

My Old Home Teacher

When I was growing up in the church I had a home teacher—not unusual, except that I was a convert and the lone member of the church in my family. Brother Reilly* was a kind and sweet man. He was diligent in coming to see me and always asked if there was anything he could do for me. He was friendly to me at church and I felt his interest in me, which was nice since I was a twelve year old without a family at church, and I would have been easy to overlook or ignore.

Once when I was a teenager, I was left home to watch my little brother who was only five at the time. He had an earache that was getting worse and he was crying inconsolably. I couldn't get hold of my mom so I called my home teacher. He was glad to come over and give John a blessing. I don't remember the outcome exactly but it was sure nice to know there was someone to call on.

I grew up, went to BYU and got married. After my husband left graduate school we ended up moving back to the town and ward where I grew up. There was brother Reilly again, still as friendly and helpful as ever. Now my husband got to know him and he also developed a warm and friendly relationship with him. This was the first man you would call if someone in the ward needed help moving or painting. He was a brick. Or anyway, that's what we all thought.

During those early years my husband found himself a very young member of the High Council. It was during this service that he took part in a high council court for my old home teacher, one of the sadder responsibilities of his stewardship. He never forgot the things that brother Reilly said to his priesthood brethren that night.

In a quiet, sad voice he expressed something like the following: "Brethren. I love you all. I have no hard feelings toward any of you. But all my life I have been active in this church. When I was a young man I did everything my mother wanted me to do. Then I got married and did everything that my wife wanted me to do. I have heard for years people tell about their spiritual experiences and revelations that they have had. But I have never to my knowledge had one myself. I am just finished living my life doing what other people are telling me is the right thing to do. I want the freedom to find out for myself if there is anything else out there."

And then he left—the meeting, the church and his marriage. A few years later after we had moved to a neighboring town I ran into him at the drugstore. He smiled and said hi while nervously trying to hide a six-pack of beer behind his back. I heard he married again and moved to another state. I have often wondered what he found out there. And I have never forgotten the warning that his example burned into my mind. It is not enough to "be active" in the church. Every person must receive revelation and respond to it for himself. Every person must invite the Savior into his life, the Savior who stands at the door and knocks, but will only come in if we open the door from the inside.

LLM

* Name changed.