



Matthew Isaac <misaac.satx@gmail.com>

Week

18 messages

Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>
To: Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>

Mon, Feb 2, 2015 at 11:07 AM

Things have been super busy for me lately. I've been doing a lot with the ward missionary work and am speaking this Saturday night in the adult session of our stake conference. I'm getting kind of sick of this wet and cold weather here in Logan. It hasn't been as cold or snowy as usual but it's still too cold to be able to really do anything outside. The other day as I was driving down Main St. heading home from Deseret Book I was sitting at the stop light on Main and Center and there was a bad accident right in the middle of the intersection. Two cars hit almost perfectly head on. One had a 17 year old cheerleader for Logan High and the other had a mom and her ~8 year old son. I pulled over after getting through the intersection and ran over to help. The people already there were all acting crazy as you can imagine. They said they couldn't get the girl out of her car which I assumed was because the car was too mangled to open the door. Her car was filling full of smoke so I knew I needed to get her out. I approached the driver's side door and realized that the door was ajar but looked fine. I opened it and it opened just fine! Then I realized what the problem was. She was sitting there in shock and bawling. She didn't want to get out. She was just scared I guess. I told her to take my hand and I led her out of the car and out of the intersection and made her sit down on the sidewalk while I assessed her for spinal injury and then checked the other two patients. I waited with all three until the officer arrived and then requested he radio for an ambulance. He did and I reported to the paramedics on the situation and then left. I technically had to wait to hand over patient care to them. Crazy night!

I had an interesting thought on Sunday. I was thinking a lot about testimonies and what they really are. (Being fast Sunday and all) A testimony in my mind is most aptly described as a witness. In the church it's witness of some type of personal revelation is it not? So bearing your testimony is declaring what you witnessed then right? A witness of a car accident would tell an officer, I saw that car there and I know he hit this car over here. In the church we might say I felt the love of God and know that I am His child. It's an interesting thing--the testimony of spiritual things. Taking it one step further, a witness can also be described as a special type of knowledge then. And with any other type of knowledge, we know that if we don't use it or talk about it often, we forget it. If I don't practice calculus or at least teach someone about it from time to time, I will forget how it works and what it is. A testimony is the same way, as you know. If you don't share it or at least ponder it often, it fades. But then, we knew that right? Because President Hinckley said, "Faith is like the muscle of my arm. If I use it, if I nurture it, it will grow strong. If I put it in a sling and leave it there, it will grow weak." And what is faith, if not the exercise that leads us to the witness.

I hope the work is going well for you. Write soon and send a couple pics!

Steve

Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>
To: Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>

Mon, Feb 9, 2015 at 12:28 PM

Steve,
Wow, you've been doing a LOT! I hope that your talk in Stake Conference went well. What was the essence of your talk?
Yes, the cold weather and snow and rain is something that I really don't miss that much... I could get used to the Texas winters really quickly.
Wow, that is a huge blessing that you were there and able to help the people that were in a car wreck. I'm still strongly considering becoming an EMT eventually. I'd have to see if I could handle it, but those are some skills that I think are pretty invaluable. Good work!

What's the legal stance - if you're EMT certified, and stop and help, can you get in any legal trouble? Obviously that's morally the right thing to do, but i was just curious about the legal side.

Thanks for your thoughts about testimony and witness. I think that it also has a lot to do with our spiritual "light." We know that we can grow in light - D&C 50:24 - "That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day." So i think that what you said is exactly right. We've both seen people who had strong testimonies at one time, and then over time, they got complacent, and neglected their spiritual light, and began to lose it. Eventually, as Pres. Uchtdorf said, in time they begin to wonder why they ever believed in the first place. The enlightenment and perspective and understanding we gain from gospel study can be lost, that enlightening can be reversed if we let it. The key, i think, is to never rationalize, to never let the Lord shift down from your number one priority spot. So bearing testimony is a fantastic way to feel the spirit and to grow in spiritual light! And It strengthens others, and "your sins are forgive you"! (D&C 62:3). The work is fantastic. I love it more than anything else that I've ever done.

