

## Missionary Lessons on Relying on the Holy Ghost

One of the coolest experiences I've had is teaching Tsuyoshi, a Japanese exchange student who is staying with a member family. Since he's from Japan, he's got a completely non-Christian vocabulary and a lot of the concepts we're teaching him are completely new. It's really cool to see how differently he approaches and view things. We've got situations where he says things like "I don't know what it is, but at church I feel.... power."

"I've been studying a little bit about revelation. I was struck by a couple of scriptures. Joel 2:28 And D&C 1:20. After reading those two scriptures, I am convinced that we are entitled to receive revelation of the same PURITY and QUALITY as that of the prophets. Though we don't always insert "Thus saith the Lord" before the communications that we receive from our Father in heaven, it's been helpful to me to remember that we pretty much could. It's inspired me to trust in personal revelation more, to seek that sort of divine communication more earnestly, and to take my prayers a little bit more seriously."

"Well the big news of the week is that the Meeks got baptized! It was an incredibly powerful baptism, and there was a lot of support from the ward there. It's the best feeling in the world to have a baptism and to know that your converts are in good hands. And the Meeks are in good hands; The members of this ward have just really stepped up and offered a lot of friendship and support. I baptized sister Meek (A daunting task because she's scared of water) and my companion baptized Brother Meek (A daunting task because he's huge) and everything went down just fine. (Except for that I couldn't find my white pants and had to use a jumpsuit... and they do NOT make jumpsuits for 6'3" guys.)The confirmations were awesome as well. Afterwards, Brother Meek said "I have received the laying on of hands three times before in different churches but I have NEVER felt anything like that before." The power of God truly is manifest in the ordinances of the gospel."

"Also, we had an opportunity to go on exchanges with the assistants the other day. I was comped up with an Elder named Elder Moss and he's AWESOME. We had a really cool experience right after Zone Conference. We had already chosen the night before an area that we were going to knock for the half hour we had between zone conference and a service project for an investigator. Well we drove to the area, felt inspired to stop at a certain point, and pulled over. We grabbed our books hopped out, and another car pulled up right behind us, a woman, just coming home. We contacted her, taught her a first lesson (She was super ready to hear the gospel), gave her a Book of Mormon, set up a return appointment for the next day (later today) and when we finished, we realized it was time for the service project so we packed up and left. It was just like an appointment with the Lord. We pulled up, our investigator came, we taught our lesson, and then left. Total miracle, it was awesome."

"Which brings me to a pretty cool story. My companion and I got sick. I was feeling pretty miserable. So I was really REALLY looking forward to my sleep that night. Well around 1:00 AM I wake up and my companion is snoring louder than a death medal band

+ a jet engine on my head. I wait ten minutes to see if he'll stop, he doesn't, and so I pack up my blanket and pillow and head to the other side of the house. The thing that makes this particularly unpleasant is that we don't have any carpet in the entire house, just linolium. Well five minutes into tossing and turning on a rock hard floor I realize that this isn't going to work. So I got up and said a prayer and asked God to help me sleep through the night. I laid back down and immediately the thought entered into my head "Elder Thomas stopped snoring". OKAY! I head back into the room and Elder Thomas is sleeping like a baby and didn't snore for the whole rest of the night. It was a testimony builder for me that God is concerned about the little things in our lives."

"We had a dissapointing Sunday despite an otherwise excellent week. One experience from Saturday that was really awesome. We went to an appointment on Saturday evening but they said they didn't have time so it fell through. Then, as we were leaving, we saw a middle-aged-woman walking down the sidewalk with her two children. I ran up and contacted her and we started talking and started teaching her the first lesson. In the middle of the lesson she started crying and told us that that morning she had been at her father's house and had been looking through some old stuff and found a Bible. She picked it up and started reading it and felt that now was the time for her and her family to get closer to God, but that she didn't know what to do or where to go next. "And now that I met you I know God is trying to send me a sign and that he has a plan for me." Woah, cool. The Lord really does have his hand in this work."

"Monsoon season has been going late and we got hit HARD a couple of times last week. One time we got hit while we were on our bikes and we weren't able to get around for a while because so many roads were flooded.

