

NEW ZEALAND LOCAL PAGES

AREA SEVENTY MESSAGE

Strengthening Young Single Adults

By **Elder Andrew O’Riordan**

Of the Seventy, Pacific Area

I have always had a great love for the young single adults (YSA) of the Lord’s Church. Maybe this stems from the fact that my parents joined the Church in the early 1960s as YSAs before meeting each other and later marrying in the New Zealand temple. Or maybe it relates to my own conversion experiences as a YSA that led to missionary service in Japan from 1986–88, which set a foundation for my life. After my mission, still as a YSA, I was blessed to meet and marry Helen Gilbert. It was 25 years ago now that Helen took a risk and married me. We have been blessed to have four children whom we adore, two of which are currently YSA.

I have come to know that the paths we travel in life are many and varied. Some of these paths lead to dead ends, some are rocky and challenging, others are long, winding paths that lead nowhere of consequence. But there is a straight and narrow path that leads to eternal life and a fulness of joy (see D&C 14:7 and Mosiah 2:41).

It is the latter path that I would like to focus on with you who are at the stage of life when you must choose on which path you will journey. The straight and narrow path, as the scriptures refer to it as, is the gospel path. There is a gate that protects the entrance to this path. The gate represents “baptism by water” (see 2 Nephi 31:16–18). So we know that this path commences once you have been baptised into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by one having proper authority, and it is the path that the Saviour of the world took. Many of our current YSA in the Pacific Area are converts to the Church, and we love and welcome you who are.

I would like to offer some suggestions of things that will help you to stay on this straight and narrow path after your baptism and throughout the remainder of your life here on earth, and hopefully assist you to deepen your conversion unto the Lord.

1. Don’t just hang around the edges of the gospel. A testimony comes at a price that includes



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faith, work, and prayer. A testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel comes by the power of the Holy Ghost: “And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5).

A testimony is likened to a mighty change of heart that induces a desire to do good continually (see Mosiah 5:2) and to continue on the path. However, faith has a shelf life and must be nurtured by righteousness. Fully engaging in the gospel preserves our conversion and invites the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Personal spiritual encounters with the Holy Ghost lead to a deeper conversion (see Mosiah 27:24–26).

2. Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught the following: “After conversion comes the desire to share—not so much out of a sense of duty, even though that responsibility falls on the priesthood, but out of sincere love and appreciation for that which has been received. When such a ‘pearl of great price’ comes into our lives, we cannot be content just to admire it by ourselves. It must be shared! And here is the great joy and happiness of the gift!” (“Go Ye Therefore, and Teach All Nations,” *Ensign*, May 1984, 79).

YSA who share the gospel are happy! In the Doctrine and Covenants we learn: “He that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:22). It has been my experience that when I share the gospel with others, it causes my own testimony of the restored gospel to swell within me and my desire to walk that straight and narrow path increases.

3. Read the Book of Mormon. The Area Presidency has invited us to immerse ourselves in the Book of Mormon. In the introduction to the Book of Mormon,

the Prophet Joseph Smith said: “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.” I encourage you to read from the Book of Mormon every day. I know it will lead you along the straight and narrow path as it has me.

4. Seek to receive all the ordinances of the gospel. In Doctrine and Covenants 84:20–21 we learn that “In the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh.” This scripture is powerful, and I have truly observed the power of God manifest in the ordinances of the priesthood, including baptism, confirmation, endowment, and sealing. Once this power is manifest in our lives, the desire to travel down forbidden paths is quickly lost.

President Thomas S. Monson has encouraged Church leaders to create opportunities for the YSA to gather together. I am

sure that his wise counsel has relation to the following scriptural teaching: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, . . . behold, there will I be in the midst of them” (D&C 6:32). I encourage our wonderful YSA to gather together by attending all Sabbath day Church meetings and to take full advantage of institute, mission preparation classes, and YSA conferences.

In the following articles are some accounts of faithful YSA I have witnessed setting powerful examples of choosing to walk the straight and narrow path. All of the YSA featured in these articles are truly converted to the gospel, have served missions and shared it with others, read the Book of Mormon daily, and seek out priesthood ordinances. They are travelling on the straight and narrow path that leads to eternal life and a fulness of joy.

I pray that in this season of the gospel where the Lord is hastening His work, the YSA of the Church will be strengthened to come out of the world and walk the straight and narrow path that leads to eternal life and a fulness of joy. ■

A Spiritual Friendship

By Jordana DeValle

When Joshua Djaelani was given the essay topic “If I were God for a day” by his high school religious education teacher, he chose to write his essay on the Restoration. Fellow classmate Christian MacRae was looking over at Josh’s computer screen and was surprised by what he read.

“I was interested because what I wrote was completely different. I wrote a lot of worldly things, like if I were God I would have money, fame, and things like that. So when I looked at his essay and saw a contrast, I wondered why he had written that.”