Have a great week!

love, Elder Isaac

p.s.- The sunglasses are fantastic, i love them! Thanks again!



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Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>
To: Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>

Mon, Feb 9, 2015 at 12:35 PM

Here, if you get a minute, read my talk. It has most of what I said but there were a few things I added in on the spot. Like when I said Act as Shepherds, I said that I imagine the Lord calling many shepherds to watch over His flock. Some over the small baby sheep, some over the teenage girl and boy sheep, some over the adults and so on. Ward council is a time to gather all these shepherds and discuss the flock and it's needs.

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Stake Conference Talk.docx

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Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>
To: Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>

Mon, Feb 9, 2015 at 12:42 PM

If you are an EMT and stop at an accident, number one you shouldn't really tell anyone you're an EMT. Then you are just covered under the good samaritan law as a person who knows first aid and tried to help. EMT's can't perform any treatment that they are typically certified and trained to perform as an EMT, but rather can help out with basic first aid and life saving procedures. So what did I do right when I got there? Told everyone I was an EMT like a dang idiot. haha. It was actually really chaotic and people were running around frantically so I said that to help them understand they should listen to my instructions and bring the patients to me for care. I realized it was a mistake of having said that but I think the laws are stupid in how they restrict a person that has been trained and certified by the state to do something that they can and should do to help others. Because I had announced that I was an EMT, I had to remain with all the patients until the ambulance came, at which time I could turn over patient care to an equal or higher certified person than myself. (Another EMT or paramedic)

Awesome picture! What in the world was that sign for though?

Elder, I want you to know that I know the Lord is directing His work. He is at the helm. Follow the promptings of the spirit and all will be well with you.

I have a story of something that happened last week but I'll tell you about it later. I need to get going for now.

Take care and work hard.

Love,
Steve

PS. I can't wait to hang out with you when you get home.

On Mon, Feb 9, 2015 at 12:28 PM, Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net> wrote:

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Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>
To: Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>

Mon, Feb 23, 2015 at 11:34 AM

Steve,

That sounds like it was a great talk! Ward councils can be very powerful and effective... but they can also be weak and ineffective. I've seen quite a variety on my mission. But you had some great thoughts in that talk! I really liked the visualization you gave of each having a corner of the vineyard, with all the tools we need to perform the work. And the work of the vineyard is the absolute MOST IMPORTANT work we could

EVER do!!! But there are a whole lot of distractions around us, and people easily lose sight of the vision. I also really liked what you said about what church leaders ask us to do - they're not suggestions... don't take them lightly.

Good to know about being an EMT, i think its really neat to have those skills to serve. I heard someone say something to the effect of, (I dont' remember who, maybe it was you), Education is the line between wanting to make a difference, and actually being able to.

Haha, that picture was at the exit of a parking lot of a different church, haha. We were turning the car around to head the other way, and thought it was a sweet sign.

What is the story you mentioned?

Well, here are a few of my experiences from this past week. I've been blessed with many "small and simple" experiences and tender mercies to see. This has continually build my testimony of how much the Lord is aware of and involved in our lives.

First highlight of the week was when Sister Cassidy(returning less active) and Sister Attaway (investigator roommate) had us and another brother from the ward over for dinner.. Sister Cassidy made rice, chicken, and mole, which was fantastic. But the best part of all was that Sister Attaway told us that she has decided that she wants to be baptized! Everything has been going really well for her, we've been impressed with her consistency in reading the Book of Mormon and coming to church. Sister Cassidy has been a huge support for her as well.

