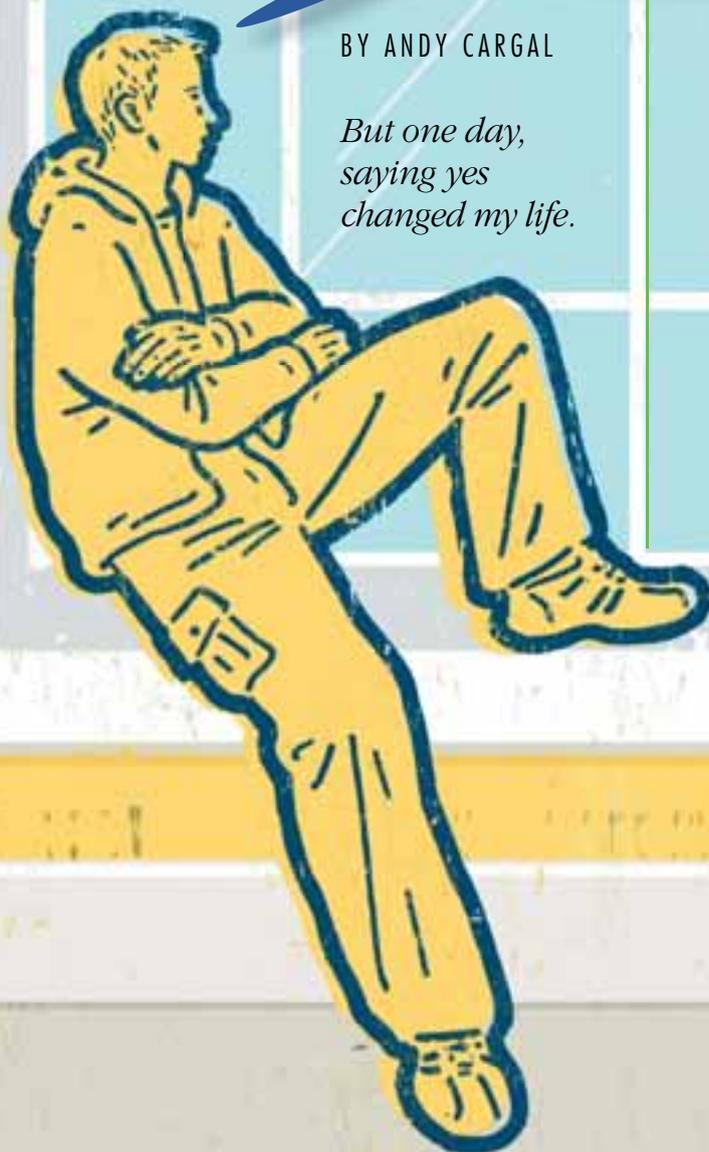


I Couldn't Say No

BY ANDY CARGAL

*But one day,
saying yes
changed my life.*



For many years I had a problem with a certain word—no. I couldn't say it.

Whenever anybody needed me for something—anything—I was there. And although I enjoy helping others, I've occasionally missed out on what seemed to be significant opportunities for my personal growth because I simply couldn't say that one word. But one summer, what seemed to be one of my biggest mental impairments turned out to be the greatest blessing of my life.

I had recently graduated from high school and planned to attend college away from home the coming fall. It would be my first time living away from family, and I was excited for the new experience. I had a well-paying job at a local grocery store, a brand new car, and I was saving a lot of money. My life was in order.

One afternoon I approached my supervisor to tell her that I needed to transfer to a store closer to where I'd be attending college. But before I could get the words out she was telling me about a position opening the following week that she wanted me to fill.

It would have been easy for me to say no. I was starting college in a month, and there were several other capable people who could do the job. But I didn't; I couldn't.

I felt frustrated. Like most teenagers, all I wanted was to move away and enjoy college life. But suddenly I found myself staying home and postponing college—because I couldn't say no to a supervisor.

I began my new duties, and, after a short time, settled into the new routine. As part of my responsibilities, I supervised a small group of people, including two high school students, Chris and Randa. After working with them for a while, I decided I liked Randa and asked her on a date. One of my

co-workers found out about it and said, "You know she's Mormon, right?"

Yes, I knew she was Mormon, but that meant little to me. At the time I was slightly misguided, thinking Mormons didn't use electricity and drove horse-drawn buggies.

As for myself, I had no religion. My parents grew up in different faiths, but neither practiced into adulthood. I was raised in a loving home, but spirituality was not part of my upbringing. However, I had always been interested in religion. In high school I had friends whom I would often ask about God, Jesus Christ, and religious principles and values. A faith-filled life was something I had always wanted, but something seemed to hold me back.

Randa and her family regularly asked me to listen to missionary lessons, but I kept putting it off. It seemed too mysterious.

Randa eventually moved out of state to attend college, and we continued our relationship long-distance. One day she called and said, "I was just talking to my mom, and she said she wants you to listen to the missionaries." This I knew, of course. But this time it was different.

Randa's parents hadn't wanted us to date because I wasn't a Church member, but Randa's mother said if I would take time to learn about the Church they'd accept our relationship. So I agreed.

The first few discussions were useless for me because I was simply going through the motions to get on the parents' good side. I didn't read the Book of Mormon or pray and was somewhat antagonistic toward the elders.

But the third discussion brought a change. I decided to read from the Book of Mormon, not so much for myself, but because I didn't

want to disappoint the missionaries again. Something surprising happened—I liked it.

In the next lesson I learned about the plan of salvation, the Word of Wisdom, the law of chastity, and how families can be forever. The principles being taught were ones I had always believed. Some religions teach that we shouldn't drink alcohol or have sexual relations before marriage, but they do nothing to back it up. Some religions teach that when we die we will be angels in heaven and servants to God but have no recollection of our experiences and associations on earth. I couldn't accept that. But here was a church that backed up what it taught. Here was a church teaching the same core values and beliefs I had always held.

Our next meeting was the clincher. Rather than teach a lesson, the missionaries showed *On the Way Home*, a film relating a story of a family who had a daughter die in an accident and later found peace through the knowledge that their family could be together forever through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As I watched the movie I felt as if my entire body were being filled with some unknown power—some sort of light, peace, and bliss—and I started to cry. I thought, "This is a Church movie; what are you doing?" It was then I knew what I needed to do.

Something surprising happened after meeting with the missionaries several times and deciding to read the Book of Mormon—I liked it.

I was baptized August 20, 1998. I met with the missionaries because I wanted to please my girlfriend's mother.

I was baptized because I wanted to please my Heavenly Father and my Savior.

I have come to learn that the Lord knows us much better than we know ourselves. Throughout my younger years the Lord blessed me with desires for righteousness, though I wasn't born a believer. Instilled within every human soul is the Light of Christ, "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9).

If we listen to the quiet voice inside that prompts us along the road of righteousness, we will be led to a life of happiness now and throughout eternity. We won't always know why we are making certain choices, and that's OK. We just need to obey.

I once had an idiosyncrasy that constrained me from saying no to people who needed me. It was annoying. Though I wanted to attend college (and eventually did), what if I had said no to my supervisor the day she asked me to fill a new position at work?

Sometimes what we see as our greatest impairments may actually be our greatest blessings. It was for me. **NE**