This interest opened a doorway, and soon a spiritual friendship formed as Josh taught Christian the discussions during free periods at school. Soon Josh gave Christian a Book of



IMAGE COURTESY OF ELDER ANDREW O'RORDAN AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

Joshua Djaelani shares a Book of Mormon with his classmate Christian MacRae, which leads to his baptism.

Mormon and invited him to come to church.

The morning Christian was supposed to go to church with Josh, he was nervous. Not knowing anybody, and with low self-esteem, he was reluctant to put himself out there and meet new people. So he sent a text message to Josh saying he couldn't make it.

After reading the message, Josh prayed and put his trust in Heavenly Father that Christian would still choose to attend the meeting. Soon after, Christian began to feel something. He recalls, "I remember feeling what I know now is the Holy Ghost. It was a really powerful feeling of, why? Why are you not going? What can you possibly lose from going? You felt good about what you prayed about, now chase that. Follow it. Don't worry about what other people will say. Go and do it; everything will be okay."

So Christian went to church with hair down to his shoulders, wearing tatty jeans and a sports polo shirt. Through Josh's friendship he was still able to feel comfortable. This consistent friendship helped Christian accept the gospel, and he was soon baptised. He says, "I felt comfortable because Josh was there every single step. He wasn't being a fellowshipper, he was my friend. That was the key difference, and that made it very easy for me to feel comfortable. Josh was a bridge to connect me to the real reason why I became a member of the Church."

When Josh left on his mission, the spiritual friendship that had been formed encouraged Christian to consider serving a mission too. "Josh was very good at encouraging," Christian says. "When he left I promised him that I wouldn't be here when he got back from his mission, and that always played on my mind. There is no doubt I

served for the Lord, but I also promised my best friend."

Now both Josh and Christian are returned missionaries. Josh knows even if he didn't have contact with Christian, or if he was on the other side of the world, Christian would still be going to Church; he would still be reading the scriptures and praying every day.

Christian adds, "Serving a mission made me so much more grateful for Josh and what he did, because it's not easy being an 18-year-old and sharing the gospel. He'll never know how grateful I am for his example, in sharing the gospel with me. Every day the knowledge of his faith builds my relationship with God. That relationship is everything now. Nothing else comes before God, nothing. It's always that, it never will be anything else. It's what I'm built on, and when everything else crumbles it doesn't matter, because the Church is still true. It started with Josh. It needed an act of faith before the miracle could happen."

Christian was also able to teach many people on his mission as he changed roles and became the one teaching the restored gospel as a missionary. "The ability to relate was very strong on my mission and that's where the success came. There was a lot of power in saying, 'Two years ago, I was where you are.' Some people don't think they can do it, but being able to see where I came from, I was able, through Heavenly Father's guidance and direction, to help others to see the same thing. It gave great vision, a vision that every member can be a missionary, and every investigator can become a returned missionary, or somebody who is worthy to go to the temple." ■



a book written by one of the prophets. I still remember a day that I was on a train. I was reading the scriptures and I remember having an overwhelming feeling that I knew it was true. I wanted to turn to the man next to me and tell him! Once I knew the Book of Mormon was true, everything else was easy. When the missionaries invited me to pray, or to live the Word of Wisdom, or to come to church every Sunday on time, I did it.”

While Amy was learning about the gospel, Jesse was preparing to serve a mission. He recalls, “Amy was an anchor. It was good to see the gospel working in her. This created the desire to see more people come unto Christ as Amy had, fully accepting it, fully knowing the truth, and having that mighty change. It’s one of the best feelings to know that you’re making a difference. We know Heavenly Father’s purpose is to bring men unto Him, so I knew I was fulfilling Heavenly Father’s purpose, bringing about the eternal life and immortality of man (see Moses 1:39). It meant a lot to preach the gospel full time and be set apart as a missionary teaching the gospel. To do it day in and day out for a long period of time, to see

Change of Heart

When Jesse MacMillen and Amy Doherty first started dating, Jesse was slowly finding his way back to the Church and Amy was learning about the gospel, which she became aware of through a high school friend. Both gained testimonies individually, and as a result, both are now returned missionaries.

Jesse was able to turn his life around when he was touched by the testimony of a recently returned missionary friend at stake conference. While sitting in stake conference, he felt the

Spirit tell him, “All you have to do is let go.” This prompting encouraged Jesse to repent and strengthen his testimony. At the same time Amy was able to build her own testimony through the help of Jesse and his family, but ultimately she found it for herself.

Amy said, “Jesse’s family was very knowledgeable of the gospel and would talk about it during Sunday family dinners. We would discuss the gospel, but my testimony came from reading the scriptures and

Returned missionaries Jesse MacMillen and Amy Doherty were married in the Melbourne Australia Temple.

other's growth and development so quickly, I loved it and I miss it.

