COULD I LEAVE MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER?

When I turned 21, I wanted to serve a mission. My great-grandmother, Margarita Sippo de Lallana, supported my decision even though that meant she would be alone. She had reared me since I was small, and I was concerned about who would care for her while I served.

We had been baptized in 1978, when I was 11 and my great-grandmother was 73. We soon quit attending our meetings, but concerned brothers and sisters from the Church came looking for us.

I became active again, and ward members looked forward to my ordination. "We're going to have a deacon!" they would say excitedly. At that time our ward had no Aaronic Priesthood holders. I became the president of the deacons quorum because there weren't any other deacons. I wondered why they would give me such a calling, but I came to understand that ward leaders were training me in priesthood responsibilities. As a result, I tried to be faithful.

My grandmother, however, remained less active, attending meetings only occasionally. But she supported my decision to serve because she knew in her heart the gospel is true.

When I turned in my missionary papers in 1990, most full-time missionaries called from Córdoba served in the Argentina Buenos Aires North or South Missions. I was sure I would be called to one of those two missions and not be too far away from my great-grandmother.

Later, when my stake president called, he told me that I needed a passport because I was going to Colombia instead! Despite my ongoing concerns, my great-grandmother encouraged me to go. Just before I left, she promised that she would return to church the very next Sunday and go to the temple before I returned. This was difficult to believe but made it easier for me to leave her.

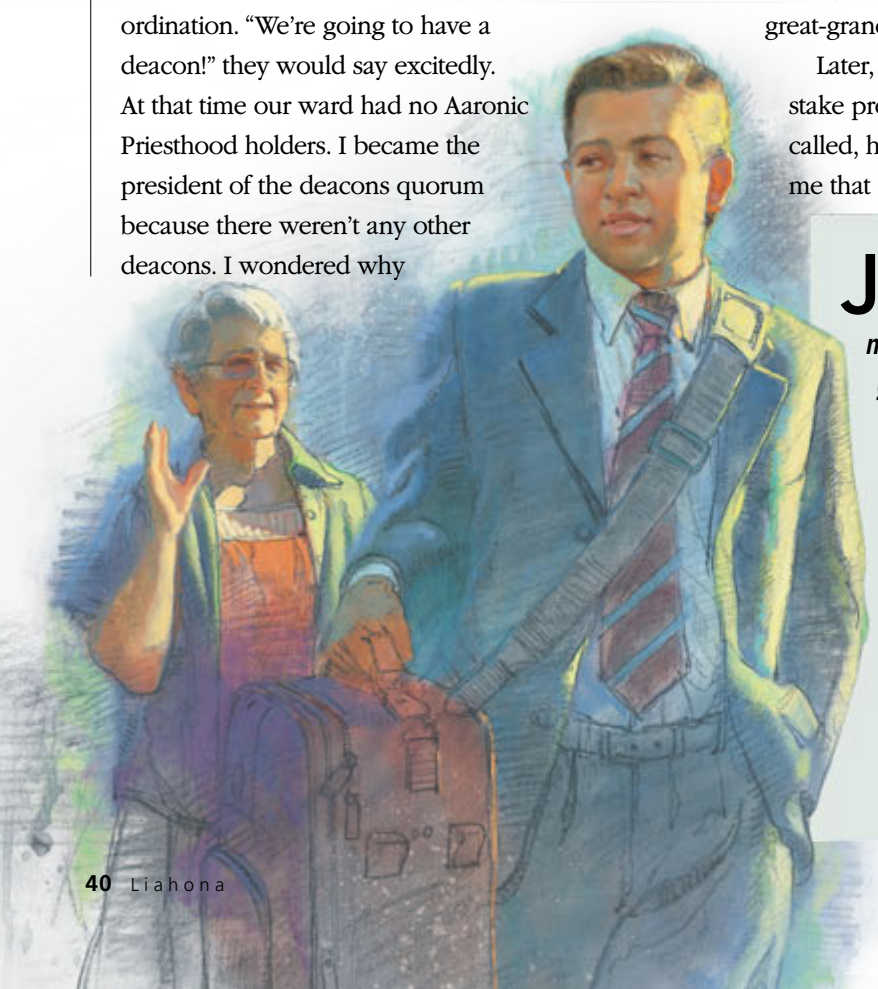
While I was on my mission, she did exactly what she had promised. Although in her 80s, she not only attended all of her meetings but also arrived on time. And she prepared for and went to the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple.

After a 12-hour, all-night bus ride returning from that first trip to the temple, my great-grandmother arrived at our ward meetinghouse on Sunday morning at 8:30, shortly before Church meetings began. Our stake president, Rúben Spitale, told her, "Let me take you home so you can rest."

"No," she replied. "I'm going to church." And she did.

