

GRACIAS



BY JAMES D. HIBBARD

With temperatures rising and hot wind blowing in seemingly every direction, my companion and I spent days biking from one end of Yuma, Arizona, to the other in search of people to teach. The heat of summer can be especially challenging, and for a new missionary, it's sometimes easy to get discouraged.

One day we had been visiting investigators and contacts, and none of them seemed to have the time or the interest to sit down and talk. As we rode our bikes, I began feeling a tinge of discouragement. I closed my eyes and silently prayed for help. The still, small voice of the Spirit whispered, "Pray with your companion."

After suggesting this to him, we turned our bikes into a park and stopped. As I said the prayer with my companion, pleading for guidance to know where we should go, a feeling of calmness and peace flooded my body. In that instant I knew that our Heavenly Father would place someone in our path who would listen. We ended the day with several good visits with some of our investigators. The answer to our prayers, however, came in full strength that evening as we planned for the following day.

We began our planning session with prayer, again asking for the Spirit to guide us. As we talked about what to do in the morning during those first few hours before lunch, both of us felt an impression to visit a small trailer park behind a commercial section of town. My companion brought up the fact that not many people lived there and that it might be a waste of time to ride our bikes all that way to talk to only a few people. At the moment, we couldn't decide if it would be worth our time, so we skipped that morning block of time and planned the rest of the day. The Spirit again whispered strongly to visit this area as we came back to plan the morning block. This time we acted upon the promptings and confirmed it with the Lord in prayer.

It was already hot as we left our apartment the next morning to tract in the small trailer park. By the time we got there, I was feeling fairly passive and indifferent

and was not expecting much. We locked our bikes to a wooden pillar and stepped up to the front door of the first trailer. I took a deep breath and knocked lightly on the thin wooden door.

Several seconds passed before the knob slowly turned and the door opened, revealing a short Hispanic lady. My first thought was of how tired and stressed she looked. Almost immediately, familiar words filled my mind, and I began to speak. "Hello ma'am," I started in Spanish. "How are you doing this morning?"

"I'm fine. Can I help you?" she replied.

"Actually, we're here to help you," I smiled. "We are representatives of Jesus Christ, missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

I slowly stopped speaking as tears welled up in her eyes. She raised her hand to her mouth, closed her eyes, and whispered her thanks: "*Gracias.*" She then took my offered hand and said, choking back sobs, "I have been praying all night for God to send me some angels, and you are here. How did you know?"

My voice trembled a little with emotion as I replied, "We were sent. I know we were sent to help you."

She told us she was undergoing intense family problems and had been floundering on the brink of depression and hopelessness. In her struggles she prayed and asked for help, for an assurance of love, and for a light in her darkening life. We knocked on her door only seconds after she had ended her prayer.

During the next 30 minutes we presented the basic principles of the gospel, and the Spirit testified to her that they are true. As we felt the Holy Ghost, we knew that she knew our message is true. It was in that instant that I witnessed the necessity of having the Spirit lead us in all we do.

The woman thanked Heavenly Father in the closing prayer, expressing heartfelt gratitude. We stepped off the porch and into the hot and dusty day, our eyes a little misty due to the witness borne by the Holy Ghost. I closed my eyes as we walked and whispered, "*Gracias.*" **NE**