing myself so hard to do something I had never been good at? Because I had to prove to myself that I could achieve a personal victory, symbolic of all the spiritual and temporal changes that had taken place in my life.

Before I found the gospel, I had always taken the easy road when it came to making choices. I never pushed myself. I never tried to become a better person, spiritually or physically. But things changed when I received the missionary lessons. Suddenly I was introduced to a whole new world of people striving to better themselves, working hard at self-mastery and education.

I was intrigued. My old friends were interested in parties and fun. My new friends were interested in experiencing joy by overcoming the “natural man”—a concept I didn’t quite understand. But I was awed by my new friends’ lifestyle. They worked hard in school, dressed modestly, didn’t drink or smoke, and they read scriptures every night!

At first I didn’t understand why they chose this righteous pattern of living. “Why would anyone want such a boring life?” I thought. I didn’t understand how regular scripture study and prayer could be better than watching a good movie.

Then I learned the meaning of the “natural man” when an institute teacher explained the concept in detail. From the scriptures he read, “The natural man is an enemy to God . . . and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (Mosiah 3:19).

True happiness, my teacher explained, comes only when our spirits learn to control our bodies, training them to be governed by the laws of God. When we live by the natural man’s principles, which is to do only what is easy and fun, we may feel good for the moment, but we will never find lasting peace or joy.

The words of my teacher struck me, and I decided that I should experiment. I would start working hard at being more like Christ would have me be. I would join in the marathon of righteous living, training daily by reading the scriptures and praying. Then I would decide if doing so could really bring me lasting happiness.

I began to read the scriptures. At first it was painfully boring. I didn’t understand a thing I read. But the institute teacher had planted a seed of faith in me, so I kept reading. And then, little by little, I started to understand the scriptures. Not only did I understand, but I also felt a real, lasting joy—different from



the temporary joy I experienced when I watched a movie or bought a new sweater. In training for this marathon of righteous living, I realized how badly I needed to drink the “living waters,” which represent the Atonement of Christ. I found answers to my deepest problems and anxieties.

The institute teacher was right. Now that I have tasted of the true joy that comes from living the laws of God, I will never be satisfied with the easy life and fleeting, feel-good moments. I no longer see myself as living in a body that is a slave to its desires. Instead, I see myself as a spirit daughter of Heavenly Father, able to make the right choices. I’ll always remember that there is a bigger marathon to run in life. I know if I endure to the end, having faith in Christ and keeping His commandments, I can attain the prize—eternal joy. **NE**