We had a cool experience with another downpour. I think this happened last Tuesday, anyways, we had a really powerful night planned out. We had good appointments at 6, 7, and 8, and we had a member going out with us, Hermano Arias. Well the appointment fell at 6 and so did our backups, our appointment at 7 turned out to kind of stink (Our investigator pretty much dropped us), and our appointment fell through at 8. Around 8 the rain started to come down... HARD!!! Like I said we went to go visit an investigator for an appointment but they weren't there. The rain started falling so hard that Hno. Arias deemed it unsafe to drive on the road (I mean it was really really coming down). So we pulled off into the parking lot of Whataburger and offered to buy us a burger. Well I wasn't that hungry, but, seeing that there wasn't really anything else we could do, accepted.

At this point, I started to get a little discouraged. I started thinking "Man, we did everything right. We planned out the night, set good backups, prayed for inspiration, got a member with us, but the night was super unsuccessful, what happened?" I walked into Whataburger with this kind of poopy attitude and depressed feeling, and walked up to the counter.

Before I could order anything, the girl at the register says "What's that book you have?" pointing at the Book of Mormon in my hand.

"It's the Book of Mormon."

"...could you tell me what it's about?"

"YEAH! Of course!"

We got to spend five to ten minutes teaching her right there at the counter of Whataburger and she was really interested! Turns out she lives outside of our area, so we had to pass on the referral, but it was still an awesome experience! It was a testimony builder for me in enduring to the end. And also in that, when we put forth all of our effort, the Lord will always make up the rest.”

“Some Elders love to Bible Bash. I used to be one of them. It was a fad and I got over it after a month or two. It's mostly self-engrandizing, spirit-quenching, love-destroying, head games. Even still, it can be pretty tough to kick the habit of bustin' out the Bible and flippin' to your tried and true battle scriptures every time someone brings up a doubt. Well anyways we were teaching a random woman that we contacted on the street and all was going well until we reached the first vision. I told the story of the first vision and she matter of factly told us that that story could not be true because God the Father and Jesus are the same person. Out came the old Bible and I was just flipping to the martyrdom of Stephen when a REALLY loud military plane flew over head. For 30 seconds we couldn't hear anything except for that plane. So I had 30 second to stand there and ponder on what Jesus Christ would do if he were in this situation.

I closed the Bible and, when I could be heard again, bore my testimony of the Godhead and first vision in clear and simple terms and told her that she could reach the same knowledge through study and prayer. After I did that her countenance changed. She relaxed and opened up. She said that she like what and how we were teaching and invited us to come back and share more another day.

I have a testimony that that plane was sent from God to stop me from contending. The spirit of God doesn't stick around long when there's contention, and if that plane wouldn't have come, the spirit would have been lost, and she never would have investigated the church.”

“In Horizon I left behind a couple of baptismal dates and a few very good friends. Leaving an area is never easy. There was one woman, Isela, who is investigating and will probably be baptized in a couple of weeks, who was particularly hard to leave behind. She had felt a need to find the truth and come closer to God about a year ago and stumbled into the Jehovah's Witness. They taught her for nearly a year but she says that she didn't feel the spirit when they taught and that when she read the Book of Mormon and spoke with us she felt the spirit strongly and it felt right. It's been amazing to see her progress and the way her life has changed. There's a light in her eyes now that wasn't there before.”

“Pedro Mayorga got baptized on Saturday which was amazing. A really good, short, powerful baptismal service. It's taken us a lot of hard work to get him into the water, but his testimony really is strong so I'm excited to see him in the church. I've learned a valuable lesson as I've been able to attend so many baptismal services out here. Sometimes we confuse emotion with the spirit. This is easy to understand considering that many of our spiritual experiences are very emotional as well as we learn new, profound truths and experience landmark changes in our lives. But for me, as I attend these baptisms, I often have the opportunity to feel the Spirit enter the room in a way that is largely detached from emotion. The ceremony of the baptism is

simple, and very short. At times it is almost awkwardly brief. For me, baptismal ceremonies do not evoke much of an emotional reaction. And yet I always feel the spirit powerfully, testifying that baptism is a necessary part of God's plan, and that through Jesus Christ we truly are given an opportunity to be born again.

This past week I also learned a great lesson on pressing forward with faith. We biked up to visit a new investigator named Vanessa at about 8 o'clock at night, but she, unfortunately, wasn't home. We had two other families that we could visit but they lived on opposite sides of the area and so we were only going to have the chance to visit one of them before the night ended. I said a silent prayer to know which family we should visit but felt like I didn't receive an answer for either family. I prayed again and pondered the names of the two families again, and again, did not receive an answer.

