

The Surprise Mission Call



By Lucy Stevenson
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(Based on a true story)

Edwin Dharmaraju smiled as he walked out of the airport and into the sunshine. He could see palm trees lining the streets and smell the spices from a nearby market. He and his wife, Elsie, were back in India! They had been living in Samoa, but now they were home again.

Edwin and Elsie weren't here for just a visit, though. They had been called to serve as missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Edwin felt a little nervous. But he knew Heavenly Father would help them. Heavenly Father had already helped them so much.

Edwin and Elsie were born in India. But Edwin first heard about the Church while going to school in the United States. He went to church there once. He even read the Book of Mormon. But when he got back to India, he forgot about the Church.

Some years later, Edwin and Elsie felt like they should move to Samoa. Edwin was a bug scientist, and he took a job on the island doing research. It was there that Edwin and Elsie met the missionaries. When Edwin read the Book of Mormon again, he felt something special.



Elsie read the Book of Mormon too. They chose to be baptized, along with their sons and daughters.

After joining the Church, what Edwin wanted most was for his family back in India to learn about the gospel.

The problem was that there were no missionaries in India to teach them! Edwin and Elsie wrote a letter to Church headquarters asking them to send missionaries to India.

What came next was a big surprise. President Spencer W. Kimball called *them* to serve as missionaries in India!

And now, here they were.

Their first stop in India was Edwin's brother's house. Edwin's parents and siblings were there too. Right away, Edwin and Elsie started teaching them. Their family was happy to learn about the gospel.

A few weeks later, Edwin and his family gathered around the swimming pool in his brother's yard. The pool had been cleaned, painted, and filled with fresh water. Everyone was wearing white. The women wore flowing saris that draped over their shoulders. The men wore loose Indian-style jackets and trousers.

Edwin stood in the pool with his father. "Samuel David," Edwin said, "having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Edwin felt happy as he baptized his father. He felt even happier when he baptized his mom next. By the end of the day, Edwin had baptized 18 people!

The next day, Edwin and Elsie rode a train for six hours. They visited more family members and taught them about the gospel. Edwin baptized four more of his relatives in a nearby river.

Finally, Edwin and Elsie took a 16-hour train ride to visit Elsie's parents. Elsie's father was a leader in another church. He didn't get baptized, but he thought the Book of Mormon was a good book. He helped translate the Book of Mormon into Telugu, one of the languages spoken in India.

When Edwin and Elsie finished their mission, there were enough new members to start one of the first branches of the Church in India! Edwin and Elsie were happy when they returned to Samoa. They were grateful Heavenly Father had sent them on a mission! ●



Edwin and Elsie Dharmaraju served their mission in India in 1978. Now a beautiful temple is being built there!