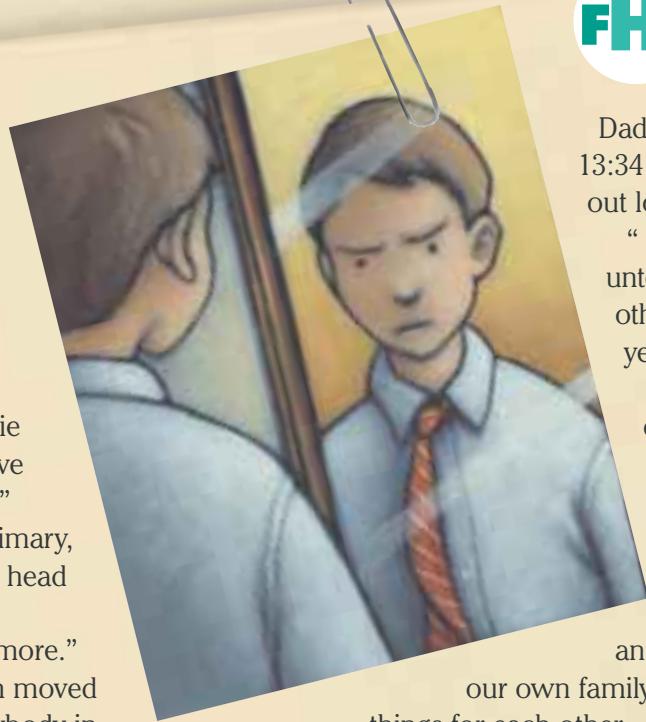


Mission IMPOSSIBLE?



A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (John 13:34).

By Lori Mortensen
(Based on a true story)



I stared at my crooked tie in the mirror. "Do I have to go to Primary, Dad?"

"I thought you liked Primary, Brandon." Dad poked his head into my bedroom.

"I used to, but not anymore." I sighed. "Not since Justin moved away. Now there isn't anybody in my class except Tyson, Kenny, and Derek. Nobody wants to sit next to Tyson because he's a troublemaker. And ever since Kenny and Derek started going to the same school, they don't even bother talking to me. I don't have any friends in Primary now." I swallowed at the growing lump in my throat.

I waited for Dad to tell me that he understood how awful it could be to not have any friends in Primary, but he just straightened my tie and said, "So what are you going to do about it?"

"Me? What can I do? I can't make Justin move back—his dad got a new job about a million miles away."

"But isn't there some way you could make friends with the other boys?"

Hadn't Dad been listening? "I could never be friends with them," I said, my voice wavering. "They don't like me, and I don't like them."

"One of the reasons we go to church is to become more like Jesus Christ," he said. "What do you think He would want you to do?"

I rolled my eyes. Dad was always saying stuff like that. But I glanced at the picture of Jesus above my bed. His kind, brown eyes seemed to look right at me. I knew that Jesus would love everyone. *But then He's never had Tyson, Kenny, and Derek in His Primary class, either,* I thought stubbornly. "I don't know, Dad. What *would* Jesus do?"

Dad opened my Bible to John 13:34 and asked me to read it out loud.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

I was getting even more discouraged now. "How am I supposed to do that when I don't even like them?"

"The same way the Savior showed His love and the way we show love in our own family," Dad said. "By doing things for each other—love and service go together. Remember the stories I've told you about when I served a mission in Texas?"

"Sure, Dad." I gave him a big smile. "You've always said how much you loved it."

"That's right." Dad's smile was just as big. "And there's a reason why it's called 'serving' a mission. I spent two years serving hundreds of people I didn't even know. But the more I served, the more my love for the people in my mission grew. You could do the same thing in your class."

"You mean do things for the boys in my class? Why would I want to do anything for them? Tyson tripped me last week, and the other two act as though I'm not even there."

"But if you did," Dad said, staring me straight in the eye, "their feelings would change—and so would yours. You could think of it as your mission to your own Valiant class if you want to."

I gulped. I wanted to be a regular, full-time missionary when I was older, but "go on a mission" to my Primary class? "I don't know, Dad," I muttered. "It sounds more like a 'mission impossible.'"

"Maybe." He smiled again. "But would you think about it?"

I thought about it all the way to church. I finally figured that if I didn't do something, I'd be miserable forever—or at least until another boy my age moved in. And in a small town like mine, who knew when that would be? *But what exactly can*



a Primary missionary do? I wondered.

I got my first idea when I opened the big glass doors of the church and saw Elder Richards and Elder Martinez smiling and shaking hands with people in the foyer. If I was going to be a Primary missionary, I knew I'd have to try that, even though just the thought of it made my stomach leap as if I'd swallowed a dozen tree frogs.

I walked to the Primary room as slowly as I could, half hoping my entire class would be out of town. When I opened the door, Kenny and Derek were already huddled together at the end of the row, whispering and giggling. Tyson was tipping back in his chair, blocking the row with his feet.

Normally I would have plopped onto a chair by the wall and ignored everybody. But this time I couldn't—not if I was going to be a missionary.