Another neat experience this week - we went to visit a less active family in the ward, the Carrizales. We invited the Robledos (some fantastic active members) to come with us to help us share the message. We shared the Mormon Message, "Good Things to Come" by Elder Holland. The message went really well, and we left with a good spirit in the home. The next day, Sister Robledo called us with a favor to ask. After she had told us the favor, she also thanked us for inviting them to that lesson. She said, "That message was for us; we really needed it." She didn't tell us details, but they have been facing some hard times lately, and she told us that the message that we had shared was just what they had needed to hear.

The other highlight of the the week was our meeting with a brother in the ward, a convert of about 5 years. He had met with us the week before, and had expressed to us how his marriage was struggling. They had had some major problems in the week prior to our meeting, and he was starting to talk about separation and eventually divorce. It was probably one of the most saddening and depressing meetings I'd had. We told him that we were not qualified to counsel him or to hear any details about the problems that they had been having, but we left with our testimonies of the atonement and of the healing power of Christ. We gave him our bishops number and encouraged him to get in contact with the Bishop, who could provide better counsel and advice. So this last week, when we met with him again, we were a little nervous to hear how things had been going. It was so great to hear that he and his wife had been able to talk things out, and to recommit themselves to each do better. There are so many things that Satan throws at us and our families, but if we "hold fast" to the word of God (1Ne 15:24), and build our lives upon the "rock of or Redeemer" (Hel 5:12), the "firey darts of the adversary" and his "shafts in the whirlwind... hail, and mighty storm" will have no power over us.

Steve, thank you for your example of putting your "hand to the plow" and never looking back! (Luke 9:62) I'm excited to spend time with you as well. I feel like i've got a stronger bond with you than I do with a lot of my friends from highschool (for example). I think that its because of the common threads of testimony we've been able to share. Similar to the relationship that is quickly built with a missionary companion -- its a result of sharing spiritual experiences and building each other up in the gospel. Go look up 2 Tim. 2:3 :)

love, Elder Isaac

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Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>
To: Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>

Mon, Feb 23, 2015 at 11:51 AM

Hey! If you're still online, could you please just tell me what church that mission field sign is from? The name of the church and it's location. I want to use it as a visual at church! Thanks! I'll write back later this week.

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Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>
To: Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>

Mon, Feb 23, 2015 at 11:59 AM

I'm sorry... I don't know the name right off, there are so many churches in our area...
The location though, and maybe you could find it on google maps? It in new braunfels, TX on Walnut Ave.
, near where walnut intersects Gardenia Dr. Try the street view, the sign in the picture says "Welcome" on
the other side, so that's what you'd see from the street.
hope that helps!

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Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>
To: Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>

Mon, Feb 23, 2015 at 12:14 PM

It does. Thanks!

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Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>
To: Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>

Mon, Feb 23, 2015 at 12:22 PM

It took some detective work (before I realized the stupid mailbox in the picture had the address on it ;) but
it's the Peace Lutheran Church on 1147 Walnut Ave. Thanks! That's awesome.

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Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>
To: Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>

Mon, Mar 2, 2015 at 9:42 AM

Great! How did you end up using it at church?

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Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>
To: Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>

Mon, Mar 2, 2015 at 9:54 AM

ANNNNNNNNNNNND...I forgot to write to you. ;) Sorry.

I haven't used it yet. I decided to wait. Each sunday during Priesthood opening exercises the bishopric
gives me a minute to say whatever I want about missionary work. In the Family Guidebook there are 6
different tasks listed for each Family Priesthood Leader to encourage the family to do and each Sunday I
read one of the 6 and tell a personal story from within the last week about how I tried to do it in my own life.
When I finish with all 6, I'm going to show that picture and explain that the world is our mission field. I think
it will be a good conclusion to the whole thing.

Jessica and I are leaving Thursday night to go on a cruise for our anniversary. We're going to two ports in
Mexico and Belize and Honduras. We'll also be staying in Tampa, FL when we get back from the cruise for
2 extra days to do some scuba diving. Should be a lot of fun. Anyway, you won't hear from me for a couple
weeks because we'll be visiting the Mayan ruins!!! I'm really excited because I've been wanting to see them
ever since I read 3 Nephi 11!

