

To the Friends and Investigators of the Church

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If you pay the price of revelation, humble yourself, read, pray, and repent, the heavens will open and you will know that Jesus is the Christ.

On a Friday afternoon, September 16, 1988, in the Vicente López Ward meetinghouse in Buenos Aires, Argentina, I was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A very good friend, Alin Spannaus, baptized me that day, and I felt happy, lighter, eager to learn more.

Today, I would like to share some lessons I learned on my path to baptism—lessons that I hope may help those of you listening who are not members of the Church yet. I pray that your hearts may be touched by the Spirit, as was mine.

First, Meeting the Missionaries

Why would a person without compelling challenges, needs, or questions be interested in meeting the missionaries and listening to their lessons? Well, in my case it was love—love for a girl, a girl named Renee. I fell in love with her, and I wanted to marry her. She was different and had standards different from most young women I knew. But I fell for her and asked her to marry me—and she said no!

I was confused. I thought I was quite a catch! I was handsome, 24 years old, and a college graduate with a great job. She spoke of her goals—of marrying only someone who could take her to the temple, of having an eternal family—and she declined my offer. I wanted to continue the relationship, so I agreed to listen to the missionaries. Is this a good reason to meet with the missionaries? Well, it was for me.

When I first met with the missionaries, I did not understand much of what they said, and to tell you the truth, I may not have paid much attention to them. My heart was closed to a new religion. I wanted only to prove they were wrong and to gain time to convince Renee to marry me anyway.

Today my children have served and are serving missions, and I understand the sacrifices that these young men and young women make to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now I wish I had paid more attention to Elder Richardson, Elder Farrell, and Elder Hyland, the wonderful missionaries who taught me.

So, from my first lesson, I say to you friends and investigators of the Church: *once you meet the missionaries, please take them seriously; they are giving up important years of their lives just for you.*

Second, Going to Church

The first time I attended a Church meeting, I heard many words that didn't make sense to me. Who were the Beehives? What was the Aaronic Priesthood? the Relief Society?

If this is the first time you have attended a Church meeting and you are feeling confused by something you don't understand, do not worry! I was clueless too. But I still remember the impressions, the new feelings of peace and joy I experienced. I did not know it then, but the Holy Ghost was whispering to my ears and to my heart, "This is right."

So let me put this lesson in one sentence: *if you are confused, don't worry—remember the feelings you have experienced; they come from God.*

Third, Reading the Book of Mormon

After several meetings with the missionaries, I was not making much progress. I felt I had not received a confirmation of the truthfulness of the gospel.

One day, Renee asked me, "Are you reading the Book of Mormon?"

I replied, "No." I was listening to the missionaries—wasn't that enough?

With tears in her eyes, Renee assured me that she knew the Book of Mormon is true and explained that if I wanted to know if it is true, the only way is—guess what—to read it! And then ask!

Read, ponder in your hearts, and "ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, ... with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ" (Moroni 10:4) if the Book of Mormon is true, if this is the true Church.

So the third lesson, in one sentence: *when you receive these things—the Book of Mormon—and you are exhorted to read and ask God if they are true, please just do it!*

Last, Repenting

The final experience I'd like to share is about repentance. After I had finished taking all the missionary lessons, I was still not convinced I needed to change anything in my life. It was Elder Cutler, a young, confident missionary with limited Spanish, who one day

said, "Joaquin, let's read together Alma 42, and we will include your name as we read it."

I thought it was silly, but I did as Elder Cutler asked and read in verse 1: "And now, my son [Joaquin], I perceive there is somewhat more which doth worry your mind, which ye cannot understand." Oh! The book was speaking to me.

And we read in verse 2: "Now behold, my son [Joaquin], I will explain this thing unto thee," and then the Fall of Adam was described.

And then in verse 4: "And thus we see, that there was a time granted unto [Joaquin] to repent."

We continued reading slowly, verse by verse, until we reached the last three verses. Then I was struck by a powerful force. The book spoke *directly* to me, and I started to cry as I read, "And now, [Joaquin,] my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you ... unto repentance" (verse 29).

I realize now that I had expected to receive revelation without paying the price. Until then I had never truly spoken to God, and the idea of speaking to someone who wasn't present seemed foolish. I had to humble myself and do what I was being asked to do even if, in my worldly mind, it sounded silly.

That day I opened my heart to the Spirit, desired to repent, and wanted to be baptized! Before that moment, I had thought of repentance as something negative, associated only with sin and wrongdoing, but suddenly I saw it in a different light—as something positive that cleared the path to growth and happiness.

Elder Cutler is here today, and I want to thank him for opening my eyes. Every decision I have made in my life since then has been influenced by that moment when I humbled myself and prayed for forgiveness, and the Atonement of Jesus Christ on my behalf became part of my life.

So the last lesson, in one statement: *experience repentance; nothing draws you closer to the Lord Jesus Christ than a desire to change.*

My dear investigator, friend of the Church, if you are listening today, you are very close to reaching the greatest joy. You are close!

Let me invite you, with all the energy of my heart and from the depths of my soul: go and be baptized! It is the best thing you will ever do. It will change not only your life but also the lives of your children and grandchildren.

The Lord has blessed me with a family. I married Renee, and we have four beautiful children. And because of my baptism, I can, like the prophet Lehi of old, invite them to

partake of the fruit of the tree of life, which is the love of God (see 1 Nephi 8:15; 11:25). I can help them come unto Christ.

So please consider my experiences, and (1) take the missionaries very seriously, (2) go to church and remember spiritual feelings, (3) read the Book of Mormon and ask the Lord if it is true, and (4) experience repentance and be baptized.

I testify to you that if you pay the price of revelation, humble yourself, read, pray, and repent, the heavens will open and you will know, as I know, that Jesus is the Christ, He is my Savior, and He is yours. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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