

MISSIONARY

BY PATRICIA AUXIER

Cody, Justin, and Trevor know that when you're a good friend, you're also a missionary.

Cody Petterson met Trevor Olvera in the school hallway in sixth grade in Nyssa, Oregon, and after that, they were almost inseparable. Soon Cody's cousin, Justin Kesler, joined the mix.

The three of them did everything together: sports, bowling, homework. Later on they even worked on Cody's family's farm. And since they shared everything, Cody and Justin couldn't help sharing the gospel with Trevor. Soon Cody and Justin began inviting Trevor to Mutual and stake dances. As Trevor got to know the other youth in Cody and Justin's ward, it made it easier to invite him to church and seminary and then to hear the missionary lessons.

Trevor said, "Cody and Justin weren't perfect, but they were trying to be like the Savior. They talked about reading scriptures and saying their prayers, and I wanted to have that as well."

Though Cody and Justin admitted they had to overcome some fears, mostly they said sharing the gospel was easy. Justin puts it this way: "We were just examples at first. And then we asked him questions about what he believed. He already knew what we believed because we acted on what we believed, so it was easy to talk to him about the Church."

One night after Mutual, Trevor remembers telling Cody and Justin that he wanted to get baptized. "When I told them that I wanted to be baptized, they were so happy for me. I knew that I had made the right decision." Even though some others he knew teased him,

Cody and Justin were by his side, literally so—at his baptism Cody was in the font, baptizing Trevor, and Justin was on the stand, giving a talk.

Trevor described his own baptism this way: "I was in the font, and I knew that I could have my sins washed away. And to have my best friends with me was beautiful. I knew I was making the right decision, and they had helped me to make it."

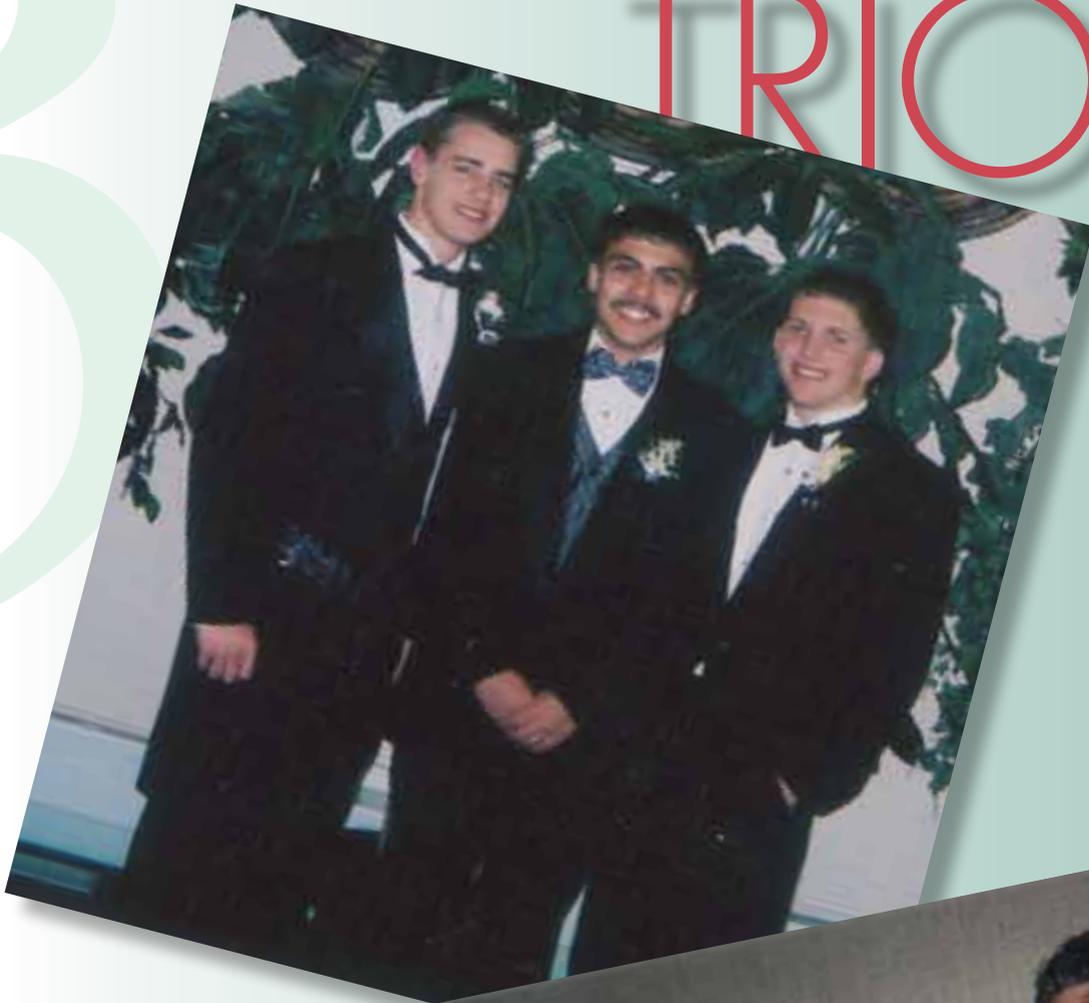
Cody said that it was a powerful experience to use the priesthood to help someone he cared about. He said, "When I pronounced the words 'Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ,' I felt the power of God fall upon me. I felt like my heart would burst. I was baptizing my best friend. He was receiving an ordinance of salvation, and I was the Lord's instrument to carry it out."