Here are some of the temples we'll be seeing. Anyway, take care for now, Elder. Work hard this final
stretch of the mission. Oh, and just out of curiosity, how many total lessons do you teach on average per
week? And how many of those are with non-members? And do you Elders track how many contacts you
make?

Love, Steve





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Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>
To: Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>

Mon, Apr 13, 2015 at 11:21 AM

Steve!!

So sorry that I haven't written back. In my mind, you were leaving on your trip, so I was waiting to hear from you when you got back, but then I realized that you had sent the last email that I had never replied to. So sorry about that!

Anyway, how are you? I am doing fantastic. I have never been happier, never loved the Lord, the people or the work more. This is the best.

Send me some pictures of your trip! I hope that you had a great time! How was the land of the Book of Mormon?

To answer your question, we teach an average of... maybe 10-12 lessons per week, with probably 8 or so with non members. And no, we don't keep track of contacts.

Sorry, out of time! I'll write more next week!

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Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>
To: Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>

Mon, Apr 13, 2015 at 11:39 AM

Didn't you see the pics I already sent?

Can I tell you something if you promise that it won't shake your testimony or make you think I've lost mine?

After a lot of recent research and having been to the so called "Book of Mormon" sites in Mexico and Central America, my conclusion right now is that is not likely where the writers of the Book of Mormon were. From what I can tell, there is a lot more evidence and it makes a lot more sense that those temples and ruins are from other people that may have been descendants or otherwise related to those from the Book of Mormon and that the actual people described in the Book of Mormon were in North America actually in the USA. If someone told me that a couple months ago I'd call them apostate but I've actually

read quite a bit about it now and this makes a lot more sense. Anyway, crazy huh? Just when I thought I kinda knew what was going on...

Did I ever tell you about the family we met on our cruise?

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Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>
To: Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>

Mon, Apr 13, 2015 at 11:58 AM

Dang it, I guess I just realized those pictures were ones I got off google. Hahahahaha. Here's some from our actual trip.



You're coming home soon so it's about time I say this: Be sure to get you one of these wife things when you get home. They're pretty great to have.

What day do you get home? Next month right?

Elder, the last month of my mission was the most spectacular and miraculous month of my entire life. Now is the time to bring together everything you have learned over the last 2 years and the preparation of your whole life. Work harder and more effectively than you ever have. Pray more sincerely, study your scriptures more diligently, and love more deeply than you ever have. I promise you can have the same kind of experience I did if you do these things.



I want to show you this picture. It's nothing special when you glance at it. But this is when I was transferred to my last area. He was one of my last companions and we are sitting next to the temple. See me in the picture? That's when I finally figured it all out. It took me over 20 months of being a missionary and I finally figured it all out. (I got home and figured more out ;) but this is when I got the majority of it). This is when I finally understood what it meant to be a representative of Jesus Christ. The Elder Gunderson in this picture is someone that I look up to even today. He was totally consecrated to the work, and had no other intention whatsoever than to save souls. He was willing to give up everything just to bring people to Christ. At this point he had spent 2/3 of his time in the church serving a mission in a spanish speaking third world country. He didn't even remember what the names of the hymns were in English anymore. ;) He was so happy just to be there and have the opportunity to serve others and give them a slice of what he had also been given. I need to be more like that today, but try to remember this as you serve. Be that guy. Leave no room for

any other desire in your heart, and when you come home you will feel in your heart the words "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

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Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>
To: Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>

Mon, May 11, 2015 at 11:09 AM

Steve!

Sorry its been a few weeks. Thanks for sending the pictures of your trip! Looks like it was quite the getaway! That is great!

Thank you for the advice on the "wife things." Duly noted. :)

As far as my release date, I fly home from Texas on May 27th. Its a sobering thought, I don't know if I've really come to terms with it yet. But I suppose that I will soon, whether I like it or not!

