

VAHA'I TONGA

EXAMPLE IN TONGA

By Nancy Harward and Lucy Stevenson Ewell
(Based on a true story)



Tonga is made up of about 170 islands in the Pacific Ocean.



Today, six out of ten people in Tonga are members of the Church.



Tonga is also known as the "Friendly Islands."

Vaha'i knelt by his bed to say his prayers. It was his first night at boarding school, and he shared a room with lots of other boys. None of them were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, like he was.

Dear Heavenly Father . . . Vaha'i started to pray in his heart. But it wasn't easy. The other boys were talking and laughing loudly.

"Hey, look!" one of his roommates, Akau, shouted. "He's praying!"

Vaha'i shifted uncomfortably. He knew Akau was making fun of him. But he pretended not to hear him. He just kept praying.

When Vaha'i first learned about the gospel, his grandparents hadn't liked the Church much either. Vaha'i had gone to Primary with his uncle or his friends.

When he turned 12, he decided to be baptized. His grandparents weren't too happy at first. But then his grandma said, "From now on, you are a member of that church. We want you to stay faithful."

Now that Vaha'i was away at school, he was determined to do just that. So he kept praying. Even when the other boys made fun of him.

One night when Vaha'i knelt down, he heard something different.

"Hey, be quiet! Vaha'i is praying," someone said.

Vaha'i finished his prayer and opened his eyes.

Akau was sitting on his bed. "It's really important to you, isn't it?"

Vaha'i nodded. "Yes, it is."

After that, the other boys were quiet whenever Vaha'i prayed. Soon Akau started kneeling with him. Other boys joined too. Eventually, all the boys in the room knelt to pray with Vaha'i each night.

Vaha'i felt happy. He had never had family prayer at home. But now he could have family prayer with his schoolmates!



Vaha'i and his wife, Sela, were the first couple to be sealed in the Hamilton New Zealand Temple.



He served as president of the Nuku'alofa Tonga Temple.



He was a teacher at Liahona College, a Church-owned high school in Tonga.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY SUSAN KEEFER

One day Vaha'i had an idea. A big Church meeting was coming up. He could invite his friends!

After prayer, Vaha'i told everyone about the meeting. "It's called district conference," he said. "People come to learn about Jesus. You can all come, if you want!"

Since they would have to leave the school to go to the meeting, each of the boys had to sign a paper to get permission. Vaha'i was amazed when he saw the paper. There were 77 names on the list!

Vaha'i's heart felt warm as he sat with rows of his classmates and listened to the talks at the conference. Akau and some of the others must have felt warm inside too. By the end of the conference, seven of them wanted to be baptized!

That night after prayer with his friends, Vaha'i said a prayer of his own. *Thank you for blessing me with good friends*, he told Heavenly Father. *And for helping me be a good example.* ●

The authors live in Waikato, New Zealand, and Utah, USA.

◆ See *Come, Follow Me* for Doctrine and Covenants 81–83.