

My conversion experience to the Church of Jesus Christ

By Elder Edward (Eddie) L. White

I praise my Lord in Heaven for showing me the path to His church. I grew up in Independence, Missouri, with wonderful parents and one brother a year younger than me. We did not attend church while I was growing up, but I always gravitated towards friends who attended church and were morally sound people. It felt like the right thing to do. Several times as a child I had experiences in which I heard the voice of the Lord saying quietly to me, "It is alright, my son." These came when I was feeling down about something, so the existence of God was not a question in my mind. Finding the church I should join was, though.

My journey to His church started in May of 1983, when I was a junior in high school. I good friend of mine, as we stood at one of the doors of the auditorium of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS) handing out programs for the senior graduation ceremony, encouraged me to attend as a counselor a camp for special needs individuals called Camp Moja. I did so the summer of 1983 and while there met my future wife, Becky.

As we began to go on dates a majority of the events we attended centered around her church's youth group. I really enjoyed being with her and going to these events. The spiritual life I had been missing was beginning to be filled and I was very happy. We continued to date each other and I continued to be involved with her church, the RLDS church. She and I even began to talk future tense of the possibility of us one day being married, but at no time did she push me to join her church. Because I knew she was a good church-going girl I even fabricated that I attended church on a regular basis because I was concerned she would not be further interested in me if I did not. I even convinced my parents to attend an Easter service at the Methodist church, where I was baptized as an infant, so I could have something to talk about with my girlfriend.

The summer of 1985 was a significant one for me. It started out with me attending with Becky, as well as other youth and adults, a reunion of the RLDS church at the same campgrounds in which Camp Moja was held. One night, as the apostle assigned to that reunion was preaching to the people the power of God came over me and convicted me that I should join this church and that I needed to confess to Becky that I did not in fact attend church anywhere on a regular basis. I remember retiring to a building used as a classroom with Becky and with tears flowing down my cheeks I confessed that I did not attend church anywhere, but I had the strong conviction from God that I should pursue being baptized into the RLDS church. She said she somehow had known I did not attend church and that going with her to the youth group had been good for us both. A side note here too, is that a person who years later I would meet and would become a very good friend of mine was at that same reunion as a 16-year-old deacon and was up front as well to offer a prayer when the apostle was finished speaking.

I began to have cottage meetings to learn more about the RLDS church and the history of the church being restored in 1830. I learned how that it was not a new church, but was simply the church Jesus Christ had set up in the beginning, with all the ordinances and priesthood offices original to His church. I also learned of the Book of Mormon as a second witness of Jesus Christ, giving the account of a number of groups of people who came across the ocean to occupy the Americas previous to the time of Jesus Christ coming to the earth. I soaked it all in and the truth of it all rang true.

While Becky was on a mission trip with the youth group later that same summer of 1985 I went over to her parent's house and said I wanted to be baptized, and that I wanted the

youth leader to baptize me with water and Becky's father to confirm the gift of the Holy Ghost upon me. I spoke by phone with Becky and told her of my decision to be baptized and when she relayed this information to all the other youth on the bus she was on she said a cheer went up among them.

I was in fact baptized right after she got back from that youth trip and the "rest is history." I have grown to love my savior Jesus Christ more and more throughout my life and watch as my three boys grow up and build their own relationship with Jesus Christ. I praise my Lord for giving me a sure testimony to join His church. Some have said over the years that we must love people into the church, but I respectfully disagree that we should in fact love people but pray they have their own testimony as to the fact that they should be baptized into His church. A personal testimony of Jesus Christ is more precious than silver or gold and I feel blessed He died, rose again and went after me as one of His sheep to bring me into His fold.