

# A Legacy of Love

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).*



**From an interview  
with Elder  
Yoshihiko Kikuchi  
of the Seventy;  
by Monica Weeks**

I lost my father during World War II, when I was four years old. I learned how to work because my father was not there and my mother gave us children assignments. I helped cook dinner for my family because Mother had to work. My older sister and brother had part-time jobs to help the family, and when I got older, I did too. I worked on a farm and with a fishing business.

After I finished junior high school, I had to work to support myself. As a young man I found a full-time job at a bean-curd shop in a larger city about nine hours away from my home. I went to high school in the evenings, so I got home late. Early the next morning at work, I made bean curds and sold them on the street or delivered them to various stores.

I became very sick from working so hard and had to stay in the hospital. I thought I might die. I was born into a Buddhist family. I always felt that there was a God in heaven, but I had never been taught about God. I was very desperate to talk to Him. I didn't even know the word for "Heavenly Father,"

so I asked, "God, are You there? Please help me." After eight days I was able to leave the hospital, and I lived with my uncle while I recovered.

A few days later the missionaries came to my uncle's door. When I saw them I told them to go away. But one of them said, "We have a great message for you. A boy just like you saw your Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ." I couldn't resist because I had been praying and seeking Heavenly Father just a few days before. So I said, "You can have 10 minutes. Come in."

The missionaries taught me the beautiful and sacred story of Joseph Smith. And I was touched. I really felt the power of the Spirit. The missionaries asked me to pray and ask Heavenly Father if their message was true, and then they taught me how to pray. I prayed that evening. Even now I remember exactly how I felt that day.

I asked the missionaries to come back almost every day after that. I believed what they taught me. I believed that Joseph Smith saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in the Sacred Grove. But before I could be

baptized, I needed to get permission from my mother. I called her and said, “Mother, I’ve found a wonderful church. I need to get your permission to join.”

She said, “No. I lost my husband; I don’t want to lose my son.” She was afraid that if I joined the Church I would leave her.

I said, “I’m not going anywhere.” And then she hung up.

The missionaries fasted and prayed for me, and I did too. I called her again and said, “Please don’t hang up on me until I’ve really explained it.” She suggested that I study more and take some more time to decide. But I felt strongly that now was the time I should be baptized.

Finally she told me, “Son, if you are going to quit right in the middle, don’t do it. But if you will stay with it all the way through, then you have my permission.” That caused me to always take my membership in the Church very seriously.

I am grateful for my mother. I am grateful for Heavenly Father who allowed me to come into contact with the restored gospel. All the experiences I’ve had in the Church have been wonderful. But nothing compares with my depth of appreciation for the

Savior, for His grace and mercy, and for what He has done for my wife and children.

When my son was called on a mission to Brazil, we took a father-son trip to the Sacred Grove in Palmyra, New York. We spent three days doing nothing but walking and talking there. On the final day we sat on a bench and bore our testimonies to each other. I shared my own conversion story once again with my son, and we cried. I hope his children and his grandchildren carry on this legacy of love and faith for years to come. ●

