

Missionary Friends

Go forth and declare his Gospel unto the children of men (Moses 8:19).



From an interview with Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy; by Hilary M. Hendricks

I grew up faithfully participating with my family in the Catholic Church. We attended church and church activities regularly, and we prayed as a family each evening at home. Throughout my boyhood, friends from church helped me make good choices.

When I was nine years old, I became an altar boy. Altar boys in the Catholic Church help the priest during the Sunday worship service, called Mass. My brothers and many of my friends served with me—a great honor for us. We lit candles at the altar, carefully unfolded the priest's robes, and placed the scriptures next to the altar. During the service we helped pass the bread for Communion, similar to the sacrament.

To become altar boys, we memorized words of the Mass in Latin. We also participated in weekly religion classes. Each summer my friends and brothers and sisters and I attended Bible school about 20 miles (32 km) from our home. My parents were busy on our wheat farm during the summer. They could have used our help during those weeks, but they felt it was important that we have this opportunity to learn

about God and be with good friends. The faith of the priests and nuns who were our teachers impressed me. I decided then that I would do what God wanted me to do.

In my junior high and high school years, many of my classmates chose to do things that I had been taught were not right, like drinking alcohol and smoking. I kept busy working on the farm, playing sports, acting in school plays, and participating in activities at my church. I felt blessed to have good friends who were also trying to choose the right.

When I was a college student and I began to learn about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, good friends again made a difference for me. I remember well my first visit to an LDS ward, which met in a tiny community hall. The moment I stepped out of the car, my college friends swarmed around me. "It's great to see you!" they said. "So glad you could make it!" I had never shaken hands with so many people in my life. "Wonderful to have you here," said people I'd never met. "Come back again." I'm still touched by that ward's love for me, a stranger.



Everything going on about me that day felt strange. The worship service I had experienced as an altar boy was very structured and extremely quiet. The Latter-day Saint worship service was so different—so much fellowship before the meeting, so many new ideas to think about and new things to experience. As I sat in that hall, I had many questions and doubts. But the warmth and friendship of Church members helped me to feel comfortable. Then, as I studied the gospel, the witness of the Holy Ghost helped me want to be baptized.

I am grateful for the restored truths available only in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And I am grateful for the friends who helped me to find those truths.

Reach out to others and make them feel welcome. Remember to smile and be kind.

As children who belong to the Church of Jesus Christ, you are blessed to know so much about our Heavenly Father and His Son. Your faith will grow as you attend church, pray, and study the scriptures on your own and with your family.

As you make good choices for your own life, please reach out to others who are not members of the Church or who may not attend church regularly. Welcome them to Primary. Smile. Sit next to someone who is new. Ask about others' interests, and always speak kindly. The love you share will help those around you make good choices and come to know the Savior Jesus Christ and the teachings of His restored gospel. ●