"My advice for the young single adults would be to get a real testimony of Joseph Smith. Really ask Heavenly Father in prayer if it is true. Ask Him over and over, then ask Him again for reassurance and a stronger testimony. Don't ever stop growing. Stretch yourself, lengthen your stride, study the doctrine deeper, live it."

While Jesse was on his mission, Amy continued growing in the gospel. She submitted her own mission papers and was called to serve her mission in England. Her mission enabled her to become cemented in the gospel and become truly converted. Now as a convert returned missionary, she knows the value of making wise choices.

"You can't serve two masters, you're either in or you're out. You need to make that decision now. Make that choice that you want to spend time with people who uplift you, people that have the same morals and standards as you. It's those people who help you and encourage you, who keep you on the path. Don't drop your standards. Choose carefully."

After serving their missions, Amy and Jesse were married in the Melbourne Australia Temple in March, 2014. ■

A Greater Purpose

By Jordana DeValle

"I had always felt inside that I wanted to open up more. There was something inside of me that just wanted to come up," James said.

As he attended church and met the young single adults, he **James MacNeill**



IMAGE COURTESY OF ELDER ANDREW O'RIOGAN AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

was able to develop a testimony of his own.

"When I started talking to them I felt a confidence and a light, and I wondered why that was. At first I thought it was fake and wondered why they were all so happy. Then I came to the conclusion that they knew exactly who they were, and I was inspired by that. I felt like I didn't know who I was, but they knew. And because of that it made me more in tune to the plan of salvation.

"Once I had a testimony, everything started to become progressive. I began looking forward, instead of living in the moment. I didn't want to waste time anymore. I wanted to make everything more meaningful in life."

Shortly after being baptised, James made the decision to serve a mission and was called to serve in Vanuatu. Here his testimony was strengthened as he served the Lord.

"I guess from the very beginning, since I was young, I felt I was born to be much more. As I served a mission, I felt like I fulfilled part of my design," James says. "It was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life—emotionally, physically,

and spiritually. One day I was lying in bed sick with malaria, and another elder asked me how long I planned on being a missionary. I replied that I had about a year to go, and then he asked me a penetrating question I've never forgotten. He said, 'Elder, are you willing to be a disciple of the Church of Jesus Christ forever?' At that point I didn't know if I could

answer him, but it stuck in my mind and heart for weeks, and it got to the point where I started being a missionary preparing for the rest of my life, rather than just being a missionary for two years."

Now home from his mission, his advice for young single adults to stay fully engaged in the gospel is:

"Always understand why you

are doing things. Be interested enough in the gospel to understand the greater purpose. It's good to follow and have faith and not know what you're doing, but find the answers for yourself. Try to understand the 'why' behind everything, and gain not just knowledge but understanding. Live the gospel and decide now whether you are going to be all in or all out." ■

The Power of a Simple Thank-You from the Heart

By Sister Aliitasi Talataina

With a big smile he said something in Kiribati that I couldn't hear, but the smile was enough to know he appreciated the compliment. The next day I packed some snacks to take as we went to work, and as we drove by, I wondered if he had had anything to eat. So we stopped and offered him my snacks and water, which he happily accepted. The next day I offered him my lunch, and I continued to do so as a service almost every day for two weeks.

Then just before Christmas, this stranger stopped us and asked for our names. I asked him why he wanted to know our names, and he replied that when he had told his wife about us, she had asked for our names. He said that he lived at the Church of Christ, and we arranged to go and visit with his family at 5:00 p.m. that day.

My companion and I headed out to the meeting and found Teruka's home just opposite



From the left: Sister Ucunibaravi (senior missionary sister), Kabotaake, Teruka, Orita, Otina (another investigator found in a rescue visit), and Sister Talataina (senior missionary sister)

their church. He was already waiting with his wife, Kabotaake, in their nice, clean hut. After



IMAGE COURTESY OF SISTER ALIITASI TALATAINA AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

Teruka at work.

greeting us, the wife explained, “I wanted to get your names so I could make something for you in return of your kindness to my husband. He comes home every day now expressing his gratitude for these two old women who thanked him for what he was doing and offered him food and water.”

I felt impressed that this was the moment, and I expressed thanks to them for allowing us to come to their beautiful home. But we suggested that instead of Kabotaake making something for us, we would like to share the glorious message of the gospel of Jesus Christ with them.

Teruka replied that they would like to hear our message. He explained that his wife had a high calling in their church, but he invited us to teach

them, and their daughter too, and wanted to start straight away.

Teruka, his wife, Kabotaake, and their 18-year-old daughter, Orita, were taught the gospel and then baptized on February 1, 2014. Teruka now serves as the Sunday School secretary in the Eita Second Ward of the East Tarawa Stake, Kiribati. They are also excited about preparing to go to the temple in 2015 to have their family sealed for time and all eternity. A simple expression of “thank you” from the heart has opened the door to the eternal journey of Teruka’s family. This is one of the many wonderful families we brought to the gospel in the beautiful country of Kiribati. ■