

A FIRM DECISION

“Choose ye this day, to serve the Lord God who made you” (Moses 6:33).



From an interview with Elder E. Israel Pérez, who served as an Area Seventy from 1997 to 2005; by Melvin Leavitt, Church Magazines

My parents and my three older brothers were baptized in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, when I was just six years old. I am grateful that they had the wisdom and courage to accept the truth. My parents and marvelous Primary teachers taught me the eternal principles of the gospel. I came to love our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, and to know that Heavenly Father always blesses us if we are obedient.

The first time I was assigned to give a short talk, I was worried because I couldn't pronounce the letter *R* correctly. I wondered, "How can I do this?" My mother told me, "God will bless you, and all will turn out well." That's exactly what happened, and I never again had any problem with the letter *R*.

At the age of eight I was baptized in borrowed white trousers. They were too long, but my mother tucked the legs up and fastened them with a few stitches. This worked fine until they got wet. As I stepped out of the water the weight of the wet cloth broke the stitches. I tripped over my borrowed pants and fell to my knees. The thought immediately came to me that this was a reminder to always kneel and pray for the help of our Heavenly Father in everything.

When I became a deacon I had a feeling that I should make some important decisions about my life. I decided that I would never drink liquor, that I would never smoke a cigarette, and that I would be obedient.

Once when I was 16 years old, I was in a restaurant with some friends from church. A man who knew one of us came in. He said, "I want to invite all of you to drink some liquor right here and now."

I remember standing up and saying, “None of us drink liquor. And if you want to drink, go find somewhere else to do it.”

This man was in his early 20s and much larger than I was—a very strong man—and he became mad. He brought a glass of liquor to me and said, “I’m going to make you drink this!”

I said, “Don’t try it. There could be unfortunate consequences.” He tried to grab me and force me to drink the liquor. The next thing I knew, the man was lying on the floor. I really didn’t have the strength to

It doesn’t matter where we are or whom we are with, we can always stand by our principles. If we make a firm decision once and for all, when temptations arise we don’t have to think, “What am I going to do?” or “What am I *not* going to do?” The decision is already made.

We are never alone. Even though His creation is so immense, our Father in Heaven knows that you live and that I live. He knows our hearts. He knows our thoughts. He has given us His perfect plan of happiness because He loves us. He is always searching for ways to bless us. ●



defend myself against that man, but Heavenly Father provided what I lacked.

Much later, when I was a husband, father, and businessman, I was invited to attend a lunch with the president of the Republic of Guatemala. I found myself in a room with many other guests. When the president entered, waiters poured liquor so that everyone could join in a toast. But I covered my glass with my hand. The president said, “Mr. Pérez, won’t you join me in a toast?”

I replied, “Mr. President, if you’re asking me if I will wish you success in your government, I will. But if you’re asking me if I will drink liquor, I will not. I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. If that is a problem, I can leave right now.”

He said, “No, no.” They drank their liquor, and we sat down. A little later the president said, “Tell me something of your church,” and I did.

Elder Pérez grew up in a loving family. Above left: At age one. Center: On the back row (center) with his brothers and sisters and his parents, Roberto and Ignacia. Right: Seated with his mother and his cousins.