Thank you for the thoughts about being totally consecrated. We have a mission phrase/slogan that we use often, "All in!" Be "all in" to the work, serve with ALL your heart, ALL your might, ALL your mind, and ALL your strength. "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God."

There is no time to turn back, to hesitate, to forget who you are and why you're here. "All In!" You can't merely dip a toe - the only entrance to the church is the diving board. Continue onward and upward your entire life. It truly is a privilege to be a representative and messenger of Christ and the Restored gospel. I'm doing all I can to soak up every minute and not waste an opportunity. Thank you for your example and your counsel. You have made a huge difference in my life and my conversion. My greatest desire is to hear (feel) those words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

I love you brother!

Elder Isaac

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Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>
To: Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>

Mon, May 11, 2015 at 11:49 AM

Along those same lines, I just purchased a piece of art from an artist I have really been liking lately. He's called Tekst and makes pictures that incorporate quotes in unique ways that are meant to be inspirational. Anyway, I just bought this one:

 Be

If you can tell, it contains the quote: "Wherever you are, be all there." – Jim Elliott

Jim "was an evangelical Christian who was one of five missionaries killed while participating in Operation Auca, an attempt to evangelize the Huaorani people of Ecuador." I've always loved the quote but didn't know that about the author.

Anyway, be all there for another few weeks.

May 27!!! Coming up quick!

A few thoughts on your homecoming for you:

-Your meeting with your stake president to be released is a very special time. Treat it with dignity and reverence. Ask for counsel. Listen to what he has to say. Also, pay close attention to your feelings. When the missionary mantle is removed you will surely feel it. It will enlarge your testimony of the calling you've been serving in for the last two years.

-Your talk in sacrament meeting is just that, a talk in sacrament meeting. The church handbook states that the meeting is still a normal sacrament meeting where a recently returned missionary is asked to speak. It is not a missionary homecoming meeting. Many people will want to come hear you speak. I have been thinking about this a lot lately and I don't think that's necessarily a great thing to do. It's good that many people want to come to hear you tell stories about your mission and how amazing it was, but I'm not sure that is the proper order of things. I would LOVE to come hear you speak but that isn't my ward so I've

decided to painfully stay here and attend my ward. When you prepare your talk, preach the gospel and bear testimony. Share mission stories only if they apply. Focus on preaching the gospel. If you don't, you have learned nothing from your service. Remember that bearing testimony involves stating truths, not saying what you are grateful for. Save the gratitude for the Lord.

-When I got home everyone told me that it wouldn't take long before the missionary fire wore off and I stopped waking up at 6:30am to do scripture study. Just like every other lie Satan inspires, that had some truth to it. It is VERY difficult after coming home to maintain your fire. Much more than in the mission field. But the lie is that it has to die down. It doesn't. You just need to work harder at it because there will be WAY more distractions and other things to accomplish. Please please please try so hard to maintain all the good habits you have been practicing the last two years. Get up early and feast upon the scriptures, for man cannot live by bread alone. Try hard to be actively engaged in all good causes and in every responsibility you have at church. Your fire will only grow richer in color.

-Get a blessing from your dad. There is going to be a lot going on and you are going to need as much help from the Lord as you can get. Your dad would also love giving you a father's blessing to start you off on the right track and give you some guiding counsel. Take advantage of the fact that your dad holds the priesthood.

-Date. Immediately. Do not wait. Start making contacts your first week home. Seek after a date like you seek after investigators. Do not take courtship and marriage lightly. Do not postpone the process for any reason, for none of your excuses will be good ones. The Lord wants man to have a companion and the sooner you can get one the better off you will be. Please listen to me on this one. It might be 5-10 years before you get married, I don't care, but start now in your search for a worthy daughter of God to spend the rest of your life with.

-Lastly, come visit me! I hope to see you very soon. I want to show you our new place, hang out, and have some good gospel conversations in person!