After I returned from my mission, we attended the temple together three times before she passed away in 2000. Because of my mission, we were both blessed. Had I stayed home, I'm confident none of these blessings would have occurred. ■

Hugo Fabián Lallana, Córdoba, Argentina



Just before I left on my mission, my less-active great-grandmother promised that she would return to church the very next Sunday and go to the temple before I returned.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GREGG THORKELSON

WE LISTENED TO THE SPIRIT

We really had no intention of returning to teach the man that night, but every day afterward as we passed his house, I felt an impression to stop.

One morning my missionary companion and I decided to go tracting in a small community in our assigned area in the southern Philippines. While we were busy knocking on doors, a man approached us and asked what we were doing. We could tell that he had been drinking.

Thinking that he was not really interested in our message, we handed him a pamphlet about the purpose of life. We then told him that if he would read the pamphlet and not drink that evening, we would come to his home to explain the purpose of life. He nodded and said he would wait for us. We hurriedly went on our way to a scheduled teaching appointment.

We really had no intention of returning to teach him that night, but every day afterward as we passed his house, I felt an impression to stop. I would immediately disregard the feeling, however, and justify my decision by telling myself that he was probably too drunk to listen.

After a few days the prompting became so strong that I could no longer resist it. As we knocked on his door, we were met by a startled lady who asked us why we had not returned earlier, as we had promised. She said her husband had waited for us that night and that for the first time in their married life, he had not been drinking.

We were embarrassed and apologized profusely. We set an appointment to return that night to teach her and her husband. Soon afterward Brother Gumabay (name has been changed) repented of all his worldly vices, was baptized, and became a pillar in the community.

A few days after his baptism, I was transferred to another area and lost contact with the family. All I could do was hope and pray that they would stay active in the Church.

Later I learned that the small community where the Gumabay family lived had a branch and then a ward. Brother Gumabay was called to be the bishop of that ward. I also learned that most of his relatives had joined the Church.

When I eventually returned to visit my old missionary area, I learned that many people had joined the Church there because of the good example of Bishop Gumabay, who had put his life in the hands of the Lord and placed Him at the helm of his family and daily activities.

I am so grateful we listened to the promptings of the Spirit to visit the Gumabay home. Through this experience I came to comprehend what the Lord meant when He said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Matthew 9:12). ■

Michael Angelo M. Ramírez,
New Zealand

CALL YOUR HOME TEACHERS

Many years ago when our four children were small, my husband took a job in another state while I stayed behind until our two older children finished school for the year. We had recently been assigned new home teachers, who had the chance to visit only twice before my husband was transferred.

One night after putting the children to bed, I heard our baby girl crying in her room. When I picked her up, I noticed that she was burning with fever. I considered taking her to the hospital, but a quick perusal of our new insurance policy showed that it covered only residents of Idaho—the state where my husband now worked. The rest of us were still residents of the state of Washington.

I grew alarmed when I took our daughter's temperature—105 degrees Fahrenheit (41 degrees C). I immediately knelt in prayer and fervently asked for help. An answer came that I would never have considered: "Call your home teachers."

The hour was growing late, and I knew that the two men, Brothers Halverson and Bird, had undoubtedly retired for the night. But I picked up the phone and called Brother Bird anyway, quickly telling him what was wrong. Within five minutes, at 11:00 p.m., my home teachers were at the front door—in suits and ties.

By this time our baby's cheeks and eyes were red, and her hair was plastered with sweat. She whimpered with pain, but Brothers Bird and Halverson were calm as they took her. Then, laying their hands on her head, they gave her a blessing and told her in the name of the Savior to be healed.

When I opened my eyes after the blessing, I could hardly believe what I saw. My daughter was giggling and squirming to be let down to play. Her fever was gone!