I took a deep breath and forced my legs to march to my row. "Er, . . . hi, Tyson," I mumbled. Our eyes locked for a second, my mouth forming an awkward smile. "Can I sit down?"

He looked startled—like he'd never seen me before. Then, after a moment, he dropped his feet and chair to the floor. "Yeah, go ahead."

I stepped around his feet, just in case he was thinking of tripping me again, and sat on a chair in the middle of the row. Then I turned toward the

other two and waved. "Hi, Derek. Hi, Kenny." You would have thought from their reaction that I'd just announced their name over the microphone or something.

But after a quick "Oh, hi" back, they were again hunched over a piece of paper Kenny had fished out of his pocket.

So much for being a missionary! I thought glumly. I couldn't think of anything else to do until Sister Reynolds called for volunteers to read some scriptures she'd written on the board. I shot my head into the air. Missionaries definitely read scriptures.

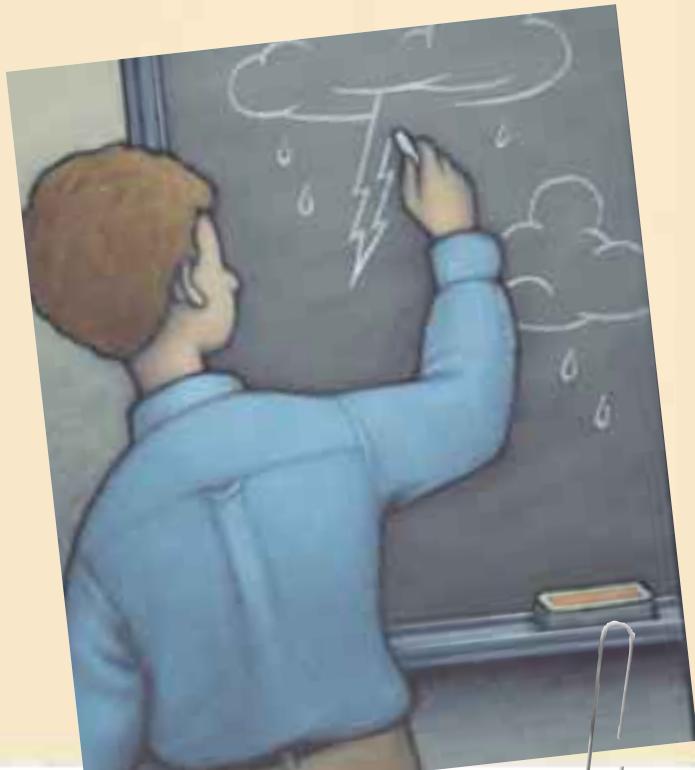
But just when I thought Sister Reynolds was going to pick me, she called on Tyson instead. He hadn't even raised his hand.

"What?" he said, fumbling for the books under his chair.

Sister Reynolds frowned slightly. "Would anyone else like to read Alma 17:25?"

Then, just as I was going to shoot my hand into the air again, I got another idea. I pushed my own Book of Mormon onto Tyson's lap and pointed to the verse. "It's right there," I whispered.

"It's OK—I'll read it," he said, taking the book. He read about Ammon, a Book of Mormon missionary who served the Lord by becoming King Lamoni's servant and watching his flocks.





When he finished, he slipped my Book of Mormon back on my lap. "Thanks," he said. "I'm not very good at finding scriptures."

"No problem." I just shrugged. But inside, I was feeling as good as if I'd read the scripture myself. Suddenly Tyson didn't seem like such a troublemaker. Was this what Dad had been talking about?

Later, in class, I sat by Tyson and Kenny. It was so fun listening to Brother Duncan's lesson that I forgot I was even on my mission until he asked for volunteers to play a drawing guessing game. Kenny and I jumped to the edge of our seats, waving our hands. Then I remembered. "Go ahead, Kenny. You can go first."

"Hey, thanks," he said.

I found out that he could draw pictures better than anybody in the whole class. "Where'd you learn to draw like that?" I asked after the closing prayer.

"Oh, nowhere," he said, his eyes shining. "I draw all the time—see?" He pulled out the piece of paper from his pocket and unfolded a picture he'd drawn of a really cool scooter with heavy duty shock absorbers.

"Wow!" I said. "It's the same kind of scooter that I've been saving for."

"I'm going to get one for my birthday," Derek chimed in. "Except it's still three months away."

Kenny stuffed the picture back into his pocket and headed for the door. "Well, I better go, Brandon. See you next week."

"Yeah, see you next week," I said. Then I rushed down the hallway to find Dad. Making friends in my Valiant 10 class was not only possible—it was fun. Primary was going to be better than ever.



I feel that friendship is a fundamental need of our world. I think in all of us there is a . . .

longing for friendship. . . . If we truly want to be tools in the hands of our Heavenly Father in bringing to pass His eternal purposes, we need only to be a friend. . . . At no time will we be more Christlike than when we are a friend."

**Elder Marlin K. Jensen
Of the Seventy
(*Ensign*, May 1999, pages 64–65.)**