I then thought it out, and decided that the Carrillo family needed our help more than the Garcia family, and so I decided we would head down to the Carrillo family, still not having received a real confirmation from the Spirit as to whom we should teach. We started off and had barely biked three blocks when we passed Vanessa, the lady who had not been home, walking back towards her home with some groceries that she had just bought. It was then that I received a confirmation from the Holy Ghost as to whom we were supposed to teach, and that night we taught and set a baptismal date with Vanessa.”

“Well Saturday was kind of a big day. Things had been getting steadily and steadily worse here in Chaparral. A few days ago the seat on my bike broke so I had been riding standing up for a few days and my back and legs were sore beyond all belief. We lost most of our investigators due to one reason or another. No one had come to church and nothing was looking up. Things kind of topped off Saturday morning. I was really tired and sore and a little bit discouraged as we set off in the morning. Our first two appointments ditched us and weren't there, and we had about three contacts in a row where we got yelled at, topped off with one where we got cussed out and driven off someone's property.

I was really depressed. I looked at my companion and could see in his eyes that he was really feeling the same way.

"We need to take a lunch." I said.

We went home and ate a bit and then both retired to different sides of the trailer to read, pray, and meditate a little and see if we couldn't receive some encouragement from the Lord.

I flipped open my scriptures and eventually was lead to read Alma 26:27 "Now when our hearts were depressed, and we were about to turn back, behold, the Lord comforted us, and said: Go amongst they brethren, the Lamanites, and bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success."

Well I really didn't feel the depression lift from my heart at all but I took it as a promise from the Lord, and came out with enough resolution to just push along, (if not exactly with a heart full of song) knowing that as I did so the Lord would bless me with success in due time.

Well the rest of that day was amazing. We found nine new investigators, a few of whom are DYNAMITE! and really really prepared to hear the gospel.

In particular, one investigator, who we thought had dropped us because her gate was always locked and we couldn't get ahold of her, called us and said she wanted us to come

back by so we could teach not only her but her sisters also, and that lesson was really really powerful.

Her sister received a couple of discussions from the missionaries a couple of years ago and then decided she didn't want any more and sent them on their way. Strangely, she said she received a testimony from them. She said "As I watched them leave my house I felt the most awful feeling I've ever felt before and I knew I was doing something wrong and that their message was true." (Not an actual quotation because she was talking in Spanish but more or less).

That was an awesome lesson for me in "No effort goes wasted." It's true, I suppose that there are a lot of missionaries who plant many, many seeds whose fruits they never see. That lesson has helped me to keep my chin up when things aren't going so well."

This one's from the MTC:

"I'll share one quick experience that I had, I think on my second or third day (Seriously feels like a lifetime ago, time has been moving really slowly since I got here). We were learning how to pray in Spanish, and so in personal study I was practicing going over mock prayers in my head.

At one point I had the ridiculously obvious idea "Why not just actually pray?" So I sat there in class and closed my eyes and said my first prayer in Spanish.

I just got overwhelmed with the spirit midway through my prayer. It just started burning in my chest and spread out through all my body. It was truly amazing.

Other than that, nothing too exceptional to report. Been having tons of spiritual experiences and my testimony is growing exponentially!

Oh yeah, I saw Josh the other day which was awesome! I think he's a DL now and you can tell he's a really good missionary. We talked for about fifteen minutes and it was super good to see him, it seems like he's really doing well, and you can see the effect that the MTC has had on him, he really just radiates happiness and love."

**From Elder Ben Wilson in El Paso.**

The MTC is a remarkable place. It is wonderful to be surrounded by thousands of missionaries all with my same desires. We all really help each other along the long road of learning to be a missionary. I love studying the gospel all day everyday! Being immersed in the Lord's work does really bring a person closer to the Lord and the Holy Ghost. As a missionary you pray about everything. Also in every prayer I have asked for the help of the Holy Ghost. I just realized it the other day that the best thing that has happened to me in the MTC is my heightened sensitivity to the presence of the Holy Ghost. It is absolutely essential that I have the Holy Ghost because it is not me that tells people the message I am sharing is true, it is the Holy Ghost. I am so grateful for my opportunity to serve a mission. I know the gospel is true and because I have this knowledge I am to invite people to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through faith in Jesus Christ and his Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.

Love you all,

Elder Brad Coons

From the MTC heading for Australia