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Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>

Mon, May 18, 2015 at 1:12 PM

To: Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>

Wow, I really like that artwork! That is a great quote too. Very true! Whatever you're doing, do it 100%. (Unless its against the gospel, then don't do it at all:)

Yes, unfortunately May 27th is coming up extremely quick! Its bizarre to me - it seems like just the other day we were in the Elders Quorum presidency together, going to visit the less active members, having presidency meeting, going to California, etc. You sure taught me a lot.

I'd love some of your counsel on a question I have. Well, first off, thank you for the counsel you already gave about returning home, it is very helpful to hear your advice! I completely agree with what you said about sacrament meeting talk for a return missionary. It shouldn't be a meeting centered around the missionary. It should be a normal sacrament meeting, centered on the ordinance of the Sacrament, and on Christ. I'm going to do all I can to not take away from the Spirit of Christ that should prevail in a sacrament meeting. I asked my mom and dad to try and keep it low-key, not inviting too many people, etc.

Unfortunately I don't have as much control over that as I'd like. I'll be attending all 3 hours of church that day, and then returning home to have dinner with my family that has traveled in. My talk is on the atonement, how it can strengthen and enable us in our daily lives. I will highlight the principles with stories, but the stories will be only that - a highlight to the doctrine.

Anyway, my question is this: I'm sure that after returning home, I'll have a desire to return to the mission, to continue having those great experiences that i had for two years. But I also know that that part of my life will be in the past, and that although my purpose to invite others to Christ doesn't change, I'll have other responsibilities and I'll need to move forward with school, dates, work, etc. (but not stopping the habits of gospel study, and still being a missionary). Anyway, my question is this - How can I move forward and not be hindered by the desire to return to the mission? I don't want to let that desire to overwhelm the 'task at hand.' Hopefully that makes sense.

Anyway, almost out of time, but thanks for the email!

I am looking forward to seeing you! definitely count on seeing me soon!

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Steve G <chancefavorsme@gmail.com>

Mon, May 18, 2015 at 2:47 PM

To: Matthew Isaac <matthew.isaac@myldsmail.net>

Great question, Elder Isaac. Here is my answer, and it's not what you'll expect me to say, and not what I ever expected to believe or teach.

I have very recently received some very subtle impressions about a topic that I have never before heard taught by the church nor discussed by any church leader. To an extent it goes against that which I HAVE been taught in church, and yet, is totally in line with what I believe to be the spirit of truth. Here it is. And be patient, by the end I believe I'll have answered your question completely.

Revelation. We have a right to receive revelation for ourselves and those within our stewardship, correct? For me, that includes my family being the presiding priesthood bearer in the home, the ward missionaries as I am called to direct their labors within the ward, the families I home teach, and perhaps others at times and in different circumstances. Revelation for a stewardship is typically bound in two ways, one is geographically, and second is by time. When a bishop is called to be the bishop he has the right to receive revelation only for those church members residing within his ward's boundaries geographically and only as long as he is called to be the bishop. Once he is released, his right to revelation is revoked as far as him being the bishop is concerned. Are we on the same page? Now...as a full time missionary you are called to serve within the geographic boundary of your mission, and also assigned an area in which to labor. This is important because in the church we also may have a right to revelation by assignment and not just by calling, correct? So you are both called and assigned and may receive revelation to preach the word of God to all those within your area. When you come home at the end of this month, you will be released of your calling and assignment and go back into a normal ward and normal church membership. This is all true so far as the church teaches so far, and now I lead to that which I never would have supposed.