Four months later, Trevor entered the font again—this time to baptize his own mother. Once again, his best friends were there for Trevor, with Cody baptizing Trevor's younger sister and Justin baptizing his younger brother.

Seeing Trevor with his mother was a powerful experience for Justin. "There was a glow around them," Justin said. "They were extremely happy because they knew that they were on the path to being together forever."

Although Cody and Justin were the ones to share the gospel with Trevor and his family, it wasn't a one-sided relationship. "Trevor helped me step up to a new standard of living the gospel," Cody said. "He helped me strive to be the example that every member of the Church should be." Cody adds that besides helping him strive to set a good example, Trevor brought "an excitement to learn about the restored gospel that renewed my excitement to learn and study as well."

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Above: As friends, these three shared everything, so it was easy for Cody (left) and Justin (right) to share the gospel with Trevor (center).



Below: Four months after Trevor's baptism, the trio shared in baptizing the other members of Trevor's family.



Talking about their experiences together has been a powerful teaching tool with investigators on their missions. When Trevor shared a picture of the three friends and their story with his investigator, Thomas, he says it brought the Spirit into the room immediately. “After that,” Trevor says, “we didn’t have to worry about him.”

These boys also helped bring each other closer to Christ. Cody compares his best friends to the stripling warriors who were “firm and undaunted” and “did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness” (Alma 57:20, 21).

Justin echoes Cody’s sentiments. “We were trying to do the right,” he said. “To have friends who believe the same things I do, who try to choose the right, makes it so much easier.”

Baptism, however, wasn’t the end. Since their childhood, Cody and Justin had planned on serving missions. At 17, Trevor immediately committed to serving a mission as well. Now, though they are serving in different missions—with Cody in the Peru Piura Mission, Trevor in the Arizona Mesa Mission, and Justin in the Maryland Baltimore Mission—they still have the same purpose: bringing more friends to the gospel.

All three elders expressed appreciation that they became missionaries before serving full-time. Trevor’s mother, Terry, said, “Cody and Justin have been missionaries for years. Missionary work doesn’t have to start by teaching somebody about your beliefs. It’s being a friend and living what you believe. To me, that’s where the basis of this all started. With being a friend.” **NE**

For more on sharing the gospel with friends, read “Chain Reaction,” *New Era*, June 2007, p. 34.

