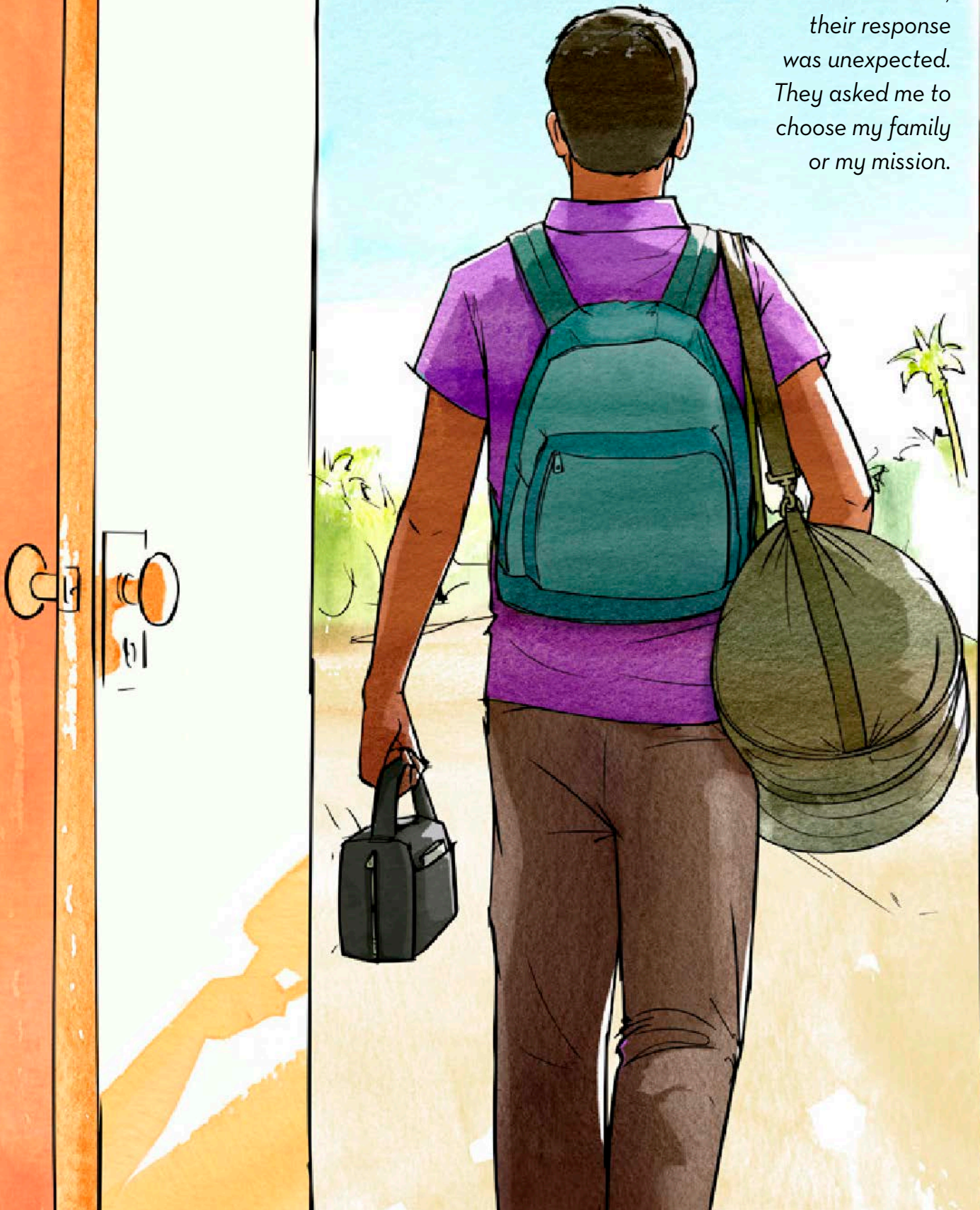


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TO STAY or OBEY?

By Melvin Rondilla

I can still remember the words of the missionaries who taught me: “Whatever God commands, do it, and blessings will follow.” These words made a deep impression in my heart. I was baptized at the age of 16, the only member of the Church in my family. Eight months later, I had the blessing of seeing my youngest sibling baptized into the Church.

When I turned 18, I wanted to serve a full-time mission and help in the Lord’s work. I eagerly told my parents about my plan and how I wanted to invite people to come unto Jesus Christ by helping them receive and live the principles and ordinances of the gospel. Their response surprised me. They said it broke their hearts to think of me leaving on a mission, and I had to choose: my family or my mission.

I was shocked when I heard those words. Immediately I went to the Church building near our home and entered one of its rooms to kneel and ask Heavenly Father, “What will I do? What will I choose: my family or my mission? Both are important to me.”

While on my knees, the words of the missionaries came to mind: “Whatever God commands, do it.”

I love my family and want to be with them forever. I respect their feelings. Yet the scripture says, “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Samuel 15:22). The Spirit of the Lord filled me, and I was strengthened. I decided to serve because I knew Heavenly Father would help my family understand.

I went home only to be sent away by my father’s angry words and told to never return. Not knowing where to go, I packed my things. I was not a bit scared, because I knew the Lord was with me, that He has a plan for every family, and that someday my family would understand this beautiful plan.

I was only a few steps away from home when my mother caught me. She embraced me and said how much she loved me. As I left, I could see her crying with all the love and pain of a mother seeing her child go.

For over a year, I stayed in the house of a returned missionary I had met when I was an investigator. The Lord was true to His promise in

1 Nephi 3:7—He provided the way so I could obey His commandments. He sent this selfless and generous man to provide for me and to create a spiritual environment where I could prepare for my mission. I felt the hand of God sustaining me through my challenges. I felt the love of our Savior Jesus Christ through His atoning sacrifice. This love carried me through my trials until I was set apart as a full-time missionary in the Philippines Cauayan Mission.

A few months later, I received a letter from my family telling me they were waiting for my return. I never lost faith and hope that my whole family would become members of the Church, be sealed in the temple for all eternity, and be with our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, someday.

After returning from my mission, I began to see that dream come true. I was able to baptize my mother, who is now preparing to go to the temple. I see my family often, and we are closer than ever before. **NE**

Melvin Rondilla lives in the Philippines.