Recently I have had a lot of contact with some of my converts. Largely inspired by you, I have been trying to reach out to those I taught in order to continue fellow-shiping them and encouraging them to keep their covenants. I can't tell you how many "fires" I've had to put out from a distance and how many wonderful spiritual experiences I've had by doing it. Through all I have experienced in maintaining contact with them, I began to notice something very strange happening. I first realized it when one of my converts currently serving her mission in Bogota Columbia started to email me many questions she was having about missionary work and other general gospel topics. I responded to her emails and almost after each one she would reply something to the effect of, "you always seem to know exactly what to write." The Spirit whispered to me, "you still have revelation to teach me just as you had when you were in Mexico." It's odd, because I had always understood that my right to receive revelation had ended when I sat down with my stake president upon returning. I started to pay closer attention about what I felt as I wrote responses to her emails, and sure enough, I felt the sweet peace of the spirit inspiring my words. I thought about this deeply and also considered how I think we sometimes will also receive revelation for others, perhaps as authorized by heavenly messengers to have us deliver a message or instruction to even just friends, seemingly outside any earthly stewardship. One could argue that a close friend IS within some type of unwritten earthly stewardship. One could also expand the definition of stewardship to include much more than just our callings or assignments in the church extended to us by those who hold the keys. That becomes a grey area for me, but I also know that this situation with my convert is something unique. It feels more like the revelation that comes with the missionary mantle. I wonder if although we are released from our missionary service, a small part of that mantle doesn't want to just follow us on for the rest of our life so far as our converts are concerned. Now I will clarify by saying I DO NOT believe I have any right to go back down to Mexico right now and start knocking doors. But I DO believe right now I have a very special right to receive revelation for those I have taught the gospel to and have joined the church as a result, and that this spirit more closely resembles the spirit of my service down there than any other right to revelation I have experienced. After all, most of them do still call me Elder. :)

The other day I was sorting through some old letters that I had written shortly after my baptism to the Elder who baptized me. He had taught many of my discussions to me although technically he was not assigned to my area. By the time we were sending these letters back and forth he had left the area and was serving hours away but we still kept in contact throughout the remainder of his mission in California. In one of the letters I came upon this that I had written to him, "...you don't realize how much I love your letters. I always look forward to them and get so excited when they come. I always felt like when you were in this area you could receive revelation for me despite your not being in my ward boundary. I still believe this is the case. I know that you don't know how touched I am sometimes when you send these letters. I think it was the last letter or maybe the one before it that I read right when I was having some huge problems with my parents. I read it in tears. It inspired me just as the other one's have all done to follow the Lord and do better. You

have always had some special thing about you Poulsen that really gets to me. I can't put my finger on it but the only thing that my small brain can muster up is that maybe you and I were friends in the pre-existence." I believe because I was his convert, looking back, he has always had the right to receive revelation for me in a special "missionary way" and continue to strengthen me and preach to me.

To further examine this topic, let's look at the words of Elder David F. Evans of the Seventy. He is currently serving as the Executive Director of the Missionary Department and earlier this year gave a talk for the New MTC Presidents and Visitors' Center Directors. He said this, "We have a lifelong responsibility as missionaries not just to bring someone into the gospel, which is the way it used to be, but to help them endure throughout their lives." He also said, "In today's world, missionaries have remarkable tools, tools we didn't have as young missionaries. We would baptize people, we would love them, and they would love us, but we would go home, and the distance in many cases created a barrier. In today's world, with the use of social media and low-cost communication tools such as Skype, missionaries have just as great of an opportunity to maintain contact with their converts as when they were in the mission field themselves."

What does this tell me? When I came home, the only thing I was released from was finding new investigators. I still have responsibility over every single person I brought into the church. I have a responsibility specifically to help them keep their covenants and endure to the end. And I am now taking that responsibility more seriously than I ever had.