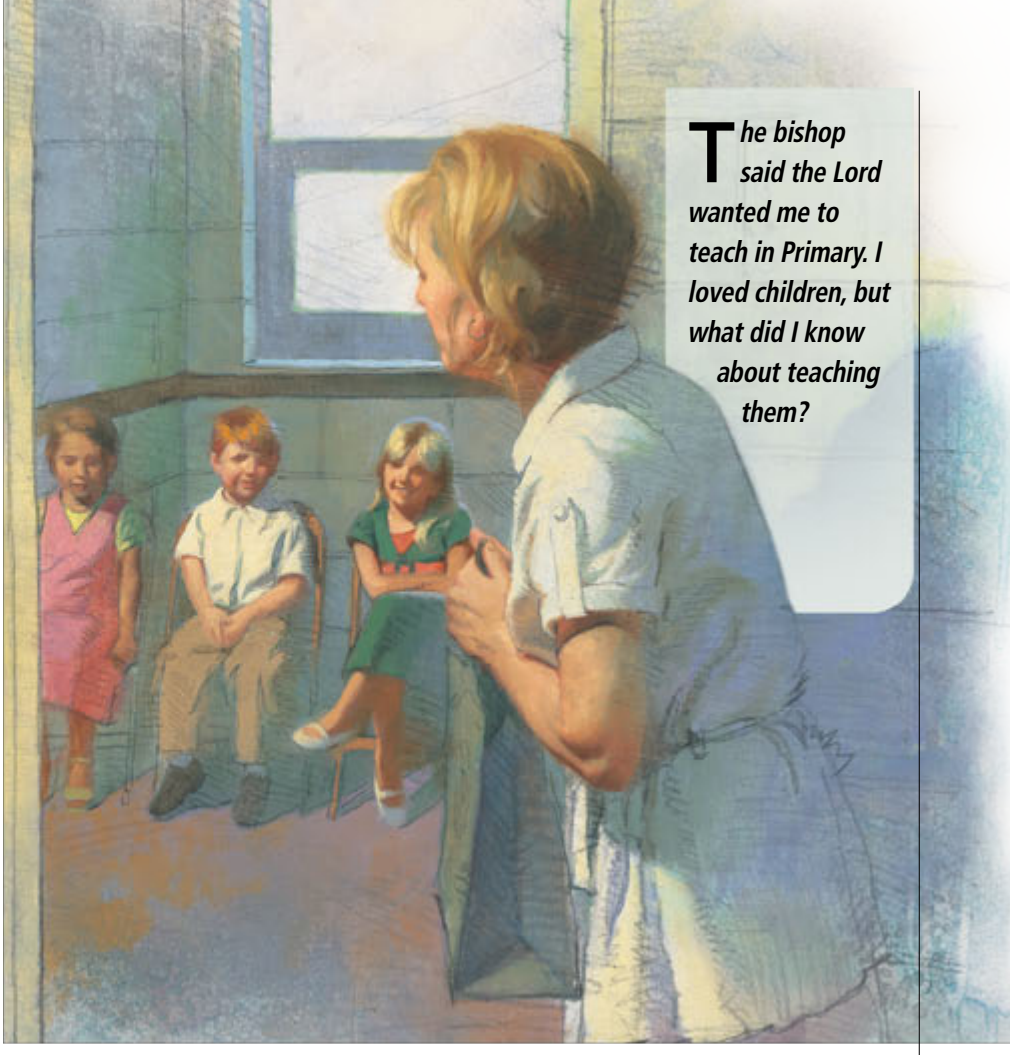
"I could feel her cool down as we administered to her," Brother Bird said to me as we all watched my child in amazement. They soon left, after which I was up for several hours with a baby who wanted to stay awake and play. I didn't mind a bit.

Many years have passed since that night when two ministering angels, in the form of home teachers, blessed my child. Soon afterward we moved to Idaho and lost touch with them, but I will always be grateful to two kind home teachers who came at the eleventh hour on the Lord's errand. ■

Diana Loski, Pennsylvania, USA

I grew alarmed when I took our daughter's temperature. I immediately knelt in prayer and fervently asked for help.

WAS MY BISHOP MISTAKEN?



The bishop said the Lord wanted me to teach in Primary. I loved children, but what did I know about teaching them?

Our ward had just been divided, so when the bishop asked to see me, I was sure I would receive a calling in the new ward. I had been working with the young women and loved them. They were so receptive to the gospel and such a joy to teach. Surely the Lord would allow me to continue teaching them.

To my surprise, the bishop said the Lord wanted me to teach in Primary instead. Surely he was mistaken! He assured me, however, that he had fasted and prayed and felt strongly about my calling. I loved children, but what did I know about teaching them?

For 15 years of marriage the only sadness my husband and I shared was that the Lord had not blessed us with children. Our efforts to adopt had also been fruitless because of our medical challenges.

Trusting the bishop, I accepted the call to teach in the Primary, but in my heart I struggled. I was angry with the Lord for leaving me childless, and I resented this new calling.

"Why, Lord, art Thou asking this of me?" I wondered. "In Thy wisdom, I have been deprived of children of my own. Why should I be asked to teach other people's children?"

I prayed and struggled and wrestled with the Lord, pleading through my tears for understanding. Finally I decided that since I had accepted the calling, I had better stop feeling sorry for myself and do the best I could.

That is when the blessings came. I quickly learned to love the children, and they learned to love me. I found that their love was great enough to help me fill the emptiness in my life. Soon I couldn't go down the hall at church without at least two children holding onto my hands and others stopping for a hug as I passed by. In turn, my husband was called as a Scout leader. Before long our home was full of children and teens.

My husband died at age 47 in November 1986. Once again the Lord knew what I needed better than I. Within weeks of my husband's death, I was called to serve a teaching mission in the Primary of the Fresno, California, Laotian branch. The courage of these exceptional people and their children gave me strength to carry on without my husband.

What a special joy it was to see the young people I had taught grow to adulthood, serve missions, marry in the temple, and start families of their own. Dozens of these "adopted" children still stop by to say hello and make my day brighter, and I'm happy when I see them in the Fresno California Temple, where I now serve.

My service in Primary truly has been a lifelong blessing. I am so grateful that our callings are dictated by the Lord and not by us. ■

Jeannie L. Sorensen, California, USA