So you are coming home and are going to want to go back? For heaven's sake, GO BACK! Go visit often! Call often! Skype with your converts! I can't comment much about maintaining contact with other members and investigators you had, but if they are uplifting relationships by all means, maintain them. And now let me speak a few words on the "moving on" part of your question. Life when you come home will largely consist of a balancing act. It's probably the biggest thing you will have a challenge with. How do you balance your spiritual life with dating and school and work and other endeavors? You must balance it all. But Elder, NEVER EVER EVER EVER EVER let go of your mission. Hold it close to your chest. Hang on to the good habits you formed and the patterns of living and preaching the gospel for DEAR LIFE. DO NOT LET GO OF YOUR MISSION. I have realized more and more as time goes on how inspired the mission is to prepare young men for the rest of their lives. I can't even believe some times how my mission has been like the PERFECT blueprint for a perfect life. You will be gleaning lessons and strength and motivation from your 2 years of service for DECADES after you come home. I believe the mission is like the practical version of a patriarchal blessing. It is almost the same thing. The only difference between the two is one is words and the other is experiences. Between the two you will never be lost and always have direction for everything you do from here on. I hope you have maintained an excellent journal and taken lots of photos. Read them often. Ponder about how experiences relate to your life when you come home. Utilize that which the Lord has provided to help you become a better person in the years ahead. Don't be like this brother who I wrote about in my journal March 21, 2012.

"Sunday during priesthood a new instructor that I didn't recognize gave a lesson. He started by saying that he had been home from his mission for 3 months, and if we understood what that meant, we'd know that he's really been home for 4 months. He implied that his last month he must have spent thinking about home instead of why he was there. It made me so sad to hear this. I reflected once again upon my mission and how my last month was the best and most productive month I had in the field. I had so many miracles and blessings occur then as a result of my hard work and to represent for me the culmination of months of learning how to serve the Lord. How unfortunate for those who do not continue as they commenced. What blessings they miss out on and what beautiful things the Lord has prepared that are lost!"

Elder Isaac, if I have done only three things right in my entire life they have been these: joining this church, serving a dang good mission, and marrying Jessica. I've made some mistakes in my church service over the years, but no one can take away from me the fact that I worked my butt off in Mexico and served a phenomenal mission. It is one of the only things in life that I feel like I gave really close to 100% on. Maybe 99.9% ;). I was so consecrated to the work. If you believe this to be true, use me as an example. They took me out of Mexico but no one will ever take Mexico out of me. To every Mexican I meet I say I am half Mexican. They always laugh because I look so white and I clarify that my inside half is the Mexican part. I can't stress this enough. Embrace your mission. One more specific counsel. Don't ever let anyone tease you or make you feel bad for sharing so many stories from your mission. You share those stories when you are prompted to do so. Let them be your guide for gospel living. Many people mock returned missionaries for telling all their mission stories. Some girls even tire of hearing about it. I'm going to teach my daughters

to seek out young men who won't stop talking about their mission. Those are they who have embraced the Lord's service. They were fully consecrated servants. They made it 100% about the work and loved every minute of it. And I will only briefly advise, of course all things can be had in both extremes. You don't want to become obsessive to the point where you don't strike that balance right? But I think the bigger danger here is of not embracing it enough. If I said eat your vegetables religiously, I don't be 20lbs of asparagus a day right? But it wouldn't be wrong to try to eat each veggie at every meal either. I hope you understand my point and the spirit of my message to you.

To conclude, you now have other "tasks at hand" as you put it to direct your energy into. Manage them as you would other tasks in the mission field. Keep your good habits going. Never let go of your converts and continue serving them as you have in the mission field. And when you get home and settled in, come over and we can talk about the next big decision you must make soon, that of choosing your eternal companion. I wish you the best of luck your last couple weeks. And I just want to say how proud of you I am and especially to hear you plan to stay all 3 hours at church. That says a whole lot about you in very few words. Keep up the good work and I'll be waiting for a big hug when you get back.

Your brother always in the gospel,

Steve

PS. My number is [916-662-4244](tel:916-662-4244). When you get home give me a call. I found the stimulus of being home overwhelming especially the first couple days and sometimes needed to just go on some late night walks around the neighborhood to clear my head. I'm always available for a walk if you need it. (I'd be happy to drive over to Brigham City or have you come over and even spend the night at our place if need to get away for a day or two)

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